In June 2000, the Executive of the Section of Researchers held a retreat. Members decided to approach Canadian Family Physician about the possibility of running a regular Research Page. This request was received positively.

The page will have a variety of purposes. After important research meetings, such as the North American Primary Care Research Group (NAPCRG) meeting and the Family Medicine Forum, the page will report on research activities and content. After the results of Canadian Institutes of Health Research competitions, the page will report on successes of family physician researchers. A series on basic statistics is planned. We will ask researchers from different provinces or who are involved in specific areas of research to provide reports. The goal is to keep Canadian family physician researchers informed about what is happening nationally and internationally, especially with research activities, funding opportunities, and resources for enhancing research capacity. Information, communication, and education are the three goals of this page.

Several Research Pages over the next year will involve a series on basic statistics for novice primary care researchers. Concepts addressed will include odds ratios, relative risks, confidence intervals, P values, sample size, power, clinical and statistical significance, and α and β errors.

One Research Page on the National Research System (NaReS) will describe an effective data collection resource available to family physician researchers but not used as much as it might be. The National Research System has the potential to increase the capacity for research in Canada, and we hope to inform investigators of how they can work with NaReS staff to develop and conduct research studies. The College of Family Physicians of Canada maintains NaReS.

One Research Page will focus on the new federal funding agency, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. What does this new agency mean for primary care research in Canada? How can family physician investigators best access the funds available? With which of the institutes should family physician researchers identify? Can family physicians expect increased funding from this new agency?

We will do a reflective piece on the direction of primary care research in Canada and what our research agenda should be. Should we focus on clinical research, on health services research, on qualitative research? Should we focus on the broader determinates of health? What are the important unanswered questions in family medicine?

The capacity to conduct research depends on the ability to obtain funding. To be competitive in the granting world, however, we need family medicine departments and other primary care organizations that have the resources and infrastructure to write high-quality grant proposals. Researchers with graduate-level training in research methodology, biostatistics, epidemiology, and other research-oriented fields are needed. We need to develop programs for master’s-level and doctoral-level training of family physician investigators. Our departments need to include doctoral-level faculty members in biostatistics, epidemiology, psychology, and sociology. We will publish a Research Page on the available capacity of resources in Canada.

Research Pages will be written by recognized and successful family medicine researchers throughout Canada.

As I write this introductory piece for the first Research Page, it is early October. The October issue of Canadian Family Physician will soon be released, in time for Family Medicine Forum 2000. In that issue, I wrote an opinion piece called “Dumbing down of academic family medicine. A manifesto for change.” I am wondering how it will be received. Will people see it as the pipe dream of a hopeless academic? Will it be seen as a milestone article that said what needed to be said and served as a blueprint for the future organization of family medicine departments? (Probably not!) Or will it be seen as just dribble by someone out of touch with reality? Will anyone pay attention to it at all? Regardless, I stick to my belief that the problems and solutions outlined in that article are critical to academic family medicine. In particular, they are critical to research in family medicine.
In most family medicine departments in Canada, research is the poor cousin. Most resources and activities involve patient care. The academic component of most departments involves teaching, postgraduate and undergraduate. Research is often an afterthought. The quality is often poor and involves surveys that look at ourselves rather than our patients. I addressed these issues in a previous article about our propensity to navel gaze. An organized approach to developing research skills and infrastructure or to identifying important questions that need to be addressed is rarely taken. And more often than not, the more time you spend on research, the less you get paid. These are generalizations, of course, and are not true for all departments, but research is appropriately valued and rewarded in less than half the family medicine departments in Canada.

For the remainder of this first Research Page, I will take a different tack and share with you some research resources I have found on-line.

**Grant writing.** A page titled “The Art of Grantsmanship” (http://www.med.uwo.ca/physiology/courses/survivalwebv3/ArtofGrantsmanship.html) is written by Jacob Kraicer of the Physiology Department at the University of Western Ontario (UWO) in London. It is well worth a read for anyone planning to submit a grant to Canadian Institutes of Health Research or any other granting agency.

**Presenting and writing up research.** A page titled “Survival Skills for Graduate Students” (http://www.med.uwo.ca/physiology/courses/survivalwebv3/) is also from the Physiology Department at UWO. It has good information on giving oral presentations, creating and presenting posters, and writing up research papers.

**Looking for granting agencies.** The Office of Research Services at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver has an excellent searchable site (http://www.orsil.ubc.ca/cgi-bin/wow/progquery.query). You can search by key words and limit by area of interest, deadline date, and type of grant. The database contains both public and private (foundations) granting organizations in Canada, the United States, and worldwide.

**Instructions to authors for more than 3000 journals.** A site titled “Instructions to Authors in the Health Sciences” (http://www.mco.edu/lib/instr/libinsta.html) is maintained by the Raymon H. Mulford Library, Medical College of Ohio in Toledo. It lists journals alphabetically and has links to their Instructions to Authors information pages. It contains all major journals, including 26 journals that begin with “Canadian.” It provides an impact factor for each journal based on how frequently articles from that journal are cited.

**Vancouver style (Uniform Requirements).** One site contains the full text of the “Uniform requirements for manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals” (http://www.icmje.org) updated in May 2000. If you want to publish in medical journals, you need to read this site.

**Writing a journal article.** An excellent paper on how to write a journal article, “Writing the empirical journal article,” is available at http://comp9.psych.cornell.edu/dbem/writing_article.html. The paper, written by Daryl J. Bem of Cornell University in Ithaca, NY, covers planning, writing, rewriting, and publishing articles.

**Sample size and power calculations.** An on-line sample size calculator (http://www.univie.ac.at/medstat/ssize.html) was written by Rollin Brant at the University of Calgary in Alberta. It allows easy calculation of sample size for four types of comparisons.

**Diagnostic test 2x2 tables.** A tool made available by the Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine in Oxford, England (http://cebm.jr2.ox.ac.uk/docs/2x2table.html), allows quick calculations of sensitivity, specificity, predictive values, and likelihood ratios for diagnostic tests. Watch this space over the next year for information that we hope you will find useful and interesting.

“The amount of writings of a profession is a measure of its vitality and activity, whilst their quality is a rough indication of its intellectual state.”

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**References**