Identifying the Facilitators and Barriers for Scientific Writing among Pharmacy Students in College of Pharmacy, Umm Al-Qura University – A Qualitative Study

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Background: Scientific writing in English language is essential for students of health-related degrees including pharmacy in this modern era of research. Students find scientific writing very challenging in the countries where English is not the first language and pharmacy programs are delivered in English language.

Aim: To explore the facilitators and barriers for scientific writing faced by undergraduate pharmacy students in Umm Al-Qura University.

Method: We used in-depth face-to-face semi-structured interviews in Arabic with 4th and 5th year students of our college to gain an insight into facilitators and barriers for scientific writing from their perspective. Interview guide was prepared and piloted in Arabic language. Eighteen participants agreed to be interviewed and signed consent form. The interviews were conducted in the college. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim later.

Results: Mean interview time was 18 minutes. Two researchers analysed the qualitative data independently using thematic analysis and agreed on the coding and themes later. A third researcher verified the coding and themes on randomly selected transcripts. Early interim analysis has shown facilitator themes around 'having rich vocabulary', 'increased writing activities', 'individual guidance' and barrier themes such as 'lack of vocabulary', 'time constraint', 'lack of ideas', 'lack of guidance' etc. More detailed data analysis is still underway.

Conclusion: Early analysis shows that efforts are needed from the college to develop culture of scientific writing among students as part of the curriculum. Individual guidance by mentors must be integral part of strategy encouraging scientific writing among students of bilingual countries.