

■ **To the Editor:** We are all academics. We love to read new studies. Randomised controlled trials whip us into a frenzy. We thrive on case reports, literature reviews and prospective analyses. Our food is data and extracurricular activities extend to detail analysis, making criticisms and fantasising about improvements in physiology, pharmacology, and ultimately, patient morbidity and mortality.

What we practise and how we do it is influenced by what academics, like ourselves, discover through thorough research. In turn, we can influence the world.

Why, then, are our practices in Southern Africa largely governed by those in America, Europe, Australia and the Scandinavian countries? Why am I reading about multiple, randomised controlled trials from Britain? Why do the only good meta-analyses derive from far-away places? Places that I've never been to?

Unfortunately, the answer is clear and simple. And no surprises here: money.

As a registrar, it is expected that I conduct some kind of research for my MMed qualification. As an academic and a little bit of a "nerd", I wanted to do something substantial: something that, for once, could influence anaesthesiologists in even Sweden, for example. I was tired of inconsequential data that have no impact. With stars in my eyes, I wanted to change the world.

I wrote the protocol, providing several eloquent explanations to "mesmerise" the ethics committee into giving approval, which was obtained.

Because my study included some laboratory testing, on markers not otherwise performed at our laboratory, I had to let the laboratory into my secrets. Substantial amounts

of money were needed to fund these tests, and I set out on a mission to find funding. Having approached the relevant authorities at my academic institution, I was swiftly persuaded to seek greener pastures.

The relevant association also turned a deaf ear to my pleas. I have only been a member of the society for 17 months, and to qualify for funding you need to be a society member for 24. The fact that my annual fees have been paid, meaning that in seven months' time, I will still be a member of the society, completely escaped them.

After heavy persuasion, I succeeded in getting a pharmaceutical company to listen to my proposal. This could make their drug famous! They were very helpful until the day they asked me to submit a detailed budget. Back at the laboratory, I had to ask for a "shopping list" of sorts. This included test kits, test tubes and vials. Because the technologist could not provide these during company hours, I had to include the after-hours fee of the technologist into my budget. I asked the laboratory politely to assist me with costs. I had to open an account, but in order for me to do so, I would need to say who would foot the bill. Now, five months later, I cannot proceed with funding requests because I am not entirely sure of the cost, and I cannot complete my budget because I don't know who will fund me.

Is it only this difficult here? Or is this a global problem? And what can we do to make this system more streamlined?

I am sure that I am not the only registrar out there who is severely disheartened and disappointed.

Sincerely,
Anonymous