Supercourse News Letter
Oct 11 2012
www.pitt.edu/~super1/

Pleases distribute this newsletter to all interested in research methods

Just Do It!!! (Nike Slogan)

BA SuperHELP Desk: We thought things might slow up on the development and building of a Global BA SuperHELP desk for research methods. We were very much mistaken and we have moved into exciting new developments. During the last few weeks we have lost our funding from the State Department which was our major source of support. Because of this we thought that we were to move slow with the Help Desk Concept. This however, is not happening as a result of outstanding people. We were very surprised to see that three groups have already set up country research methods help desk. The Lebanon help desk has been started by Jihad Irani and Ghada Farhat. The Pakistan Research help desk has been developed by Dr. Zakiuddin Ahmed. The Iranian help desk has been started by Reza Asady.
I owe Zaki, Reza and Jihad as they took me by the neck and said that we can do this in our country by ourselves and it will improve research and health in their country, and if we work together, the world. In other
words: Just Do It!"

 You can reach the Iran Help desk at:
http://www.pitt.edu/~super1/ResearchMethods/index10.htm
As other centers are developed we will highlight the centers and developers in our honor role of help desks. Please consider developing a help desk, and we will add you to our BA SuperHELP club!! Contact me
(ronaldlaporte@gmail.com) if you would like to join. Reza is using free software called http://www.hesk.com/. It is a very good idea. It would be good if you all tried this and other versions so that we can make recommendations. The software is very simple. Here is a nice note from Reza which discusses her Help Desk.

Dear all
At first I am very grateful of being a member of you, who try to make the world better and healthier. And for those who want to start I remind that HESK helpdesk tool is an excellent choice. It is very user friendly; messages are saved on database, accept file attachments and sends Email reminders…..
Regards
Reza

You say you want a revolution
Well, you know
We all want to change the world
You tell me that it's evolution
Well, you know
We all want to change the world
(Nike using Beatle song)

The model is coming together very well, instead of a hierarchical model we will establish a loose federation of national help desks using the expertise in each country. The costs to maintain the help desks can be made to be very small. Many help desks across the world use upper level graduate students. It is very positive for the graduate students as they learn more and more about research design. Often these students take "help desk" for credit. It is a major advantage for the program as well, as graduate students are "inexpensive". It would be a win-win for everyone. Our goal is for our clinical friends to think of research methods BEFORE they start research, rather than trying to clean up a mess of data afterwards. Becoming a BA SuperHELP desk likely will make the help desks centers and anchors to stimulate better research in countries

One can go to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help_desk to read about help desks in general. We are pushing the concept of a help desk to new global levels in multiple languages as Reza has done. We are in discussions about national help desks, regional (e.g. central asia) and global to improve productivity across the world.

Air Jordan, playing with the big guns

Lancet, Nature, British medical journal: In the past few weeks we have been discussing how to increase publications from developing countries in the upper tier journals. We have talked with top editors of the Lancet, Nature and BMJ and identified a means to do this without sacrificing quality. In the major international journals about 3% of the publications come from developing countries. The Lancet received 2000 articles from developing countries and published only 15. Our approach will be to have the Lancet identify from the 2000 articles ~100 that are interesting and "Lancet worthy", but have inadequate methods. We will go through these with a second read to identify the articles that have minor problems with research methods, and work with the authors to help the research methods.
Perhaps there will be 30 articles. Then the articles are re-reviewed by the lancet, and perhaps 15 new articles are accepted, a doubling of the number of articles from developing countries in the Lancet. We would like those experts in research methods to help "incubate" articles for these top journals.

Just do it again

We think a Global BA SuperHELP desk can have major impact on improving the publications. Several studies have demonstrated that the primary reason by far that Journal Articles are turned down is because of poor methods and statistics. Here we have the wonderful opportunity for global help desks to change this. It is also pretty cool that we, who are geek methods people, will be sought after to help other researchers to be published. In the future I predict that the help desks will be the major centers for research in countries. We all want you to become the leaders of research in your countries, and you can be building a BA SuperHELP desk.

With Reza, Jihad/Ghada, and Zaki's proof of concept we are rolling. We would appreciate if you could offer suggestions, as this is the first time that a global research methods help desk has been proposed.

Pittsburgh: It is beautiful in Pittsburgh in the fall. The leaves are bright red, yellow and green. There are flocks of baby turkey s causing a ruckus, and we have a huge buck deer and his harem in our back yard. This drives Ella (our dog) in a wildlife frenzy. Come vacation in Pittsburgh.

Best Regards,
Ron, Faina, Eugene, Nicholas, Mita, Olga.
University of Pittsburgh
For the Supercourse team (www.pitt.edu/~super1/)

"Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well- being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO)