



Are we Asking Enough Questions to have Inclusive and Innovative Research?

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It is widely recognized that any problem has multiple solutions. But research is often stopped when a solution is found even when enough attention has not been given to the basic causes for the problem and all possible ways to counteract it. This is because the exhortation by eminent scientist Einstein that “It is important not to stop asking questions” is often ignored.

A recent example is research regarding corona virus which has not only caused more than 200 million cases and four million deaths but also created misery and suffering by upsetting economy, education and employment for nearly two years. Rightly, scientific institutions concentrated on a preventive measure – vaccination. But, when some vaccines were found, these institutions stopped further search, even for another preventive measure. This is an example of scientists ignoring the exhortation by Einstein that “It is important not to stop asking questions”. The fact that this was a serious omission is highlighted by an article titled “A simple and unique habit which can Prevent Many Diseases Throughout Life” [1]. This praiseworthy habit can not only prevent covid 19 pandemic but also prevent many diseases caused by organisms which enter body through nose or mouth, including tuberculosis which also could not be eradicated. Moreover, when nose blowing habit is used widely, there is no need to have masks and lockdowns. Then, we can achieve profound improvements in economy, education and employment. Other advantages are: (a) it does not do any harm, (b) it does not need money for equipment, medicines or payment for service, c) needs only less than 10 seconds each time, (d) this can be easily practised by anyone without approval or help, (e) ability to prevent many diseases anytime in life will help to get rid of fear and anxiety about these diseases, (f) can repeatedly save lot of money and time for visiting doctors, hospitals

and medicine shops and (g) mutation of virus will not affect its effectiveness. These multiple benefits confirm that not asking more questions was a serious mistake.

Another example of incomplete research is treatment for loss of hearing. Repeated attempts have succeeded in producing better and better hearing aids. Despite these, large number of people are not able to hear properly. Even more important, hearing aids are expensive and not affordable for most people. Therefore, these researches are incomplete because the exhortation by Einstein that “It is important not to stop asking uestions” has been ignored. A review of the basic problem shows that hearing loss occurs when the tiny hairs in the inner ear are damaged or die. This often occurs with aging. Another fact is that sound waves travel from the outer ear until these reach the eardrum and make it vibrate. From there, the ossicles receive this vibration and send it towards the inner ear, where the cochlea stimulates the stereocilia, which in turn send electric impulses via the auditory nerve to the brain. These mean that any damage to these parts and the brain can also lead to hearing loss. An essential question is how can damage of hair cells or ossicles or stereocilia or concerned brain lobes be prevented? ENT specialists and neurologists have a role in such inclusive and innovative research. Another important field for inclusive and innovative research is to ascertain whether any diet supplement for those nearing end of middle age, can prevent or at least delay any of the damages mentioned above. These will be praiseworthy preventive measures which will help millions of people. These possibilities confirm that not asking more questions was a serious mistake.

There may be many more problems for which ideal solutions (particularly preventive measures) can be found by asking more

questions which can lead to more inclusive and innovative research. It is important to first carry out surveys to ascertain the extent and severity of these problems in order to plan research to tackle these for the benefit of most (if not all) people of the country and the world.

A serious problem which has been standing in the way of many improvements in health is that, despite extensive propaganda, millions of people ignored health warnings and suggestions (e.g. against smoking, drinking and drugs and regarding wearing masks and keeping social distance etc.). I have no figures but I suspect that millions have the habits of smoking, drinking or taking drugs. It is regrettable that they include educated and intelligent people. The fact that this grave situation is continuing for many years has not been questioned by scientists. This is another example of scientists ignoring the exhortation by Einstein that "It is important not to stop asking questions". It is essential to carry out inclusive and innovative research (particularly psychological studies) to ascertain reasons for these serious mental blocks among people and how to overcome these. Another way to tackle this problem can be by basic changes in education to concentrate on acquiring discipline and rational thinking at the foundation stage of education.

A similar mental block or hesitancy to ask questions among scientists may be standing in the way of carrying out inclusive and innovative research. An article titled "Why Tuberculosis Has Not Been Eradicated? Need for Vision and bold Innovative Research" [2] published in 2017 was a wake-up call to Health Research Workers to carryout innovative research with vision. There was no response to this call made solely in the interest of achieving better health. Reasons for this have not been told and deserve to be investigated. May be, this could have been misinterpreted as interferences in their well-established systems of research by a person who has little or no experience in their special subjects. Or, this might have been misinterpreted as questioning their ability to carry out innovative research themselves. Another basic problem may be that motivation for research of most scientists may be attainment of glory and not improving the health situation in their country, forgetting that the latter approach also will help them to attain glory. The latter approach is preferable because scientists are part of the society and have availed of many faculties provided by the society to reach their present position. They ought to recognize that they owe this debt to the society.

Another article titled "Another Wake-up Call for Innovative Research with Vision" [3] also seems to have been ignored. I am not surprised because even the exhortation by eminent scientist Einstein has been ignored. But, this is a serious matter and requires to be investigated and a solution found. I hope the present article, which is a third wake up call for inclusive and innovative research, will receive better response.

Large sums of money and many hours of efforts have been spent on research and publication of research findings and recommendations. But, these and even repeated recommendations about their utilization have mostly been ignored. Why should we spend large sums of money and hours if these are not utilized? This question does not imply that all findings and recommendations of research should be automatically accepted. But, it does strongly urge that these should first be debated widely with open mind, and a consensus arrived at about their utilization. Then these should be accepted and utilized by governments. Rejection of research findings and recommendations should be openly debated so that research workers will not waste time and efforts on unacceptable or impracticable solutions of problems. Absence of such healthy debates and their dissemination is not in public interest.

A national authority on Research and its Utilization, comprising of expert research workers and organizations (both government and non-government), should be set up to periodically review research findings and utilization of their findings and guide inclusive and innovative research. A global confederation of these national authorities will help.

We can make progress only if scientists ask lot of relevant questions, discuss these freely and objectively and carry out scientific studies to find proper answers. By its nature, top level of any government organization will not encourage questions being asked by scientists. Non-government organizations may be free to accept questions but may not have funds to carry out scientific studies to find answers. These are serious blocks in the way of asking questions that are vital for progress of science. While asking questions scientists should not take the attitude of a frog in a well for which the universe consists of the well only. Scientists have to ask a lot of questions within and beyond the well, with an open mind and without being influenced by any pressure groups or pressure of circumstances. If scientists do not ask searching questions they cannot have a scientific and practical approach which is essential

for progress. A compartmental or piecemeal approach lacks vision and could retard progress or even set the clock back. Most problems are interconnected with other problems. The questions asked should cover wider fields so that none of the interactions will be missed. Scientists should adopt this approach which will give them a wider and clear vision.

I have asked number of questions based on data I know of. May be more questions should be asked and answers found for all these by well planned studies. Some of us may hesitate to ask questions because of a pessimistic attitude. Will their silence help? Asking questions will at least help to have vision and repeated questioning will give a wider vision.

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