

The Doug Altman Scholarship & Building Capacity Globally 2019

September 2019



Figure 1: Dr Peter Gill, Dr Tom Jefferson, Prof Carl Heneghan, Georgia Richards, Sir Iain Chalmers, Dr Sally Hopewell and the 2019 Doug Altman Scholars and Building Capacity Bursary awardees at the ice-breaker event "Evidence in the Pub" on the eve of EBMLive.

Report authors: Georgia Richards¹, Dr Peter Gill^{1,2}, Ruth Davis¹, Dr Helen MacDonald³ & Prof Carl Heneghan¹

¹Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine, University of Oxford, UK.

²Department of Pediatrics, The Hospital for Sick Children, & Child Health Evaluative Sciences, SickKids Research Institute, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

³The BMJ, London, UK.

Table of Contents

1. Summary of report.....	3
2. The Applications.....	4
3. Doug Altman Scholars 2019.....	5-9
4. Building Capacity Bursary Awardees 2019.....	10
5. The Doug Altman Award.....	11
6. Feedback from Scholars & Awardees.....	12
7. Conclusions.....	13
8. References.....	14-15

1. Summary of report

We are delighted to report on the success of the inaugural Doug Altman Scholarship following a donation from the McCall MacBain Foundation (MMF). Given the generosity of the MMF, we funded eight forward-thinking future leaders of evidence-based medicine who attended the 2019 EBMLive Conference in Oxford. The scholars brought provocative, bold and constructive contributions on the theme of making research relevant, replicable and accessible to end users. They tackled the issue of reducing questionable research practices, offering solutions and continuing the great work that Professor Doug Altman started in 1994 with "[*The scandal of poor medical research*](#)." (1)

We awarded a further six early mid career researchers from low- and middle-income countries a Building Capacity Bursary, which also covered travel and accommodation to attend EBMLive 2019. They brought unique perspectives and contributed to the overall aim of building capacity in evidence-based medicine globally. The Doug Altman Scholars and the Building Capacity Bursary awardees enriched EBMLive, bringing their ideas, enthusiasm, and the perspectives of early-mid career researchers to the conference.

This report highlights the contributions of awardees, the outcomes this initiative and our future plans for supporting early mid career researchers and to build capacity globally.



Carl Heneghan
Professor of Evidence-Based Medicine,
University of Oxford



2. The Applications

The Doug Altman Scholarship was advertised internationally to encourage a broad range of high-quality applications. An editorial titled, “[A scholarship to foster future leaders in evidence based medicine](#),” was published in the *British Medical Journal* (BMJ) to promote the creation of the scholarship in memory of Doug Altman and to announce the call for submissions (2). We reached out to universities and medical schools across the world as well as international and national networks such as the Cochrane Collaboration, Students 4 Best Evidence, and the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR).

We received a total of 68 entries from 26 different countries around the globe (Figure 1), with an overall gender split of 43% female. Each application was reviewed independently by members of the conference steering committee, which included representation from the Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine (CEBM) and the *BMJ*.

We announced the news of the applications, Georgia Richards and Peter Gill, wrote a blog on the EBMLive website (3), which was shared widely on social media.

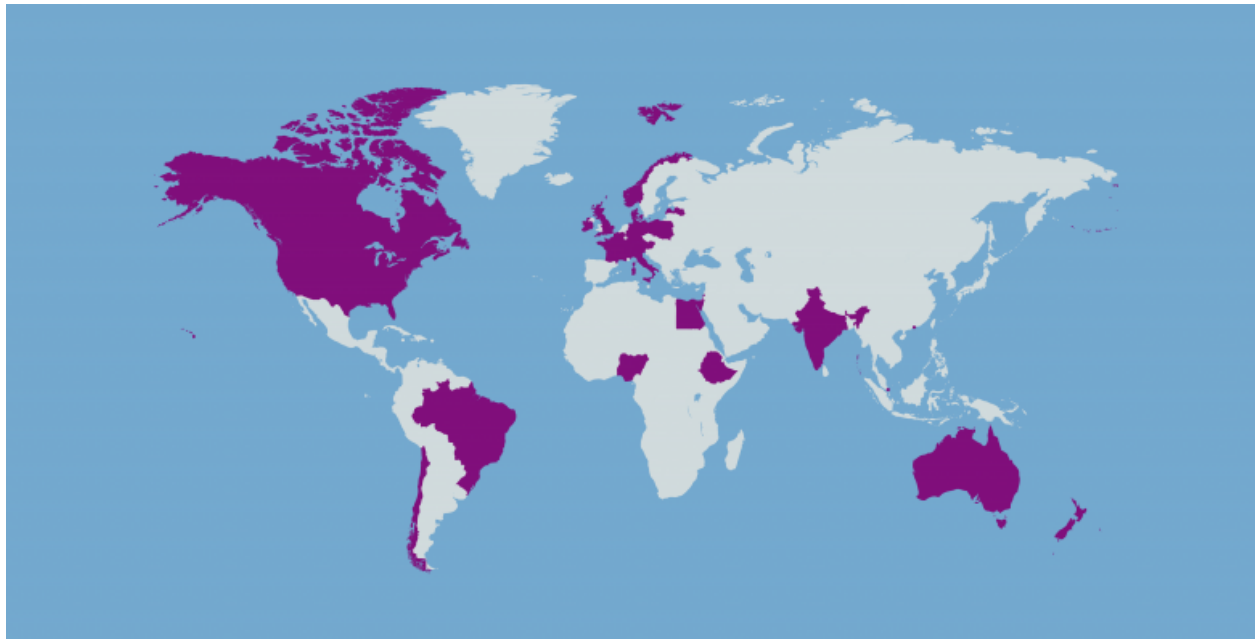


Figure 2: Summary of the geographical variation of entries received (purple, n=26) for the 2019 Doug Altman Scholarship.

3. Doug Altman Scholars 2019

The eight Doug Altman Scholars came from diverse backgrounds and presented on various topics at EBMLive. In the lead up to EBMLive, scholars wrote blogs on pertinent topics to evidence-based medicine available on the [EBMLive website](#) and all scholars had their abstract submissions published in the [BMJ Evidence-Based Medicine](#) journal (4). The profiles of scholars are also available on the EBMLive website, here: <https://ebmlive.org/doug-altman-scholars/>

Georgia Richards and Peter Gill wrote a blog for [The BMJ Opinion](#) to introduce the scholars in the lead up to EBMLive (5).



Figure 3: The eight Doug Altman Scholars after their presentations at EBMLive. From the left: Cole Wayant, Matt Parkes, Christoffe Bjerre Haase, Tanya Rombey, Logan Williams, Stephen Bradley, Brennan Kahan and Drew Dagens.

Following the conference, all Doug Altman Scholars contributed to the writing of an opinion and debate article published in *BMJ Evidence Based Medicine*, titled “[Challenges facing early-career and mid-career researchers: potential solutions to safeguard the future of evidence-based medicine](#)” (6).

Cole Wayant (USA)



Mr. Wayant was a dual-degree medical and doctoral student at Oklahoma State University Center for Health Sciences in Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA. His research explored biases in medical research and how bias and poor methodological/reporting quality may affect study conclusions, interpretations, and applications. Clinically, Mr. Wayant is interested in hematology/oncology.

At EBMLive, Mr. Wayant presented “[A review of the magnitude of financial relationships with industry and disclosure practices among clinical practice guideline authors](#)” (7) and wrote about

this in a pre-conference blog titled “[Financial conflicts of interest in medical research: perspective from an early-career researcher](#)” (8).

Matthew Parkes (UK)



Mr. Parkes was a research statistician at the University of Manchester in the Research in Osteoarthritis Manchester unit (ROAM), a group specializing in conducting late phase clinical trials of nonpharmacological interventions for osteoarthritis. He was completing a PhD by publication in Epidemiology and Biostatistics, which focused on refining the methodology of lateral wedge insole trials. His research interests include chronic disease clinical trials methods, outcome research, and digital epidemiology. He is a keen user of Stata, and increasingly passionate advocate of R and Python for clinical research. He is particularly keen to explore ways

of improving transparency, reproducibility, and collaboration in research; specifically, how we change the writing of scientific manuscripts to interweave data, analysis, and write-up.

At EBMLive, Mr. Parkes presented “[*Papers as living documents: using literate programming to produce fully transparent, reproducible research manuscripts*](#)” (9) and he wrote about in a pre-conference blog titled “[*Show your working: Is the way we write our papers fit for purpose?*](#)” (10).

Christoffee Bjerre Haase (Denmark)



Dr. Haase was a researcher and medical doctor from the University of Copenhagen. Based on the theory of science, philosophy and evidence-based medicine, Christoffer was primarily interested in the inter-relations between the concepts of overdiagnosis and diagnosis/disease and the ways (medical) science and societal discourses influence those concepts. His projects analysed whether medical science, and specifically evidence-based medicine, allows any health risk (e.g. hypertension) and existential condition (e.g. sarcopenia) to become a diagnosis and, also, whether the economic effect of diagnosis

changes the diagnosis itself.

At EBMLive, Dr. Haase presented "[The lack of ontological awareness in evidence-based medicine allows overdiagnosis](#)" (11) and wrote three blogs about his work, including "[The evidence of what?](#)", "[Trustworthy evidence or paid lip service](#)", and "[Shifting to 'disagree to disagree' using EBM](#)" (12–14).

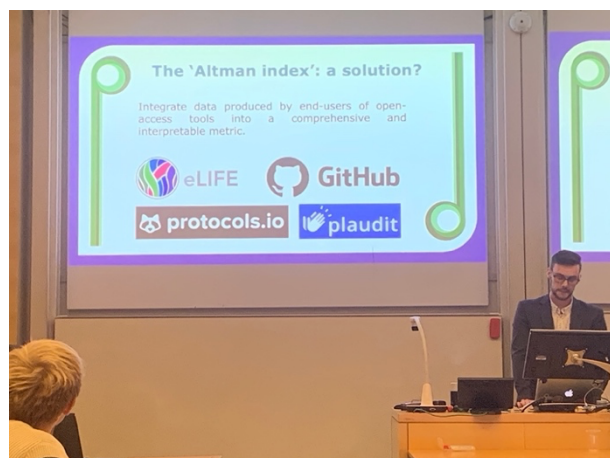
Tanja Rombey (Germany)



Ms. Rombey was a doctoral student in Theoretical Medicine at Witten/Herdecke University in Germany. She held a Master's degree in Public Health (Management & Leadership) from the University of Sheffield and a Bachelor's degree in Health Economics from the University of Cologne. Tanja has a keen interest in systematic reviews and their methods as a part of evidence-based medicine, her doctoral thesis was investigating protocols for systematic reviews. It was her aim to become a professor of evidence-based medicine and teach medical students about meaningful research and its use in clinical practice.

At EBMLive, Ms. Rombey presented, "[More systematic reviews are being registered in PROSPERO each year, but records are seldom up-to-date](#)" (15) and wrote about this in a pre-conference blog titled "[Systematic review protocols and registration: Why? How? What \(needs improving\)?](#)" (16).

Logan Williams (New Zealand)



Mr. Williams was a final year medical student at The University of Auckland, in New Zealand. He was passionate about perinatal neurodevelopment, having previously completed a BSc in Biomedical Science (neuroscience) and an intercalated BMedSc(Hons) in neonatal medicine. He had developed a keen interest in scientific integrity, particularly in the interplay between the academic ecosystem and research misconduct.

Mr. Williams presented his idea titled, "[*If you can't beat 'em, join 'em: combating poor scientific practice with a quantitative, open-access research metric*](#)" (17) and wrote a pre-conference blog titled "[*First, do no harm: the promose of new scientific metrics*](#)" (18).

Andrew (Drew) Dagens (UK)



Dr. Dagens was studying for an MSc in Evidence-Based Healthcare at the University of Oxford. He was an infectious diseases specialist with the Royal Air Force and was interested in the healthcare of military personnel; both serving and veterans. His work has looked at viral carriage in Royal Marine recruits and chronic tropical illness in forces deployed to South Sudan. Dr. Dagens was working on the taught component of his master's degree, but hoped to complete a systematic review on the diagnosis of neglected tropical diseases. Ultimately, he aimed to complete a DPhil at the CEBM in Oxford. In addition to his specialty in infection, Drew is

interested in the problem of 'fake news' in science.

At EBMLive, Dr. Dagens presented his idea titled, "[*Predator publishing or Fake Science? A Case series of 75 unsolicited emails received from 'predator journals'*](#)" (19) and wrote a pre-conference blog titled "[*Predatory publishing or Fake Science?*](#)" (20).

Brennan Kahan (Canada)



Mr. Kahan was a statistician based at the Pragmatic Clinical Trials Unit, Queen Mary University of London from Canada. His main area of research was around trying to improve the statistical methods used in randomised trials. A particular focus was on trying to increase transparency in how trials were analysed.

At EBMLive, Mr. Kahan presented his idea titled, "[*Unexplained discrepancies between planned and conducted statistical analyses in randomised trials*](#)" (21) and wrote a pre-conference blog titled "[*A proposed framework for the pre-specification of statistical analysis*](#)

[*methods in clinical trials \(Pre-SPEC\)*](#)" (22).

Stephen Bradley (UK)



Dr. Bradley was a GP undertaking a PhD on lung cancer diagnosis funded by Cancer Research UK at the University of Leeds. He was passionate about addressing inequalities in health and his clinical work focuses on specialist services for homeless people, asylum seekers and immigrants. Dr. Bradley served on a NICE clinical guideline committee and was an executive committee member of the Fabian Society, a political think tank.

At EBMLive, Dr Bradley presented his idea titled, "[*Time for a real manifesto*](#)" (23) and wrote his pre-conference blog on "[*Research without*](#)

[*journals?*](#)" (24).

4. Building Capacity Bursary Awardees 2019

The Building Capacity Bursary awardees presented their research ideas in a dedicated rapid-fire session for early-mid career researchers and some awardees also did poster presentations. In the lead up to EBMLive, some awardees wrote blogs on pertinent topics to evidence-based medicine available on the [EBMLive website](#) and all awardees had their abstract submissions published in the [BMJ Evidence-Based Medicine](#) journal (4).



Figure 4: The six Building Capacity Bursary awardees, from the left: Raymond Okechukwu (Nigeria), Daniel Umpierre (Brazil), Tatiane Ribeiro (Brazil), Augusto Cesar Soares dos Santos Junior (Brazil), Shabana Ali (India) and Yasmin Elsobky (Egypt).

Following the conference, all Building Capacity Bursary awardees contributed to the writing of an opinion and debate article published in *BMJ Evidence Based Medicine*, titled “[Building capacity in evidence-based medicine in low-income and middle-income countries: problems and potential solutions.](#)” (25)

5. The Doug Altman Award

On the final afternoon of EBMLive, Mrs. Sue Altman attended EBMLive for the announcement and presentation of the Doug Altman Award. After independently scoring each Doug Altman Scholar during their presentations, the highest score and inaugural Doug Altman Award was awarded to Dr. Stephen Bradley.



Figure 5: The Doug Altman Awards ceremony. From the left: Georgia Richards, Peter Gill, Stephen Bradley and Mrs. Sue Altman.

6. Feedback from Scholars and Awardees

*“I have never been to a conference that **contributed more to my future career** as a physician-scientist. The other Doug Altman scholars were equally impressive, and I believe the connections I made with them will continue to strengthen as we all mature in our careers. Altogether, my experience as a Doug Altman scholar cannot be equalled and it is all due to the generosity of the McCall McBain foundation.”*

*“A **once in a lifetime opportunity** that only strengthened my interest in EBM.”*

*“The EBMLive 2019 meeting was a **state-of-the-art event**, perfectly organized and planned. The selected themes for each session were characterized by a true connection to current relevant topics in healthcare science and were also distinguished by a high technical level. From the point of view of a scholar, **the event was a great success**. There were events especially designed to offer early mid-career researchers the **opportunity to network** and discuss how to innovate. These events allowed us to develop connections enabling the possibility for **long-lasting collaborations** between scholars and members of the EBMLive faculty.”*

*“It was a **very positive and inspiring experience**. I have not experienced such thing before, and I am expecting not to get such a chance again.”*

*“The experience was wonderful! It was one of the first times in my career that I've been able to meet with **like-minded people** to discuss issues around EBM, and this conference gave me not only new ideas on how to ensure my research has a real impact, but also led to some new collaborations with people I'd never have met otherwise. Everyone at the conference was incredibly supportive, and the opportunity to write a blog and have it promoted by EBMLive and other groups has been phenomenal. I really do believe that the opportunity to attend EBMLive as a scholar has **changed the trajectory of my career** and will allow me to continue to work towards improving EBM.”*

*“I was **inspired and motivated** by this opportunity and **challenged** within me to contribute to the EBM space in my own little ways.”*

*“I particularly enjoyed the sessions that were especially **dedicated to early-career researchers** like myself. Although my head was drained from the last three days, I felt sad to leave Oxford. Not only had I had the chance **to meet and chat with my role model**, Andrea Tricco, during EBMLive, I also made a dozen new friends (including the other scholars, building capacity bursaries, Peter and Georgia)!”*

*“Rarely **such good opportunities and platforms** are provided to people early in their career with scholarships. I would like to sincerely thank the foundation, organisers and the entire team of EBMLive 2019 for their **great mentorship, support and scholarship**.”*

7. Conclusions

The inaugural Doug Altman Scholarship, following a donation from the McCall MacBain Foundation (MMF), was a resounding success. We funded eight forward-thinking future leaders of evidence-based medicine to attend the 2019 EBMLive Conference in Oxford. The scholars brought provocative, bold and constructive contributions on the theme of making research relevant, replicable and accessible to end users.

We awarded a further six early-mid career researchers from low- and middle-income countries a Building Capacity Bursary which covered travel and accommodation to attend EBMLive 2019. They brought unique perspectives and contributed to the overall aim of building capacity in evidence-based medicine globally.

The Doug Altman Scholars and the Building Capacity Bursary awardees enriched EBMLive, bringing their ideas, enthusiasm and the perspectives of early-mid career researchers to the conference. We hope to have the opportunity to continue Doug Altman's legacy in the future, and continue to develop future leaders in evidence-based medicine.

We welcome further discussions with the McCall McBain Foundation on the possibilities of support to continue fostering the development of future leaders in evidence-based medicine at EBMLive 2020.



Professor Carl Heneghan,
Professor of Evidence-Based Medicine, Director of CEBM, University
of Oxford



Georgia Richards
DPhil/PhD Candidate, CEBM, University of Oxford



Ruth Davis
Manager, CEBM, University of Oxford



Dr Peter Gill
Assistant Professor, Department of Paediatrics, University of
Toronto

8. References

1. Altman DG. The scandal of poor medical research. BMJ [Internet]. 1994 Jan 29 [cited 2022 Nov 16];308(6924):283–4. Available from: <https://www.bmj.com/content/308/6924/283>
2. Richards GC, Macdonald H, Gill PJ. A scholarship to foster future leaders in evidence based medicine. BMJ. 2019;364.
3. Richards GC, Gill P. Announcement: The inaugural 2019 Doug Altman Scholarships [Internet]. EBMLive. 2019 [cited 2022 Nov 16]. Available from: <https://ebmlive.org/announcement-the-inaugural-2019-doug-altman-scholarships/>
4. Table of contents [Internet]. BMJ Evidence-Based Medicine. 2019 [cited 2022 Nov 16]. Available from: https://ebm.bmj.com/content/24/Suppl_1
5. Richards GC, Gill PJ. Early career researchers at EBMLive 2019 [Internet]. The BMJ Opinion. 2019 [cited 2022 Nov 17]. Available from: <https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2019/07/12/georgia-c-richards-and-peter-j-gill-early-career-researchers-at-ebmlive-2019/>
6. Richards GC, Bradley SH, Dagens AB, Haase CB, Kahan BC, Rombey T, et al. Challenges facing early-career and mid-career researchers: potential solutions to safeguard the future of evidence-based medicine. BMJ Evidence-Based Med [Internet]. 2019 Oct 25;bmjebm-2019-111273. Available from: <http://ebm.bmj.com/lookup/doi/10.1136/bmjebm-2019-111273>
7. Wayant C, Vassar M. 3 A review of the magnitude of financial relationships with industry and disclosure practices among clinical practice guideline authors. BMJ Evidence-Based Med [Internet]. 2019 Jul 1 [cited 2022 Nov 17];24(Suppl 1):A2–A2. Available from: https://ebm.bmj.com/content/24/Suppl_1/A2.1
8. Wayant C. Financial conflicts of interest in medical research: perspective from an early-career researcher [Internet]. EBMLive. 2019 [cited 2022 Nov 17]. Available from: <https://ebmlive.org/financial-conflicts-of-interest-in-medical-research-perspective-from-an-early-career-researcher/>
9. Parkes M. 7 Papers as living documents: using literate programming to produce fully transparent, reproducible research manuscripts. BMJ Evidence-Based Med [Internet]. 2019 Jul 1 [cited 2022 Nov 17];24(Suppl 1):A4–A4. Available from: https://ebm.bmj.com/content/24/Suppl_1/A4.2
10. Parkes M. Show your working: Is the way we write our papers fit for purpose? [Internet]. EBMLive. 2019 [cited 2022 Nov 17]. Available from: <https://ebmlive.org/show-your-working-is-the-way-we-write-our-papers-fit-for-purpose/>
11. Haase CB, Brodersen J, Bulow J. 8 The lack of ontological awareness in evidence-based medicine allows overdiagnosis. BMJ Evidence-Based Med [Internet]. 2019 Jul 1 [cited 2022 Nov 17];24(Suppl 1):A5–A5. Available from: https://ebm.bmj.com/content/24/Suppl_1/A5.1
12. Haase CB. The evidence of what? [Internet]. EBMLive. 2019 [cited 2022 Nov 17]. Available from: <https://ebmlive.org/the-evidence-of-what/>
13. Haase CB. Trustworthy evidence or paid lip service? [Internet]. EBMLive. 2019 [cited 2022 Nov 17]. Available from: <https://ebmlive.org/trustworthy-evidence-or-paid-lip-service/>
14. Haase CB. Shifting to ‘disagree to disagree’ using EBM [Internet]. EBMLive. 2019 [cited 2022 Nov 17]. Available from: <https://ebmlive.org/shifting-to-disagree-to-disagree-using-ebm/>

-
15. Rombey T, Hoffmann F, Pieper D, Allers K. 4 More systematic reviews are being registered in PROSPERO each year, but records are seldom up-to-date. *BMJ Evidence-Based Med* [Internet]. 2019 Jul 1 [cited 2022 Nov 17];24(Suppl 1):A2–3. Available from: https://ebm.bmj.com/content/24/Suppl_1/A2.2
 16. Rombey T. Systematic review protocols and registration: Why? How? What (needs improving)? [Internet]. *EBMLive*. 2019 [cited 2022 Nov 17]. Available from: <https://ebmlive.org/sr-protocols-and-registration-why-how-what-needs-improving/>
 17. Williams L. 1 If you can't beat 'em, join 'em: combating poor scientific practice with a quantitative, open-access research metric. *BMJ Evidence-Based Med* [Internet]. 2019 Jul 1 [cited 2022 Nov 17];24(Suppl 1):A1–A1. Available from: https://ebm.bmj.com/content/24/Suppl_1/A1.1
 18. Williams L. 'First, do no harm': the promise of new scientific metrics [Internet]. *EBMLive*. 2019 [cited 2022 Nov 17]. Available from: <https://ebmlive.org/first-do-no-harm/>
 19. Dagens A. 5 Predator publishing or fake science? A case series of 75 unsolicited emails received from 'predator journals.' *BMJ Evidence-Based Med* [Internet]. 2019 Jul 1 [cited 2022 Nov 17];24(Suppl 1):A3–4. Available from: https://ebm.bmj.com/content/24/Suppl_1/A3
 20. Dagens A. Predatory publishing or Fake Science? [Internet]. *EBMLive*. 2019 [cited 2022 Nov 17]. Available from: <https://ebmlive.org/predatory-publishing-or-fake-science/>
 21. Kahan B, Cro S, Forbes G, Andrew Johnson N, Parkes M. 6 Unexplained discrepancies between planned and conducted statistical analyses in randomised trials. *BMJ Evidence-Based Med* [Internet]. 2019 Jul 1 [cited 2022 Nov 17];24(Suppl 1):A4–A4. Available from: https://ebm.bmj.com/content/24/Suppl_1/A4.1
 22. Kahan B. A proposed framework for the pre-specification of statistical analysis methods in clinical trials (Pre-SPEC) - *EBMLive* [Internet]. *EBMLive*. 2019 [cited 2022 Nov 17]. Available from: <https://ebmlive.org/a-proposed-framework-for-the-pre-specification-of-statistical-analysis-methods-in-clinical-trials-pre-spec/>
 23. Bradley S. 2 Time for a real manifesto. *BMJ Evidence-Based Med* [Internet]. 2019 Jul 1 [cited 2022 Nov 17];24(Suppl 1):A1–2. Available from: https://ebm.bmj.com/content/24/Suppl_1/A1.2
 24. Bradley S. Research without journals? [Internet]. *EBMLive*. 2019 [cited 2022 Nov 17]. Available from: <https://ebmlive.org/research-without-journals/>
 25. Gill PJ, Ali SM, Elsobky Y, Okechukwu RC, Ribeiro TB, Soares Dos Santos AC, et al. Building capacity in evidence-based medicine in low-income and middle-income countries: Problems and potential solutions. *BMJ Evidence-Based Medicine*. BMJ Publishing Group; 2019.
-