Introduction
Clinical research traditionally takes place within universities or public teaching hospitals where facilities and resources such as libraries, laboratories, equipment and staffing are available to support the research conduct.

In contrast, the private clinicians especially the primary care physicians in Malaysia do not have any research facility or resource to aid the conduct of research. Often, clinical questions encountered in consultation are answered by searching in the internet for the available evidence. However, most studies are performed in developed countries and therefore, the recommendations may not be applicable to the local settings. This is especially so in primary care practice where the evidence from our region is lacking. There is hence, an urgent need for research to be done in primary care settings, especially so in the private sector settings where a great number of doctors practise.

Getting The Help of Experts
Although most doctors recognize the importance of conducting research, we are often discouraged from doing so because of lack of research skill, funds or research team.

So, how can one conduct research in the private practice then? One way is to collaborate with colleagues and friends with a similar interest. The Malaysian Primary Care Research Group (MPCRG) under the auspices of the Academy of Family Physicians of Malaysia (AFPM) is one such group. This group comprises like-minded doctors with a common interest in primary care research. The members are primary care providers (including doctors and allied health care providers from the private general practice), Ministry of Health (MOH) and both private and public medical universities. The group members also vary in their research skills and expertise - from novice to experts. Nevertheless, each member has one aim in mind, and that is to enjoy the process of research and to cultivate an evidence-based practice. The team has collaborated with institutions from the MOH such as the Institute of Health Systems Research as well as public and private medical universities in Malaysia.

Another way to conduct research for private doctors is to participate in a company-sponsored clinical research or trial that commonly involves testing new medical devices, or efficacy of new medications. The advantage of participating in a trial is that one gets an opportunity to begin research while in private practice, and there is no worry about the funding.

The disadvantage is one will not be able to go through the whole research process as the design, conception of the study is often pre-determined and the analysis will also be done by the sponsors.

Do I Have The Time To Take Part In Research?
The general misconception of participation in a research project is that research takes up a lot of time. However, research is best done with a team working together where the burden is shared. Research meetings could be scheduled to suit all team members and the use of Internet, emails, Facebook and forums has facilitated discussions and allowed researchers to discuss various issues at their own time without the need to physically get together.

It does not require much effort for one to learn to balance professional and personal commitments to allow research to be done. The essence is the commitment to conduct research. Once you are committed, you will be able to allocate time to engage in research and