Integrating Discovery and Care
PKLI & RC International Symposium 2026
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Special Messages

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The Vision of PKLI&RC in Advancing Medical Knowledge and Research

Saeed Akhtar

It is matter of great honor and pride for me to share the vision of PKLI&RC for this special supplement of PKLI-JHS dedicated to our first international scientific symposium. This first very successful international scientific symposium attended by more than 3000 professionals and highly accomplished national and international faculty really represented the true academic and research spirit of PKLI&RC. There were two fundamental themes behind the vision of creation of PKLI&RC. Firstly, to create a center of excellence in Kidney and Liver related ailments that will focus on prevention, best clinical care, highest standards of medical education at undergraduate and postgraduate level and cutting-edge research, both basic and clinical. Secondly, a sick person, irrespective of race, religion, color, creed and financial status should never be denied treatment. In a short span of 8 years, we have accomplished both the targets, which now need to be refined and excel further. PKLI&RC Lahore, a 480 beds facility, is the first public sector health care institution, not only in Pakistan but entire southeast Asia which is accredited by the Joint Commission International (JCI), USA. Supported by the Government of Punjab funding, endowment funds and public fund-raising, 80% of our patients are fully (50%) or partly subsidized (30%), getting the same high-quality treatment as our 20% paying patients. We have established 18 outreach filter clinics across the whole province, connected to main PKLI&RC through telemedicine and supervised by board certified specialists, that perform Hepatitis B and C screening and treatment to reduce End stage Liver Disease (ESLD) as well as early screening and treatment for Diabetes, Hypertension, hematuria and protienuia to reduced End Stage renal Disease (ESRD) and early bladder cancer detection. In addition, these clinics offer initial evaluation and workups near home, for financial screening, kidney and liver transplantation, complex HPB and urological oncology surgeries on a hub and spoke model, through an EMR based referral system including post op follow-up. On the clinical side, PKLI&RC has performed more than 1200 kidney transplants, 1000 liver transplants, 14000 urological surgeries, 17000 dialysis, 10,000 IR procedures, 8000 complex GI procedures with excellent outcomes. All these numbers are growing exponentially now with a very steep upwards trajectory, as we have increased the bed capacity and faculty pool in last 3 years. PKLI&RC currently performs more than 500 transplants a year. With addition of 200 inpatient beds in 2026 as PKLI Rawalpindi campus, the scope of clinical services will be enhanced further.

Education and research had been the highest priorities of PKLI&RC, and this symposium reflects the importance and the emphasis that PKLI&RC board, management and faculty stresses on quality of education and research. At undergraduate level, our school of nursing and allied health was started a year ago. Nursing school also offers post BSN specialized training and PKLI University is being planned and processed through bureaucratic paperwork. Our postgraduate educational activities include residency and fellowship programs in 14 disciplines including transplant surgery, nephrology and hepatology, GI, Urology, Anesthesia and critical care etc., training more than 100 residents and fellows. Our Electronic

Affiliation: Founder and Chairman BOG, Pakistan Kidney and Liver Institute & Research Center, Lahore, Pakistan
Email: saeed.akhtar@pkli.org.pk
Corresponding Author: Prof. Dr. Saeed Akhtar

Medical record (EMR) system captures data for high quality clinical care, follow-ups and research. Our structured training programs follow international standards and are geared towards producing competent, compassionate, ethical and responsible physicians for tomorrow so our reliance on foreign trained physicians is reduced. PKLI has established a research department with basic scientists and clinical researchers with PhD background. It is our vision that the culture of research should be inculcated in the minds of all faculty, residents and fellows. On the basic science side, we have recruited best people from across the globe, focusing on stem cell research, potential organs regeneration, genomics, proteomics, tranplantomics and next generation gene sequencing. Board has allocated 1 billion Rupees for biobank and basic research. Under the supervision of IRB, following strict ethical principles, Clinical research in all specialties is strongly encouraged and clinical trial unit (CTU) has been established, recruiting patients for various national and international trials. Both, Biobank and CTU are expected to bring in significant revenue in future years to make research a viable option for PKLI&RC

PKLI&RC has laid very strong foundations for prevention, clinical care, education and research in kidney and liver related illnesses and transplantation with very steep upward trajectory in 8 years. This is the first step in a long journey towards creating an internationally renowned center of excellence in the years to come. The best part is the free treatment for anyone who cannot afford it.

Challenges of the First PKLI&RC International Symposium 2026

Usman Aujla

The successful execution of the First PKLI International Symposium represents a significant milestone in the academic journey of PKLI&RC. Conceived as a platform for global scientific discourse, the symposium convened leading clinicians and researchers from around the world to deliberate on advancements in medical sciences. Beyond its academic objectives, it strategically highlighted PKLI's clinical strengths, research capacity and academic leadership, while fostering constructive pathways for international engagement.

While the symposium effectively achieved its primary goals, attracting participation from a diverse and distinguished cohort of international faculty and healthcare professionals, its execution involved navigating a complex landscape of operational, administrative, and strategic challenges. Organizing an international event of this magnitude for the first time required extensive coordination and seamless cross-departmental collaboration.

A key challenge laid in the inherently multidisciplinary nature of the scientific program. The symposium required the integration of diverse specialties, including liver and kidney transplantation, gastroenterology, hepatology, nephrology, interventional radiology and allied fields, into a cohesive and impactful agenda. Aligning international keynote speakers with local faculty contributions, while ensuring a balanced and relevant scientific discourse, demanded sustained and meticulous academic planning.

Administrative and logistical constraints added another layer of complexity within a public sector organization, impacting operational execution, including the prioritization of strategic partnerships and procurement processes.

Affiliation: Chair, Organizing Committee
Director Strategic Planning & Chairman Gastroenterology and Hepatology, Pakistan Kidney and Liver Institute & Research Center, Lahore, Pakistan
Email: **usman.aujla @pkli.org.pk**

Financial limitations posed an additional significant challenge within a public sector institution. Budgetary constraints restricted operational flexibility and increased reliance on external professional collaborations. However, the rapid development of strategic alliances with industrial partners proved to be a remarkable strength within a constrained timeframe. This required careful negotiation to secure essential support and funding while maintaining the symposium's academic integrity and independence.

Institutional infrastructure limitations, including IT networks, digital systems and audio-visual capabilities, further necessitated strong collaboration with external partners. These challenges also emphasize the importance of strategic investment in institutional capacity to support future innovations and large-scale academic initiatives.

Strategic communication among key stakeholders including the hospital, industry partners, pharmaceutical sector and transportation services required a skilled, well-coordinated and adequately equipped workforce to ensure seamless execution. This underscores the need for further planning, capacity building and resource development. Despite these challenges, the institution successfully demonstrated a culture of collaboration and professionalism, while thoughtfully integrating elements of Pakistan’s renowned hospitality and rich cultural heritage. This not only enhanced the overall experience but also projected a positive image of the country to the international medical community.

In summation, despite considerable regulatory, financial, logistical and planning challenges, the PKLI International Symposium 2026 was executed in an unprecedented manner, setting a new benchmark for such events in the country.

A unifying strength of the symposium was the collective effort to sustain a shared vision across diverse stakeholders, including clinical and non-

clinical disciplines. The Scientific and Organizing Committees, along with management teams, exemplified the institutional spirit where contributions from top to bottom were marked by dedication and enthusiasm. This collective commitment played a pivotal role in bridging gaps, aligning efforts and successfully delivering the event. This dedication ultimately transformed an ambitious vision into tangible success.

The symposium not only facilitated meaningful academic exchange and strengthened international collaborations but also provided invaluable institutional learning. It stands as a strong testament that, through strategic foresight and sustained commitment, PKLI can overcome challenges and continue to expand its presence within the global medical community, setting a robust precedent for future endeavors.

Challenges and Opportunities in Academic and Clinical Integration

Nadeem Bin Nusrat

The integration of academic research with clinical practice is a cornerstone of modern healthcare advancement. Academic medicine is driven by discovery, innovation, and the generation of new knowledge, while clinical practice focuses on delivering safe, effective, and patient-centered care. When these two domains function together, research findings inform patient management, and clinical experience helps generate new research questions. However, achieving meaningful integration between academic and clinical spheres presents both challenges and opportunities for healthcare institutions.

One of the primary challenges in academic–clinical integration is balancing the demands of patient care with the responsibilities of teaching and research. Clinicians in quaternary care centers often manage heavy patient loads, leaving limited time for academic activities such as conducting research, mentoring trainees, and publishing scholarly work. This imbalance can result in strong clinical service but reduced academic productivity. Bridging this gap requires institutional frameworks that provide protected academic time, promote collaborative research, and recognize academic contributions alongside clinical service.

Another key challenge is aligning institutional priorities and resources to support academic development. High-quality research requires funding, infrastructure, reliable data systems, and trained personnel. Many healthcare institutions, particularly in developing regions, face financial and logistical constraints that limit sustained Research activity. Establishing effective academic programs therefore require investment in research support systems such as biostatistical expertise, research ethics oversight, clinical trial infrastructure, and digital health records that enable efficient data collection and analysis.

Despite these challenges, the opportunities created by academic–clinical integration are substantial. Institutions that combine patient care with research activities have access to diverse patient populations and real-time clinical data. This setting allows clinicians and researchers to identify clinically relevant questions and translate findings into improved medical practice. Translational research emerging from such environments accelerates the adoption of innovative diagnostic tools, therapeutic strategies, and evidence-based clinical protocols, ultimately improving patient outcomes.

Integrated academic environments also play a crucial role in training the next generation of healthcare professionals. Medical students, residents, and fellows benefit greatly when they train in institutions where research and clinical care coexist seamlessly. Such exposure promotes critical thinking, strengthens evidence-based decision-making, and cultivates a culture of inquiry.

Furthermore, interdisciplinary collaboration and advances in digital health technologies are strengthening academic–clinical integration. Modern healthcare increasingly relies on collaboration among clinicians, researchers, and scientists from multiple disciplines to address complex clinical challenges. At the same time, electronic health records, clinical registries, and advanced data analytics enable researchers to analyze large datasets and generate insights that guide clinical decision-making, ultimately

Affiliation: Chair Scientific Committee, HOD & Consultant Department of Urology. Pakistan Kidney and Liver Institute & Research Center, Lahore, Pakistan
Email: nadeem.nusrat@pkli.org.pk
Corresponding Author: Dr. Nadeem Bin Nusrat

supporting more effective and personalized patient care.

For institutions such as the Pakistan Kidney and Liver Institute & Research Center (PKLI&RC), the integration of academic excellence with high-quality clinical care is both a responsibility and an opportunity. As a center committed to patient care, education, and research, PKLI&RC provides a platform where scientific discovery can translate directly into improved patient outcomes. By fostering a culture that values collaboration, innovation, and continuous learning, such institutions can strengthen their role as leaders in academic medicine.

In conclusion, integrating academic research with clinical practice is essential for the continued progress of healthcare systems. Although challenges related to workload, resources, and institutional priorities remain significant, the potential benefits advances in medical knowledge, improved patient care, and stronger medical education far outweigh these obstacles. Through strategic investment, collaboration, and a commitment to academic inquiry, healthcare institutions can successfully bridge the gap between discovery and care, ensuring that scientific progress continues to benefit patients and society.

Not Just another Medical Symposium: A Platform for Innovation and Collaboration

Irfan Ahmed

PKLI & RC International Symposium 2026 proved to be much more than a routine academic event. It emerged as a vibrant and interactive platform for collaboration, collective advancement of healthcare innovation and technology. It brought together clinicians, researchers, and eminent scholars and leaders from across the world with a shared commitment to improve global patient care.

The symposium was conceived with a clear vision to advance care through discovery. We aimed to start creating an echosystem where dialogue exists between clinicians and scientists, and ongoing scientific work can translate into improved patient care. Rather than focusing on traditional lecture-based knowledge transfer, the symposium started with multi-speciality pre-conference workshops encouraging cross-speciality interactions, critical discussions, and the exploration of emerging technologies shaping the future of healtcare provision in Pakistan.

Over the course of the symposium activities that lasted a week, participants engaged in a rich exchange of ideas spanning clinical practice, translational research, surgical innovation, and healthcare systems improvements. International faculty and local leaders shared their experiences, discussed complex clinical scenarios, and highlighted evolving standards of care. The discussions reflected the dynamic nature of modern healthcare, where collaboration across disciplines and institutions is increasingly essential to address complex healthcare challenges in global context.

Affiliation: Co-Chair Scientific Committee, Consultant Hepatobiliary Surgeon & Director Research
Department of Research, Pakistan Kidney and Liver Institute & Research Center, Lahore, Pakistan
Email: irfan.ahmed@pkli.org.pk
Corresponding Author: Prof. Irfan Ahmed

One of the defining features of the symposium was its strong emphasis on care through discovery that highlighted importance of innovation in modern medicine. Advances in minimally invasive and robotic surgery, digital health and precision medicine are rapidly transforming how we should diagnose and treat diseases in our local context using our existing resources. This symposium provided a forum where these developments could be critically evaluated and contextualized for regional healthcare systems leading to change and improvement. By fostering dialogue between clinicians, scientists, and technology experts, the meeting highlighted how innovation should be responsibly integrated into clinical practice to improve patient outcomes in local healthcare setting where resources remain limited.

Equally important during the whole event was the spirit of collaboration between clinicians and scientists. Healthcare today is no longer confined within institutional or national boundaries. The PKLI&RC symposium demonstrated the power of international partnerships in driving healthcare progression in LMIC countries. Faculty and participants from diverse healthcare systems shared perspectives, identified common challenges, and explored opportunities for joint research and training initiatives. Such collaborations are essential for building resilient healthcare systems and accelerating the translation of scientific discovery into clinical benefit.

Another key objective of the symposium was to nurture our future generation of clinicians and researchers. Young doctors, trainees, and students were actively involved through oral and poster presentations, case discussions, and direct engagement with senior faculty. Their enthusiasm were a reminder that the future of medicine depends on fostering a culture of

curiosity, inquiry, mentorship, and continuous learning.

The publication of this supplementary issue of the PKLI Journal also represents an important extension of the symposium's impact. This supplement ensures that the knowledge discussed and shared by our local researchers reaches a wider audience to those who were unable to attend in person.

Ultimately, the success of the PKLI & RC International Symposium 2025 reflects the dedication of individuals and collective team efforts. From the scientific, organizing committees and senior faculty support, to the trainees, collaborative researchers, and all healthcare professionals who participated, the symposium was a collective achievement. It demonstrates what can be accomplished when institutions commit to creating spaces where ideas can be challenged, partnerships can be formed, and innovation can flourish.

As healthcare continues to evolve, forums such as this symposium will remain essential. They remind us that progress in medicine is rarely achieved in isolation. Instead, it emerges from dialogue, collaboration, and a shared determination to advance the science and art of healing.

The PKLI International Symposium 2025 was a platform for innovation, collaboration, and will help shape future direction in healthcare in Pakistan.