

RESEARCH PAPER

Publication rate of studies presented at veterinary anaesthesia specialty meetings during the years 2003–2008

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Abstract

Objective To assess publication rates, factors predicting publication, and discrepancies between conference abstracts and subsequent full-text publications of abstracts from the veterinary meetings of the American College of Veterinary Anesthesiologists and the Association of Veterinary Anaesthetists from 2003 to 2008.

Study design Retrospective cohort study.

Methods A total of 607 abstracts were identified and a database search (Scopus, PubMed, CAB) was conducted to identify matching publications. Authors of nonmatching abstracts were contacted to participate in a confidential online survey. Risk ratios were used to assess factors predicting publication and these were tested for significance ($p < 0.05$) using Fisher's exact test.

Results The overall publication rate was 63.3% and the mean (\pm SD) time to publication was 25 ± 19 months. Factors significantly associated with subsequent full publication (i.e. publication of a full manuscript in a peer-reviewed journal) were continent of origin (North America), study design (experimental studies), specialty (analgesia) and the presence of a source of funding. The principal reasons why studies remained unpublished were lack of time and responsibility lying with co-authors. Minor changes compared with the original abstract were found in 71.6% of all publications. Major

changes were noted in 34.6% and the outcome of the study changed in 7.6%.

Conclusions and clinical relevance These data suggest that some of the abstracts reported preliminary findings. Therefore, caution is warranted when quoting abstracts as references in scientific publications. To date, major veterinary journals have not issued recommendations in their author guidelines addressing the use of abstracts as a reference. The authors propose the inclusion of such a statement in author guidelines.

Keywords anaesthesia, discrepancies, predicting factors, publication, veterinary.

Introduction

It is common scientific practice to present results of ongoing medical research at specialised conferences in the format of oral communications or as poster presentations. The information presented at such conferences is typically made available in written format to the scientific community as abstracts in printed proceedings of the conference or via publication in scientific journals.

There seems to be a widespread expectation that scientific information published as an abstract in proceedings will be followed by subsequent full publication of the study in a scientific journal (Dahllöf et al. 2008). However, a considerable number of abstracts do not result in full publications. An analysis of abstracts presented at meetings of

different subspecialties of both human (Scherer et al. 2007) and veterinary medicine show publication rates of 5.6–73%. There is a substantial delay exists between presentation of a study at a conference and its full publication. Reported mean (\pm SD) times to publication range from 8.7 ± 4.2 to 24.3 ± 21 months (Bagheri et al. 2005; Dyson & Sparling 2006; Autorino et al. 2007; Brace et al. 2010; Snedeker et al. 2010b; Smith et al. 2011).

Several factors can influence the subsequent publication of conference abstracts. Dickersin & Min (1993) found that funded studies and those with significant findings were more likely to result in a full publication, whereas Castillo et al. (2002) found a significant association between the study design and subsequent publication. They showed that randomized controlled trials were more likely to be published than observational studies. In addition, there are discrepancies between information that appears in conference abstracts and that in the subsequent full-text publications. Major changes between conference abstract and full publications have been found in 39–77% of abstracts (Rosmarakis et al. 2005; Smith et al. 2011).

Only one study could be identified that reports the publication rate of abstracts for the specialty of veterinary anaesthesia (Dyson & Sparling 2006). This study covered abstracts of the American College of Veterinary Anesthesiologists (ACVA) meetings during the period 1990–1999. In this study, which reported a publication rate of 73%, major differences between abstract and full publication were found in 7% of the analysed abstracts, with half of these resulting in a different conclusion.

The objective of the present study was to determine the publication rate, the mean time to publication and the factors predicting publication for abstracts presented at veterinary anaesthesia specialty meetings and published in the meeting proceedings and peer-reviewed journals. Abstracts from meetings of the ACVA and the Association of Veterinary Anaesthetists (AVA) during the years 2003–2008 were analysed. An online survey among the authors of the unpublished studies was used to identify the main reasons for failure to publish. Furthermore, differences between the abstracts and the subsequent full publication were identified and their influence on the reported study outcome determined.

Considering the current literature on this subject, we hypothesized that approximately 50% of the abstracts would make it to full publication and be

published within 2 years (Scherer et al. 2007). Furthermore, we expected that randomized controlled trials, studies with positive findings and those reporting a source of funding would be more likely to be published.

Materials and methods

The abstracts of studies presented at veterinary anaesthesia specialty meetings were obtained either from printed copies of conference proceedings or from abstract collections published in the journal *Veterinary Anaesthesia and Analgesia* (VAA). Specifically, meetings included for the purpose of this study were the World Congresses of Veterinary Anaesthesiology (2003 and 2006), the spring and autumn meetings held by the AVA (2004–2008), and the annual meetings of the ACVA (2004–2008).

The following data were extracted from each abstract: title, initials and last names of all authors, number and order of authors, month and year of presentation (i.e. month and year, when the respective conference was held), country of authors' affiliation, study type, outcome, funding, specialty, species studied and abstract length in words. If the authors originated from more than one country, the country of the first author was recorded. The abstracts were grouped by continent to simplify analysis.

The study type was classified as experimental or observational study (Hartling et al. 2010), as shown in Table 1. The outcome was classified as positive, neutral or negative according to Hasenboehler et al. (2007) (see Table 2).

Studies were defined as funded if the provision of medications and/or supplies by a private company, the awarding of a scholarship or grant to one or more authors, and/or direct funding from a private company or an institution were reported in the abstract. In the proceedings from the ACVA meet-

Table 1 Classification of study type of studies presented as abstracts, as described by Hartling et al. (2010)

Experimental study	Observational study
Randomized controlled trial	Cohort study
Nonrandomized controlled trial	Case-control study
Uncontrolled trial	Cross-sectional study
	Case series
	Case report

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