



A critical analysis of publication rates of national oncology meeting abstracts in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: In this study our aim is to analyze the publication rates of abstracts, which were presented between 2006 and 2011 years in biennial National Cancer Meeting of Turkey (NCM) and Turkish Medical Oncology Society Meeting (TMOSM) and to determine the timely change of publication rates and to predict the quality of the abstracts.

Methods: All abstracts, which are either accepted as podium or poster presentations in NCM and TMOM between 2006 and 2011, are extracted. Subsequent publication rate of those abstracts were defined by searching PubMed and Turkish Medical Index.

Results: Between 2006 and 2011, overall 2451 abstracts were presented in annual NC and TMOS meetings. Of these 2451 abstracts, 286 of them (11.7%) were published in consecutive years. Median publication interval was 11 months. While 28 of 286 (9.8%) abstracts were published in national journals, 258 of them (90.2%) were published in international journals. 97 of a total of 424 podium presentations (22.9%) were published. The publication rate was correlated with the type of presentation (OP vs. PP: 22.9% vs. 9.3%, $p < 0.001$). The highest publication rate was for prospective studies (14.4%). Majority of abstracts (53.1%) were published in journals indexed within the science citation index (SCI). Rest of the published abstracts were in index of SCI-expanded.

Conclusions: Non-publication of research abstracts is a problem for 88.3% of abstracts of this study. The data presented in this study should lead abstract authors to criticize themselves and find a way to improve their study quality.

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1. Introduction

Oncology is a field in constant progress. Physicians should always stay updated, and synchronize with new achievements; otherwise it would end up with lower quality of medical care and even decreased survival outcomes of patients.

Oncology meetings are important events for sharing knowledge. In addition, those meetings are important steps in the lifespan of a clinical trial, since they are the first places in which the results of trials are mentioned, published and received acceptance.¹ The abstracts presented in the meetings have an important place in a researcher's academic training, as well.²

It is widely accepted that scientific quality of meetings depends on accepted abstracts as oral and poster presentations.³ Acceptance of abstracts as the earliest scientific evidence is a controversial issue for many years. In order to accept abstracts as scientifically approved material, quality of abstracts should be measured methodologically. One way to measure the quality of abstracts is to look at their publication rates.

The publication rates varies between 31.6% and 74% from various medical specialty meetings.^{1,3–8} In oncology, publication process is even more important than other specialties; because new developments are not easily achieved, translational medicine is hard to complete and every effort should be made to improve medical care to save lives. A previous Cochrane review reported that the publication rates of abstracts presented in oncology meetings were ranged between 35.5% and 81.3%.⁹

In this study our aim is to analyze the publication rates of abstracts, which were presented between 2006 and 2011 years in biennial National Cancer Meeting of Turkey (NCM) and Turkish

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Medical Oncology Society Meeting (TMOSM) and to determine the timely change of publication rates and to predict the quality of the abstracts.

2. Material and methods

2.1. Identifying abstracts

All abstracts, which are either accepted as podium or as poster presentations in NCM and TMOM between 2006 and 2011, are extracted. Current evidence suggests that optimal duration for the studies presented in a meeting to be published is a 2-year period. Based on this assumption, authors concluded that a 5-year period would be reasonable for allowing a presented study to be published. The data collection was completed in December 2016, and a final date of presentation was regarded as the 2011 meeting to allow the final studies to be published in this 5-year period. The window of 5-years to evaluate the abstracts led the study to include presentations between 2006 and 2011. This 5-year period was a consideration of the authors, and was not based on any specific criteria. The abstracts were retrieved from abstract books of related meetings and recorded in a database. In order to eliminate investigator-related biases, all of these abstracts were extracted and analyzed by two independent researchers. In total, 2461 abstracts were investigated, and those abstracts were further subclassified according to their primary researcher type and the main topic; as well as type of presentation, trial design. Also the abstracts were subgrouped for being as multicentric or multidisciplinary.

2.2. Searching for subsequent peer-reviewed journal publications

The primary study outcome was time to publication in peer-reviewed journals. Subsequent publication rate of those abstracts were defined by searching PubMed and Turkish Medical Index. The name of corresponding author, the title of abstract, keywords and if necessary a combination of these terms were searched. If the search was not successful than co-authors were searched by the same method. If no article could be located by two searches than the abstract was accepted as unpublished.

The search was complete once we established as a manuscript. For an abstract to be classified as published, the corresponding article should match the name of abstract or should report the same intervention and have at least one of author in common. The

discrepancies between two reviewers were discussed and resolved by consensus.

After the verification of an abstract as a peer-reviewed article, the duration between the presentation at meeting and publication was noted. The name, field (medical oncology, etc.), origin (national or international) and impact factor of journals were documented.

2.3. Statistical analysis

In the descriptive analyses of study, categorical data were presented as frequencies and percentages. Group comparisons were conducted with chi-square test for categorical data and Mann Whitney *U* test for numerical data. A type-1 error level of 5% was used in analyses. The statistical analyses were performed by using PASW v18.0 software (IBM Inc, USA).

3. Results

Between 2006 and 2011, overall 2451 abstracts were presented in biennial NC and TMOS meetings. Of these 2451 abstracts, 286 of them (11.7%) were published in consecutive years. Median publication interval was 11 months. Sixty-sixth percent of all abstracts were published within 1 year. Overall in 2 years period 85% of abstracts were published. The change in publication rates within years was shown in Fig. 1. There was a significant drop in publication rate of abstracts (19.2% in 2006 and 7.1% in 2011; $p < 0,001$). We found that 66% of abstracts were published in 1 year and 85% published in 2 years.

In general, most of the published articles were from abstracts of adult oncology group (84%). Only 10% of pediatric group and 5% of nursing group abstracts were published. While 28 of 286 (9.8%) abstracts were published in national journals, 258 of them (90.2%) were published in international journals.

The main characteristics of published and unpublished abstracts were outlined in Table-1.

There was no statistically significant difference in the number of authors when published and unpublished works were compared (a median of 6.7 vs. 6.3; $p = 0,077$). And there was no statistically significant difference in abstracts according to the enrolled patient numbers ($p = 0.06$).

In general, the most popular topic was breast cancer (430 abstract-%20 publication rate), with lung cancer following it (199-7%). The other common abstract topics were head and neck cancers

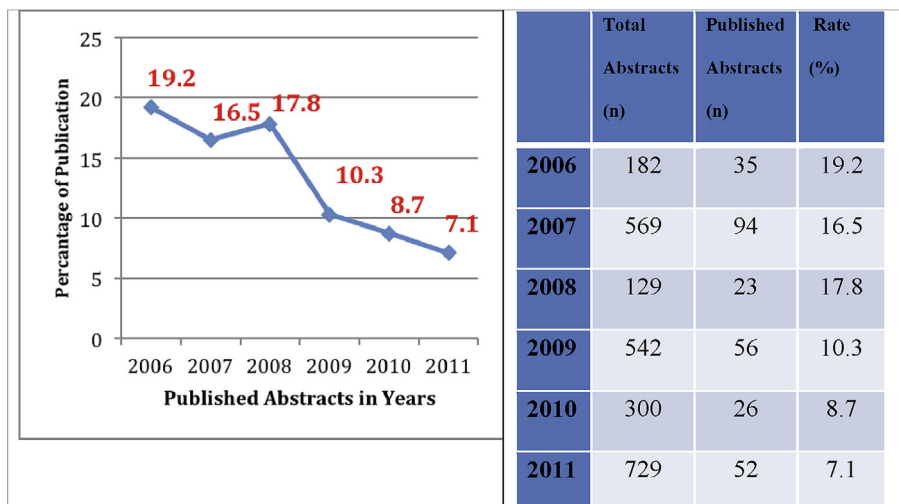


Fig. 1. The change in publication rates within years.

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