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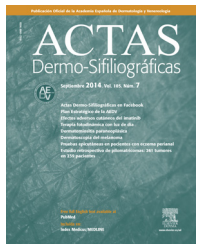

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Identifying Randomized Clinical Trials in Spanish-Language Dermatology Journals☆

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KEYWORDS
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Abstract
Background: The necessary foundation for good clinical practice lies in knowledge derived from clinical research. Evidence from randomized clinical trials (RCTs) is the pillar on which decisions about therapy are based.
Objective: To search exhaustively and rigorously to identify RCTs in dermatology journals published in Spanish.
Methods: We located dermatology journals through the following search engines and indexes: PubMed, LILACS, SciELO, Periódica, Latindex, Índice Médico Español, C-17, IBECS, EMBASE, and IMBIOMED. We also sought information through dermatology associations and dermatologists in countries where Spanish was the usual language of publication, and we searched the Internet (Google). Afterwards we searched the journals electronically and manually to identify RCTs in all available volumes and issues, checking from the year publication started through 2012.
Results: Of 28 journals identified, we included 21 in the search. We found a total of 144 RCTs published since 1969; 78 (54%) were in Latin American journals and 66 (46%) were in Spanish journals. The most frequent disease contexts for RCTs in Spanish journals were psoriasis, mycoses, and acne vulgaris. In Latin American journals, the most frequent disease contexts were common warts, mycoses, acne vulgaris, and skin ulcers on the lower limbs. Manual searches identified more RCTs than electronic searches.

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Conclusions: Manual searches found a larger number of RCTs. Relatively fewer RCTs are published in Spanish and Latin American journals than in English-language journals. Internet facilitated access to full texts published by many journals; however, free open access to these texts is still unavailable and a large number of journal issues are still not posted online.

PALABRAS CLAVE
Ensayo clínico aleatorizado;
Búsqueda manual;
Revistas dermatológicas

Identificación de ensayos clínicos en revistas dermatológicas publicadas en español

Resumen
Introducción: Para asegurar una práctica adecuada se hace necesario incorporar el conocimiento derivado de la investigación clínica, en la que los ensayos clínicos con asignación aleatoria (ECA) son el pilar fundamental para la decisión de una terapia.
Objetivo: Buscar e identificar de manera exhaustiva y rigurosa los ECA publicados en revistas dermatológicas en español.
Métodos: Se detectaron las revistas dermatológicas mediante búsquedas en PubMed, LILACS, SciELO, Periódica; Latindex; Índice Médico Español; el C-17; el IBECS, EMBASE e IMBIOMED; y/o por el contacto con las asociaciones de dermatología/especialistas de cada país y la búsqueda libre por Google. Posteriormente se realizó tanto una búsqueda manual como electrónica de los ECA en los volúmenes y números disponibles. La revisión de cada revista se realizó en cada volumen y número desde su publicación hasta el año 2012.
Resultados: De las 28 revistas encontradas se incluyeron 21. Desde 1969 se identificaron 144 ECA, 54% (78) en las revistas latinoamericanas y 46% (66) en las españolas. Entre las enfermedades estudiadas predomina la psoriasis, las micosis y el acné vulgar entre las revistas españolas, mientras que entre las latinoamericanas prevalecen las verrugas vulgares, las micosis, el acné vulgar y las úlceras de los miembros inferiores. La búsqueda manual identificó más ECA de los detectados por búsqueda electrónica.
Conclusiones: La búsqueda manual permitió una alta detección de ECA. El número de ECA identificados en revistas dermatológicas iberolatinoamericanas es bajo comparado con las revistas publicadas en inglés. Internet facilitó el acceso al texto completo de muchas revistas, pero se carece aún de un acceso libre al texto completo y de un volumen importante de números publicados por esta vía.

Introduction

An individual clinician's experience is an important source of knowledge in dermatology. However, when such knowledge becomes the sole basis for clinical decision-making, therapeutic effects are often overestimated. Compounding this problem is the physician's tendency to rely on knowledge acquired during residency training or to find it difficult to incorporate current evidence into routine practice, especially if new information calls beliefs and previous experience into question.[1–3] Clinical trials follow an experimental design in which a researcher manipulates exposure to 1 or more treatments in order to compare effects.[4,5] The main purpose of this type of study is to assess the efficacy and safety of an intervention that seeks to prevent or cure a health condition or to speed recovery.[4,5]

Given the importance of randomized clinical trials (RCTs), it might be supposed that they would be easily available to both treating physicians and researchers. Problems arise, however, when health care professionals seek to locate and use information from RCTs. Among the difficulties that have been reported are 1) the novelty of the terminology itself, 2) the underuse of descriptors when trials are indexed in databases, and 3) the high percentage of journals that do not post articles online.[6–8] Problems that further interfere with physicians' use of RCTs are lack of time for reading these articles and the lack of access to the publishing journals.[9,10]

To help identify RCTs published in the Spanish language in several medical specialties, the Cochrane Collaboration undertook a project to search for them manually. Searching in databases alone reportedly fails to find a significant number of RCTs in the specialties of ophthalmology, public health, anesthesiology and critical care, and general and internal medicine.[8,11–14] In addition, online MEDLINE searches can fail to return up to 25% of RCTs available, mainly when the authors have not included the search terms *randomized controlled trial* or *controlled clinical trial* in the titles.[15]

We present the results for dermatology journals included in the Cochrane Collaboration's project on hand searching for RCTs in Spanish, as these findings complement the important earlier work of González-Castro et al.[7,16] in identifying trials reported in *Actas Dermo-Sifiliográficas* between 1948 and 2000 and *Medicina Cutánea Ibero-Latino-Americana* between 1970 and 2000.