Acknowledgments in Journals From Emerging Markets

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Figure 1. Emerging Markets by Region

Figure 2. Types of Acknowledgments

Figure 3. Comparison of Acknowledgments

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Abstract

Objective The objective of the research was to examine the use of acknowledgments in publications from emerging markets. Research design and methods: Emerging markets were defined as countries with a clinical trials database accessible to the public, a journal citation index, a medical publication industry, and a medical writing or editing organization. Using PubMed, 100 articles published in emerging markets were identified by the following search terms: “clinical trial,” “randomized,” “in English,” “emerging market,” “journal,” “published,” and “acknowledgments.” The articles were assessed for inclusion and types of the following acknowledgments: funding, statistician, medical writer, editor, reviewer, patients, and colleagues. Results In 90% of the articles surveyed, 54 journals published acknowledgments. Articles from Asia and South America were more likely to include acknowledgments than those from Africa and the Caribbean. Of the 200 articles reviewed (10 per journal), 81 (40.5%) included acknowledgments. Funding was the most common type of acknowledgment (41.5%), followed by statistician (21.5%), and medical writer (14%). Nearly 10% of the articles did not include any type of acknowledgment. The articles were surveyed across 6 regions: Africa, Asia, Europe, Middle East, North America, and South America. Funding was the most common type of acknowledgment, followed by statistician and medical writer. Conclusion The authors recommend that journals from emerging markets consider providing guidelines on acknowledging medical writers, editors, statisticians, and reviewers as a way to improve the publication process.

Introduction

Emerging markets have become important players in the pharmaceutical industry and in medical publications. In recent years, many emerging markets are beginning to emerge as important players in the medical publications industry. These markets have a growing number of medical writers and editors, statisticians, and reviewers who are in high demand from international publishers. The objective of this research was to examine the presence of acknowledgments in publications from emerging markets. The authors surveyed 100 articles published in emerging markets to determine the types of acknowledgments and the percentage of articles that included them.

Methods

Countries classified as emerging markets were investigated with an internet search. Journals were surveyed and found in PubMed that were written in English and full-accessible were identified. In 1 of the journals surveyed, a recent editorial about ICMJE guidelines lists conditions for authorship but does not address acknowledgments or other types of acknowledgments. The authors recommend that journals from emerging markets consider providing guidelines on acknowledging medical writers, editors, statisticians, and reviewers as a way to improve the publication process.

Results

In 90% of the articles surveyed, 54 journals published acknowledgments. Articles from Asia and South America were more likely to include acknowledgments than those from Africa and the Caribbean. Of the 200 articles reviewed (10 per journal), 81 (40.5%) included acknowledgments. Funding was the most common type of acknowledgment (41.5%), followed by statistician (21.5%), and medical writer (14%). Nearly 10% of the articles did not include any type of acknowledgment. The articles were surveyed across 6 regions: Africa, Asia, Europe, Middle East, North America, and South America. Funding was the most common type of acknowledgment, followed by statistician and medical writer. Conclusion The authors recommend that journals from emerging markets consider providing guidelines on acknowledging medical writers, editors, statisticians, and reviewers as a way to improve the publication process.

Discussion

Despite the desire to publish in English, journals originating in emerging markets frequently do not follow ICMJE and GPP2 guidelines regarding acknowledgments. Some journals surveyed published articles without acknowledgments, even when author instructions required acknowledgments. Several factors could explain the inadequate use of acknowledgments: lack of awareness of publication guidelines, limited experience with compliance-driven publication processes, scarcity of publication resources such as medical writers, editors, and statisticians. Funding, the most common type of acknowledgment, was usually from grants, which may have been required with the grant award. The acknowledgment of medical writers and editors was virtually nonexistent. In 1 of the journals surveyed, a recent editorial about ICMJE guidelines lists conditions for authorship but does not address acknowledgments or ghostwriters. Regional differences in the types of acknowledgments may reflect cultural differences: In Africa, the contributions of colleagues, reviewers, and/or patients were cited in 86% of acknowledgments. In Asia, funding was cited in 72% of acknowledgments, which suggests that some authors may have played a reviewer or honorary role in manuscript development. Our survey was limited by the relatively small number of articles reviewed and the limited number of journals available in full text.

Conclusions

Acknowledgments are underscored in journals originating in emerging markets. Journals from emerging markets may not require acknowledgments as a condition for manuscript publication. Acknowledgments of medical writers or editors, statisticians, and reviewers are infrequent: Whether the lack of acknowledgment of medical writers and editors indicates unavailability of these resources or acceptance of ghostwriting is unknown. Education about ICMJE and GPP2 guidelines in general, and use of acknowledgments in particular, is an area of need among authors and journal editors in emerging markets.

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