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Optimizing Scientific Communication Strategy: A Survey of Physician Perceptions on Information Sources

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To understand the relative value, impact, and credibility of various information sources to physicians.
Research design and methods: An online survey was given to physicians who had been treating patients for ≥2 years across 6 specialties (primary care, neurology, urology, ophthalmology, plastic surgery, and dermatology) from the US, Canada, and 5 EU countries. Survey questions addressed the value and impact of different types of information sources and factors that influence their credibility and usefulness. Participating physicians were compensated.
Results: Of the 550 physicians who responded to the survey, 44% had been in practice 11-20 years and 29% treat 50-99 patients per week. Across specialties and regions, peer-reviewed publications were consistently ranked highest for providing credible and useful information for managing patients and informing treatment decisions, while journal supplements, society/conference newsletters, and conference posters ranked lowest. Findings revealed that physicians most frequently use information from CME presentations/publications or medical conference presentations to remain up-to-date in their field and for informing treatment decisions. Physicians (53%) reported that one of the most important criteria for a publication to be considered credible and reliable is being published in a nationally recognized, peer-reviewed journal. Physicians indicated that the best ways for industry to help meet physicians' needs for information are publishing research in peer-reviewed journals and supporting CME programs. The results were consistent across specialty groups.
Conclusions: Peer-reviewed publications appear to hold the highest value to physicians and should be prioritized in scientific communication strategies.

INTRODUCTION

- With an ever increasing stream of new scientific data, it is important that the information be effectively communicated to physicians so that appropriate treatment decisions can be made
- As of April 2015, a total of 188,173 clinical studies were registered on clinicaltrials.gov alone; 16,869 studies have posted results[1]
- Numerous forms of communication are available for sharing scientific information with physicians; however, it is not fully understood how physicians typically obtain new information to stay up-to-date and make treatment decisions, or how credible they believe the information is

OBJECTIVE

- To gather information to enable understanding of the relative value, impact, and credibility of various information sources available to physicians

METHODS

- An online survey was conducted
  - Physicians treating patients ≥2 years
  - Specialties: dermatology, neurology, ophthalmology, plastic surgery, primary care, urology
  - US, Canada, and 5 EU countries
- Survey questions addressed the value and impact of different types of information sources and factors that influence their credibility and usefulness
- Subgroup analyses assessed differences between regions (North America vs. EU) and specialities
- Participating physicians were compensated for their participation

RESULTS

- 550 physicians responded to the survey (**Figure 1**)
  - Primary care physicians (n=110), neurologists (n=110), urologists (n=110), ophthalmologists (n=110), plastic surgeons (n=55), and dermatologists (n=55)
- Survey respondents represented a range of practice types and sizes (**Figure 2**)

Figure 1. Physician Sample Distribution

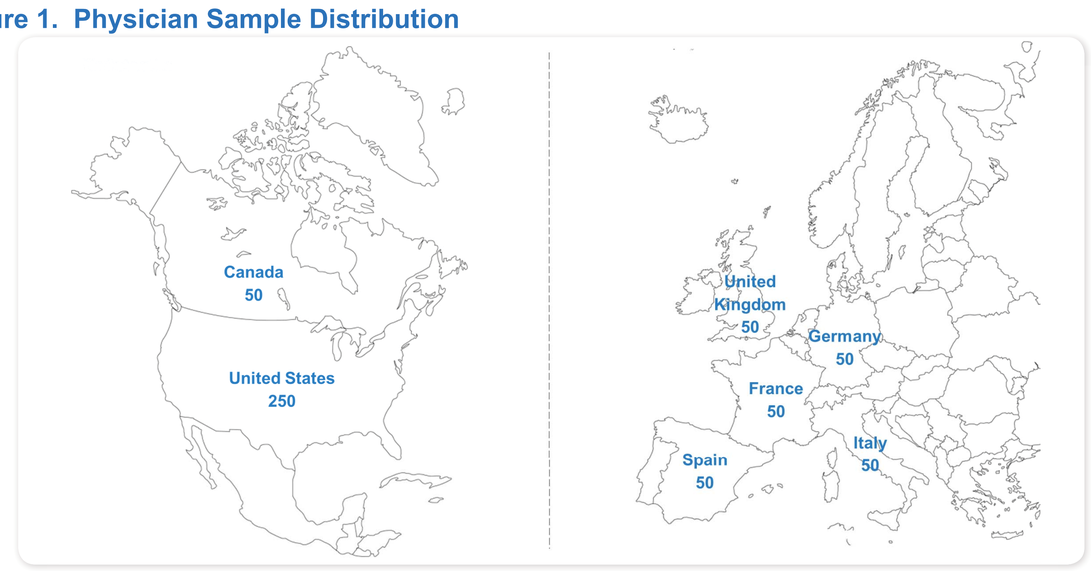
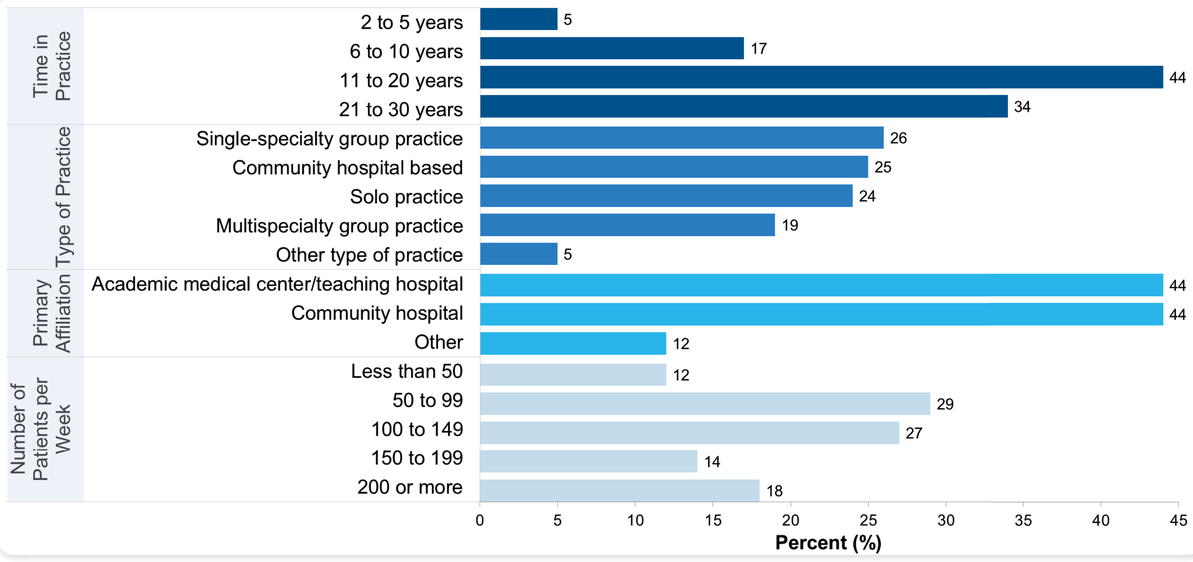


Figure 2. Practice Characteristics



Credibility and Reliability of Information Sources

- Across specialties and regions, physicians consistently ranked peer-reviewed publications highest for providing credible information (**Table 1**) and for help in managing patients
  - Comparative data versus standard-of-care (ie, active comparator) was a highly ranked feature in information sources to be considered reliable and credible

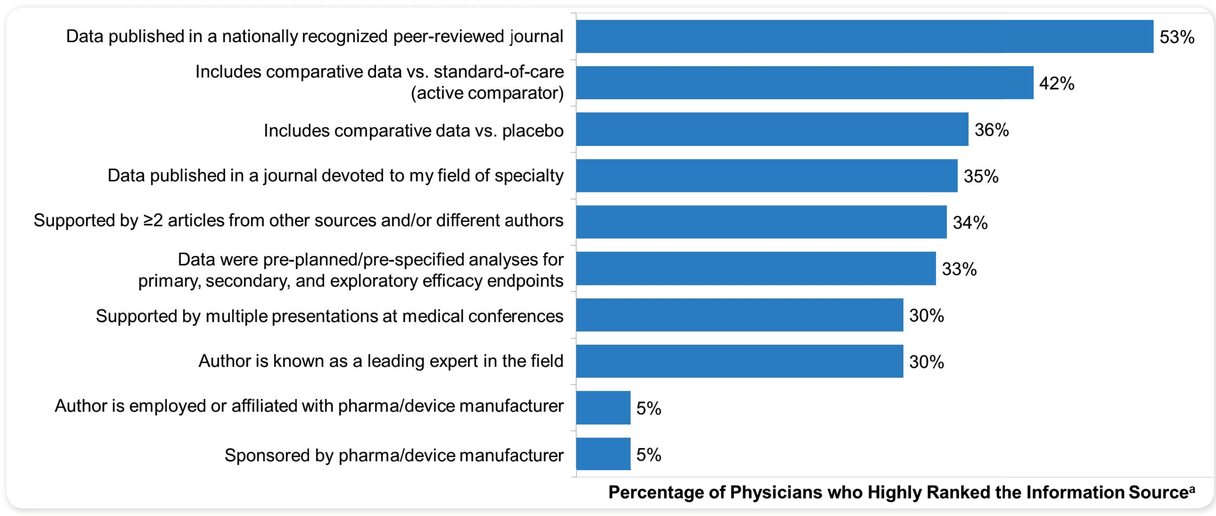
Table 1. *Please rate the credibility of the following sources of information.*

Information Source	Mean rating[a]	Percentage of physicians who highly rated the source[b]
Meta-analysis published in a peer-reviewed journal	5.7	64%
Literature review in a peer-reviewed journal	5.5	58%
Manuscript published in a peer-reviewed journal	5.5	54%
Consensus statement published in a peer-reviewed journal	5.4	55%
CME presentation or publication	4.8	34%
Symposium at a congress or other venue	4.4	27%
Presentation at a medical conference	4.4	25%
Journal supplement	3.5	14%
Article in a society or conference newsletter	3.4	11%
Poster presented at a medical conference	2.9	7%

[a]Relative scale where 1=least credible and 7=most credible
[b]Rating of 6 or 7 on the 7-point rating scale

- Overall, data published in a nationally recognized peer-reviewed journal was ranked as the most important feature for an information source to be considered reliable and credible (**Figure 3**)

Figure 3. *Please rank the following important features for an information source to be considered reliable and credible.*

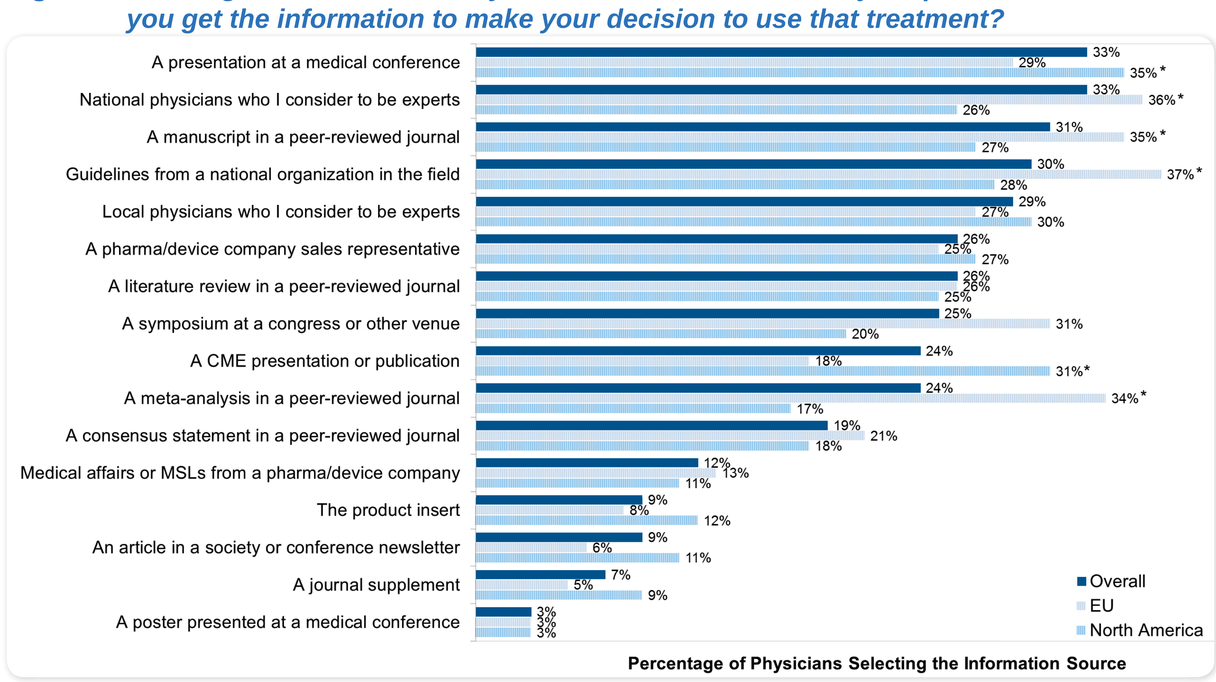


[a]Ranked 1,2, or 3 out of the 10 information sources listed

Impact of Information Sources on Treatment Decisions

- Publications in a peer-reviewed journal (ie, meta-analyses, literature review, consensus statement, manuscript) were ranked highest for their impact on their treatment decisions
- The top 3 sources that guided physicians' most recent decision to use a new treatment were a presentation at a medical conference, a nationally recognized expert physician, or a peer-reviewed manuscript (**Figure 4**)

Figure 4. *Thinking about the last time you used a new treatment in your practice, where did you get the information to make your decision to use that treatment?*



*=significantly higher than other global region

Information Sources Used to Remain Up-to-Date

- In order to remain up-to-date in their field, physicians most frequently rely on CME presentations/publications or medical conference presentations, followed by peer-reviewed publications
  - EU physicians also rely on symposia at a congress or other venue to stay up-to-date
- Journal supplements, society/conference newsletters, and conference posters ranked lowest

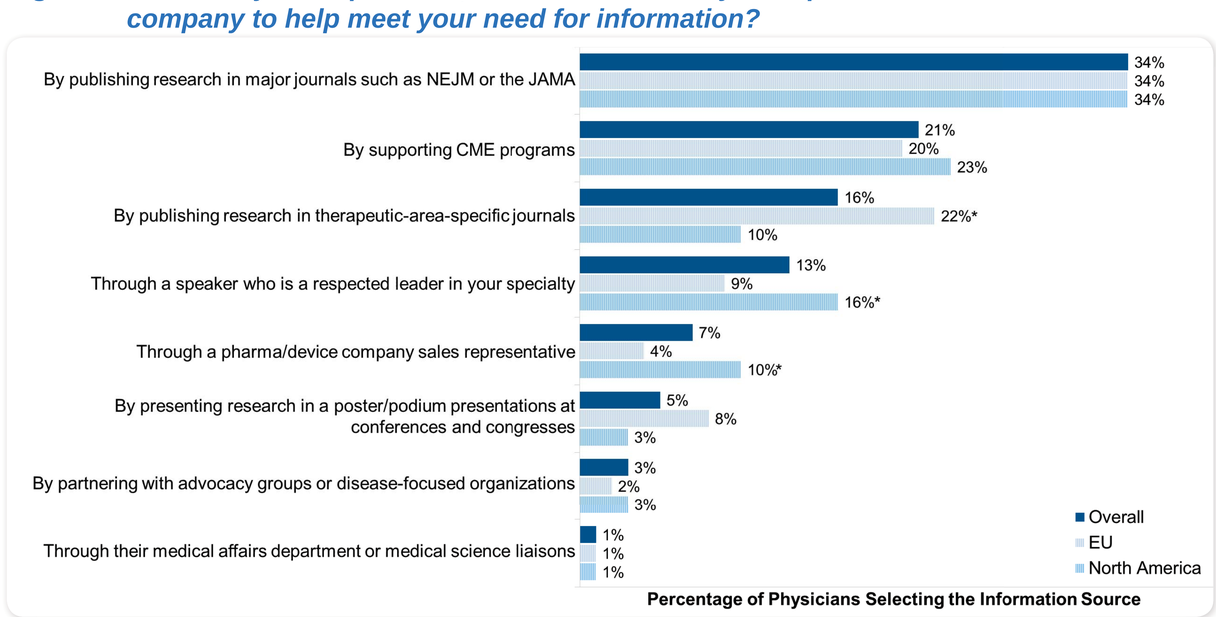
Impact of Clinical Trial Data on Practice

- Physicians across specialties and regions, rated clinical trial findings from pre-specified endpoints and pooled analyses from multiple trials as having the most impact on how they practice medicine
  - Subgroup and post-hoc analyses were rated the lowest

Impact of Manufacturers on Information Sources

- Physicians indicated that the best way for industry to help meet physicians' need for information is by publishing research in top-tier, peer-reviewed general medicine journals (**Figure 5**)

Figure 5. *Based on your experience, what is the best way for a pharmaceutical/device company to help meet your need for information?*



*=significantly higher than other global region

CONCLUSIONS

- Peer-reviewed publications appear to hold the highest value to physicians and should be prioritized in scientific communication strategies
- Presentations at medical conferences should also be targeted as they appear to be an important information source for informing treatment decisions
- Results were consistent across specialty groups; however, some regional differences were observed

REFERENCES

1. Trends, Charts, and Maps. ClinicalTrials.gov. https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/resources/trends. Accessed April 14, 2015.

DISCLOSURES

This study was sponsored by Allergan, Inc. Irvine, CA. The study survey was distributed and data analyzed by MediMedia Research. All authors met the ICMJE authorship criteria. Neither honoraria nor payments were made for authorship.

Financial arrangements of the authors with companies whose products may be related to the present report are listed below, as declared by the authors. All authors are full-time employees of Allergan, Inc.

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Presented at the 11th Annual Meeting of the International Society for Medical Publication Professionals (ISMPP), April 27-29, 2015, Arlington, VA, USA