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, 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 26% treat ≤50 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 way 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; 18,869 studies have posted results

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 specialties
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

Credibility and Reliability of Information Sources

Across specialties and regions, physicians consistently ranked peer-reviewed publications highest for credibility and reliability. Table 1 shows the results.

Comparative data versus standard-of-care (ie, active comparator) was a highly ranked feature in information sources to be considered reliable and credible

CONCLUSIONS

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)

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

Impact of Clinical Trial Data on Practice

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

By publishing research in top-tier, peer-reviewed journals

DISCLOSURES

This study was sponsored by Allergan, Inc. Irvine, CA. The study survey was distributed and data analyzed by MediMedia Research. All authors and the CJME advisory board, neither themselves nor anyone making payments to them are listed as authors. No other payments were made to any of the authors. No additional support was provided to any of the authors by any person or organization, including this organization, to aid in the present research being cited, as the research is self-funded. All authors have no personal, professional, or financial relationships to disclose that might prejudice the objectivity of this research.

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