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Abstract**Objective**

To understand the use of the recently introduced preprint medRxiv database by pharmaceutical companies.

Research design and methods

Data on preprints from 25 June 2019 to 24 September 2020 were extracted from the medRxiv database, using the medrxivr R package. Preprints with at least one author affiliated with a top 50 pharmaceutical company¹ were identified. Research topics, number of revisions, publication status, time to publication and copyright license information were extracted for each preprint.

Results

Of 11,344 preprints, nearly 1% had ≥ 1 author affiliated with a pharmaceutical company. A similar proportion was observed in an analysis of bioRxiv conducted prior to medRxiv launch. Only 0.1% (14/11,344) of preprints had a pharmaceutical company employee listed as first or corresponding author. As a likely consequence of the coronavirus pandemic, the most common topics were “infectious diseases” and “epidemiology” in all (2,909/11,344 and 2,589/11,344, respectively) and pharma-affiliated preprints (27/99 and 15/99, respectively). The majority of preprints had only one unrevised version posted (8,782/11,344 all; 76/99 pharma-affiliated). Overall, 10.5% of all preprints and 8.1% of pharma-affiliated preprints were subsequently published; average time from first preprint registration to journal publication was 102.8 days (median:85, interquartile range [IQR]:45–147) for all preprints, and 110 days (median:92.5, IQR:57.75–151.5) for pharma-affiliated preprints. All pharma-affiliated preprints had a copyright license; the most common license was “CC_BY_NC_ND” for all preprints, including pharma-affiliated preprints.

Conclusions

Only a very small proportion of preprints was affiliated to pharmaceutical companies and even fewer had a pharmaceutical employee listed as first or corresponding author. The proportion of revisions and most commonly selected copyright license were similar across both groups.

Reference

1. Christel M. Pharm Exec's Top 50 Companies 2020. Pharmaceutical Executive 40:6. <https://www.pharmexec.com/view/pharm-execs-top-50-companies-2020> (accessed September 24 2020).

Current trends in pharmaceutical industry-affiliated preprints

Only a small proportion of preprints published on medRxiv had authors affiliated with a pharmaceutical company

