

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Publication of works rated as “top ten” at scientific congresses of Peruvian medical students

Publicación de los trabajos calificados como “top ten” en los congresos científicos de estudiantes de medicina del Perú

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Dear Editor

Every year, the Peruvian Student Medical Scientific Society (SOCIMEP) hosts the National Scientific Congress (NSC) of Medical Students, an event that has brought together students from 40 medical schools in the country since 1987 with the goal of promoting scientific research during undergraduate studies.¹ To that end, each NSC holds a scientific competition that evaluates and rewards the best works in three categories: research works, research projects, and clinical cases.

The assessment of these papers takes place in three stages: a first non-attendance phase called “abstract and documentation,” in which only the abstracts of the papers are received and structurally evaluated; a second non-attendance phase called “*in extenso* and slides,” in which several judges receive full-text papers to review and assess them according to previously established criteria;² and a third attendance phase called “oral presentation,” in which approximately 60% of the previously reviewed papers are selected based on the score they obtained. In this final phase, students present their works to a jury that evaluates their methodological criteria, topic presentation, and answers to their questions.

In the research paper modality, the 10 papers with the highest scores are selected and receive the title of “top ten”, and their authors are summoned again for an oral presentation.² The following is a brief overview of a descriptive study carried out with the aim of determining the publication rate of research papers rated as “top ten” in the NSCs of Peruvian medical students conducted between 2014 and 2018.

Information about the top ten works was obtained from the records published in each NSC’s social networks (supplementary material), and then it was determined whether these works had been published in any scientific journal. Papers were considered as published when they were available in a scientific journal indexed in one of the following databases: Latindex, SciELO, PubMed, Scopus, or Web of Science. The methodology used to establish whether or not research papers had been published is based on the methodology proposed by Mayta-Tristán & Mezones-Holguín in their study.³

Similarly, other variables were included for the analysis of the information, such as number of authors, time elapsed until publication, participation of the advisor in the publication, journal indexing, SCImago quartile in which the journal is ranked, type of access to the article, type of journal, language of publication, and reference to participation in the NSC.

Considering that each NSC has a top ten, 50 papers were classified in these rankings during the 5 years of analysis. For analysis purposes, 9 papers were excluded because they were submitted as a thesis to obtain the degree of physician. Finally, only 19 out of the remaining 41 papers were published, for a publication rate of 46.34%.

The average number of authors per publication was 7 (IQR: 5-7) and the average time from submission to publication was 14 months (IQR: 5-25). Most of the papers were published in Spanish in open-access journals and included the advisor's name. None of the published papers mentioned if they had been previously presented at a NSC (Table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of the papers rated as top ten and published in scientific journals (n=19).

Characteristics		n (%)
Year of submission to the NSC *	2014 (n=8)	2 (25.0)
	2015 (n=9)	5 (55.55)
	2016 (n=8)	3 (37.5)
	2017 (n=9)	6 (66.66)
	2018 (n=7)	3 (42.85)
Number of authors in the NSC		5 (4-7) †
Number of authors in the publication		7 (5-11) †
Time elapsed until publication (months)		14 (5-25) †
Participation of the advisor in the publication	No (n=19)	3 (15.78)
	Yes (n=19)	16 (84.21)
Indexed in Scopus (n=19)		14 (73.68)
Quartile 1 (n=14)		4 (28.57)
Quartile 2 (n=14)		2 (14.28)
Quartile 3 (n=14)		5 (35.71)
Quartile 4 (n=14)		3 (21.42)
Access	Closed (n=19)	4 (21.05)
	Open (n=19)	15 (78.94)
Type of journal	General (n=19)	10 (52.63)
	Specialized (n=19)	9 (47.36)
Language	Spanish (n=19)	12 (63.15)
	English (n=19)	7 (36.84)
Reference to the NSC in the publication (n=19)		0 (0.0)
Publication rate (n=41)		19 (46.34)

NSC: National Scientific Congress

* The total number of papers ranked in the top ten between 2014 and 2018 was 41, but only 19 of them were published.

† Median (interquartile range)

Source: Own elaboration.

Although the publication rate found in the present study (46.34%) was higher than that reported in previous research in the same population,^{4,5} higher figures would be expected considering that these are the best rated research papers in the NSCs and that, for the most part, they include the advisor, a condition that has been described as a factor associated with publication.⁶ As a result, it is necessary to identify the factors that influence the non-publication of such papers, for which qualitative studies could be conducted due to the small number of papers included in the top ten, i.e., the small sample size.

Most of the papers (n=14, 73.68%) were published in journals indexed in Scopus, and nearly half of them were published in journals ranked in quartiles 1 and 2 of the SCImago Journal & Country Rank (n=4, 28.57% and n=2, 14.28%, respectively), confirming their good methodological quality and reaffirming and justifying their ranking in the top ten research papers of the NSCs.

No published paper mentioned whether it had been submitted to an NSC, *let alone* that it received one of the highest scores, possibly due to the authors' lack of experience, though it is recommended that this information be included in the publications.⁷

As a limitation of the study, it should be acknowledged that the short follow-up period (3 years) may have impacted the quantification of the top ten publications of 2018, despite previous reports concluding that this period is sufficient for the publication of up to 88.7% of the papers submitted to the NSCs.⁶

In conclusion, 46.3% of the papers ranked in the top ten in the NSCs are published in a scientific journal, and according to the SCImago Journal & Country Rank of Scopus, these papers are published in high-quality journals. Although this figure is promising, more than half of the papers are not published; therefore, SOCIMEP should encourage their publication and promote the conduct of studies evaluating the reasons for non-publication.

Supplementary material to support the results of the present study is available at <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.14069102.v1>.

Conflicts of interest

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