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International representation of authors, editors and research in neurology journals

Teodora Bojanic¹, Aidan Tan²,³
¹Faculty of Medicine, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, ²School of Medicine, Western Sydney University, Sydney, Australia, ³South Western Sydney Clinical School, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

Background: Published research informs international healthcare, yet only a few studies have assessed the representation of authors, editors, and research from developing countries in biomedical journals.

Methods: We reviewed all research articles published in five high-ranking peer-reviewed neurology journals (The Lancet Neurology, Acta Neuropathologica, Nature Reviews Neurology, Brain and Annals of Neurology) in 2010 and 2019 to determine the extent of contributions of authors, editors and research from developing countries, and the degree of international research collaboration between developed and developing countries.

Results: First authorship was attributed to authors from developing countries in only 2% (11/729) of research articles in 2010 and 3% (19/647) of research articles in 2019. All 144 editorial board members in 2019 were from developed countries. International research collaboration between developing and developed countries accounted for only 4% (30/729) of all research articles in 2010 and 6% (40/647) of all research articles in 2019.

Conclusions: Representation of authors, editors and research from developing countries is rare in high-ranking peer-reviewed neurology journals, and this has not improved over the past decade. Supporting high quality and contextually appropriate biomedical research now is necessary for developing countries to meet the rising healthcare needs of their populations in the future.

Key messages: Published research should reflect the diversity of global health. There is an urgent need for strategies to support high quality and contextually appropriate biomedical research in developing countries.