Reviewer's report

Title: Representation of less-developed countries in Pharmacology journals and difficulties in publishing: an opinion of corresponding authors in an online survey

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Reviewer: J Petrak

Reviewer's report:

General
The author deals with an interesting aspect of an "old" problem of the scientifically peripheral countries (Gibbs WW. Lost science in the Third World, Scientific American 1995;273:76-83) but quality of language and some methodological imprecision frequently make the manuscript difficult to follow.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. Background
The first paragraph may be omitted.
My suggestion would be to shorten the second paragraph, as for example:
Publishing in the prominent scientific journals brings better visibility and impact of research results both at individual and collective (institution, country) levels. Scientists are under continues pressure to publish in good quality international journals for the sake of the rewards and promotion (ref.). This also applies to the scientists from less-developed countries (LDC). It has been observed that the LDC researchers have the perception that it is difficult to publish in the world renowned biomedical journals, and the results of the studies in the fields of epidemiology (ref.), psychiatry (ref.) and cardiology (ref.) confirm the underrepresentation of LCD authors in the respective international journals. The conclusions of one survey indicate that researchers from LCD countries believe that the editorial bias is a major reason for their publications underrepresentation (ref.).

There is no study which has documented....

Two last sentences have to be omitted.

2. Methods
The author should clearly state how the study journals sample was selected. How did he search Medline journals? Did he search by the exploding form of MeSH heading "pharmacology" or by broad subject terms? Did he take into account related subject terms like "anti-infective agents", "drug therapy" etc. How does he estimate the number of Medline pharmacology journals not included in
analysis (eg. Table 1 does not include Cardiovasc Hematol Disord Drug Targets, Exp Opin Investig Drugs, Pharmacoepidemiol Drug Safety, etc.)

How did the author review the journal issues? Did he start by PubMed single citation search, did he use some other database, did he checked the print issues, online issues, or…?

According to the list of OECD member countries at the url: http://www.oecd.org/document/58/0,2340,en_2649_201185_1889402_1_1_1_1,00.html, 4 countries have become members in 2010. So, in the time of study design OECD had 30 member states (not 27!).

What was the list of questions that made up a structure questionnaire (how many questions, open-ended or close-ended etc.)?

3. Results

The author declares that only non-OECD countries originated papers were included in the analysis.

Am I wrong in saying that on the list of contributing countries (Table 3) there are 4 OECD countries (Korea, Poland, Mexico and Turkey)????

Regarding IF- it is necessary to mention how many journals are ranked in the JCR pharmacology&pharmacy journal subject category, what is IF of the best ranked journal, how the journals in the group are distributed according to IF values (quartiles in category) etc. The results of this study would be then more persuasive.

4. Discussion

My suggestion is to rewrite completely the discussion section.

a. The author can hardly compare the results of his study with those quoted in discussion (ref. 5, 12, 13), because the latter were obtained on the small samples of the leading journals in the respective fields.

b. The results of the survey of the LCD corresponding authors should be the strongest point of this study! Therefore, the author should discuss them extensively. The authors of one of the cited articles (ref. 14) superbly elucidated a poor representation of LCD in international literature (p. 183) and I believe this is a right direction for further discussion.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1. To shorten and modify title into: Representation of less-developed countries in pharmacology journals: an online survey of corresponding authors

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited
Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests