

The quality of medical and public health research from Palestinian institutions: a survey-based study

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Abstract

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Background There has been an increase in the quantity of health research from the occupied Palestinian territory in the past decade but no assessment of the quality. The aim of this study was to assess the quality of reports of Palestinian health research and factors associated with it.

Methods We searched MEDLINE and Scopus for reports of original research relevant to human health or health care authored by researchers affiliated with Palestinian institutions and published between Jan 1, 2000, and Aug 30, 2015. We used international guidelines to assess report quality, classifying as adequate those with at least 50% of items completely addressed.

Findings Of 2383 reports identified, 497 met our inclusion criteria. 264 (55%) reports were published after 2010, 354 (71%) first authors were affiliated with Palestinian institutions, and 261 (53%) reports had co-authors from outside the occupied Palestinian territory. 342 (69%) reports were inadequately reported, and none of the studies had adequately reported all items. Of 439 observational studies, 11 (3%) reports provided adequate descriptions of eligibility criteria and selection procedures, 35 (8%) reported efforts to address potential sources of bias, 50 (11%) reported the basis for the study sample size, and funding sources were mentioned in 74 (17%) reports. Improved reporting quality was associated with international affiliation of the first author (prevalence ratio 1·6, 95% CI 1·2–2·1), international collaboration (2·9, 1·7–5·0), international funding (1·9, 1·5–2·5), publication after 2005 (3·9, 1·8–8·5), and an four or more co-authors (1·5, 1·1–2·1).

Interpretation Although the quality of reports of Palestinian research has improved in recent years, it remains well below an acceptable standard. International reporting guidelines should be used to guide research design and improve the quality of reports of research.

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Contributors

LA, KE, NA-R, EB, and IC conceived and designed the study. LA searched the literature from electronic databases. LA and MO participated in data screening, extraction, and quality assessment with guidance from NA-R and IC. LA analysed the data and wrote the first draft of the Abstract. All authors provided critical comments and contributed to the interpretation of analysed results. All authors have read and approved the final version of the Abstract for publication.

Declaration of interests

We declare no competing interests.