

What are the problems physicians encounter in writing scientific manuscripts?*

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** The results are from the same online survey of the abstract titled as 'Barriers to academic publishing in journals perceived by Turkish physicians?'

Introduction: Medical publishing is a hard task with its own rules and fundamentals. We aimed to determine the barriers affecting academic writing for Turkish physicians. We investigated whether the difficulties in writing differ according to academic degree and being a physician in surgical or internal medicine departments.

Methods: We conducted an online survey including physicians from 24 departments. The questionnaire inquired about demographics, occupational characteristics including age, gender, academic degree, years from graduation from medical school and department of speciality. Using multiple-choice questions, respondents were asked about the difficulties of academic writing.

Results: A total of 155 physicians completed the survey. Seventeen respondents (11.2%) felt that they are not interested in academic writing (Figure 1). Internal medicine department consisted of mostly pediatrics, family medicine, radiology, chest diseases, oncology, hematology, psychiatry, physical medicine and rehabilitation, genetics..etc. whereas surgical department included obstetrics and gynecology, general surgery, urology, pediatric surgery, ophtalmology, aesthetic plastic surgery..etc. The answers of internal medicine and surgical departments were not different statistically (Table 1). Most of the participants reported problems in finding financial support, obtaining permissions and a need to acquire skills regarding especially those related to data analysis, statistics and language. Need for financial support was reported by Associate Professor/Professors more than residents and fellows (p =0.04) (Table 2).

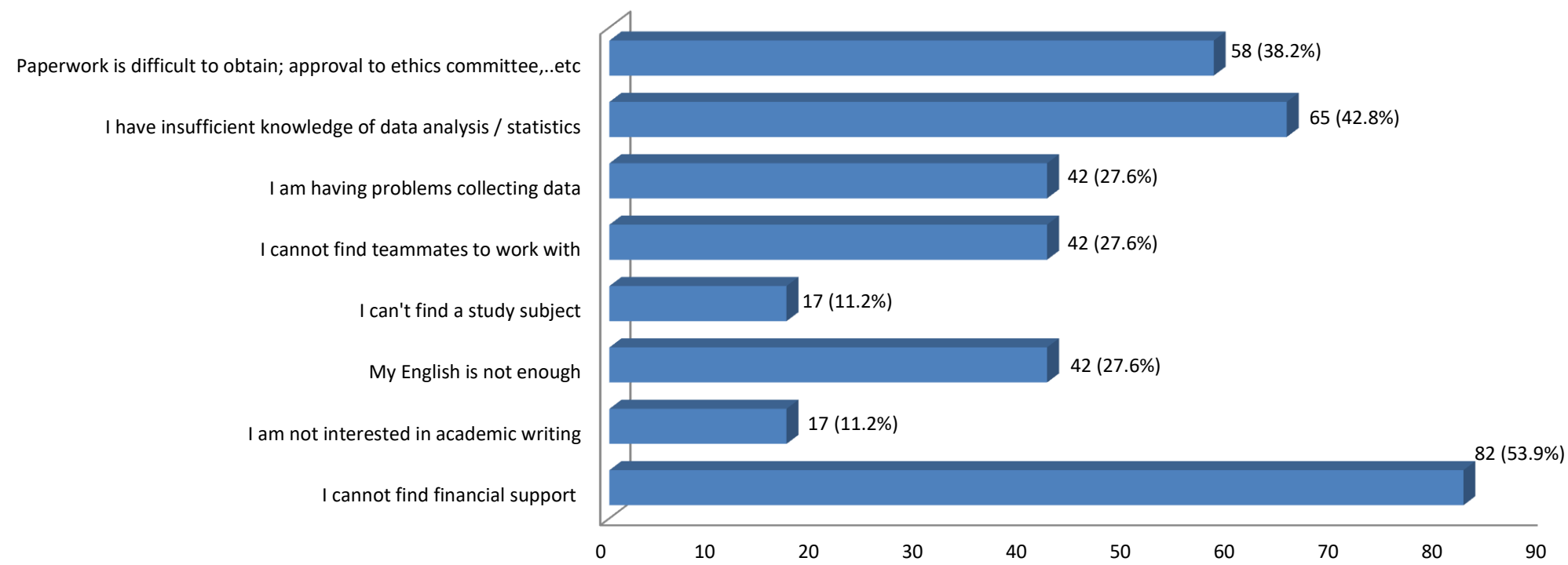


Figure 1: What are the problems physicians encounter in preparing scientific manuscripts? (n = 152)

Table 1: Comparison of the characteristics and the responses of internal medicine and surgical departments

	Internal medicine Department n=93	Surgical Department n=57	p value
	median (min-max)	median (min-max)	
Age (years)	44 (26-61)	46 (25-63)	0.735
Years of Practice (n = 153)	20 (1-37)	21.5(1-41)	0.786
	n (%)	n (%)	p value
Gender			
Women	61 (65.6)	25 (43.9)	0.009
Men	32 (34.4)	32 (56.1)	
What are the problems physicians encounter in preparing scientific manuscripts? (n=147)			
I am not interested in academic writing	9 (10.0)	8 (14.0)	0.486
Language problems, My English is not enough	28 (31.1)	13 (22.8)	0.274
I can't find a study subject	11 (12.2)	4 (7.0)	0.310
I cannot find teammates to work with	24 (26.7)	16 (28.1)	0.852
I am having problems collecting data	24 (26.7)	18 (31.6)	0.521
I have insufficient knowledge of data analysis / statistics	35 (38.9)	26 (45.6)	0.420
Paperwork is difficult to obtain; approval to ethics committee, permissions for clinical research	37 (41.1)	21 (36.8)	0.606
I cannot find financial support (government, university hospital grant, industry..etc)	54 (60.0)	27 (47.4)	0.134

Table 2: The respondents' characteristics by academic title

	Associate Professor/Professor	Resident	Research fellow	p value
	Median (min-max)	Median (min-max)	Median (min-max)	
Age (years)	50 (36-63)	42 (28-60)	30 (25-45)	<0.001
Years of Practice (n = 153)	25 (10-41)	17 (4-38)	5 (1-21)	<0.001
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	p value
Gender				
Women	33 (68.8)	40 (47.6)	9 (45.0)	0.039
Men	15 (31.2)	44 (52.4)	11 (55.0)	
What are the problems physicians encounter in preparing scientific manuscripts? (n=147)				
I am not interested in academic writing	1 (2.1)	14 (16.7)	2 (10.0)	0.037
Language problems, My English is not enough	9 (18.8)	25 (29.8)	8 (40.0)	0.164
I can't find a study subject	1 (2.1)	13 (15.5)	3 (15.0)	0.054
I cannot find teammates to work with	10 (20.8)	26 (31.0)	6 (30.0)	0.443
I am having problems collecting data	12 (25.0)	24 (28.6)	6 (30.0)	0.878
I have insufficient knowledge of data analysis / statistics	15 (31.2)	37 (44.0)	13 (65.0)	0.035
Paperwork is difficult to obtain; approval to ethics committee, permissions for clinical research	20 (41.7)	27 (32.1)	11 (55.0)	0.139
I cannot find financial support (government, university hospital grant, industry..etc)	33 (68.8)	40 (47.6)	9 (45.0)	0.044

Discussion: Clinical medicine and research are hard to combine with the daily workload and shortage of time. In this study, major barriers for academic writing were the need for support for funding, obtaining permissions, paperwork, statistical analysis and language. We hope that our results could help to recognize the shortcomings in medical education for academic writing.