

PATIENT-REPORTED OUTCOMES IN STUDIES PUBLISHED IN 2014: WHICH DISEASE AREAS HAVE BEEN THE MAIN FOCUS OF CLINICAL RESEARCH?

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Objectives

To determine the disease focus of all papers indexed in the PubMed database that reported quality of life as an outcome and were published in 2014.

Methods

An evidence surveillance process was established based on a systematic search of PubMed, using key words relevant to the assessment of quality of life and patient-reported outcomes and limited to studies published in English, in humans, with abstracts, and either clinical trials, observational or validation studies or systematic reviews. The surveillance incorporated all studies published from 2010 and was updated weekly.

Abstracts identified by the search that reported quality of life outcomes were indexed according to disease area, using the chapter categorisation from ICD-10 as a framework.

Articles were included if they reported results or a study protocol from a primary research study or were a systematic review. To account for the delay in indexing of publications, we included all studies with a publication date of 2014 that were indexed in PubMed up to 18 May 2015.

Search strategy

("quality of life"[tiab] OR QOL[tiab] OR HRQOL[tiab] OR "patient reported outcome"[tiab] OR PRO[tiab] OR "patient-reported"[tiab] OR "clinician-reported"[tiab] OR "carer-reported"[tiab])

AND

(questionnaire[tiab] OR tool[tiab] OR instrument[tiab] OR survey[tiab] OR randomised[tiab] OR randomized[tiab] OR controlled[tiab])

Limits

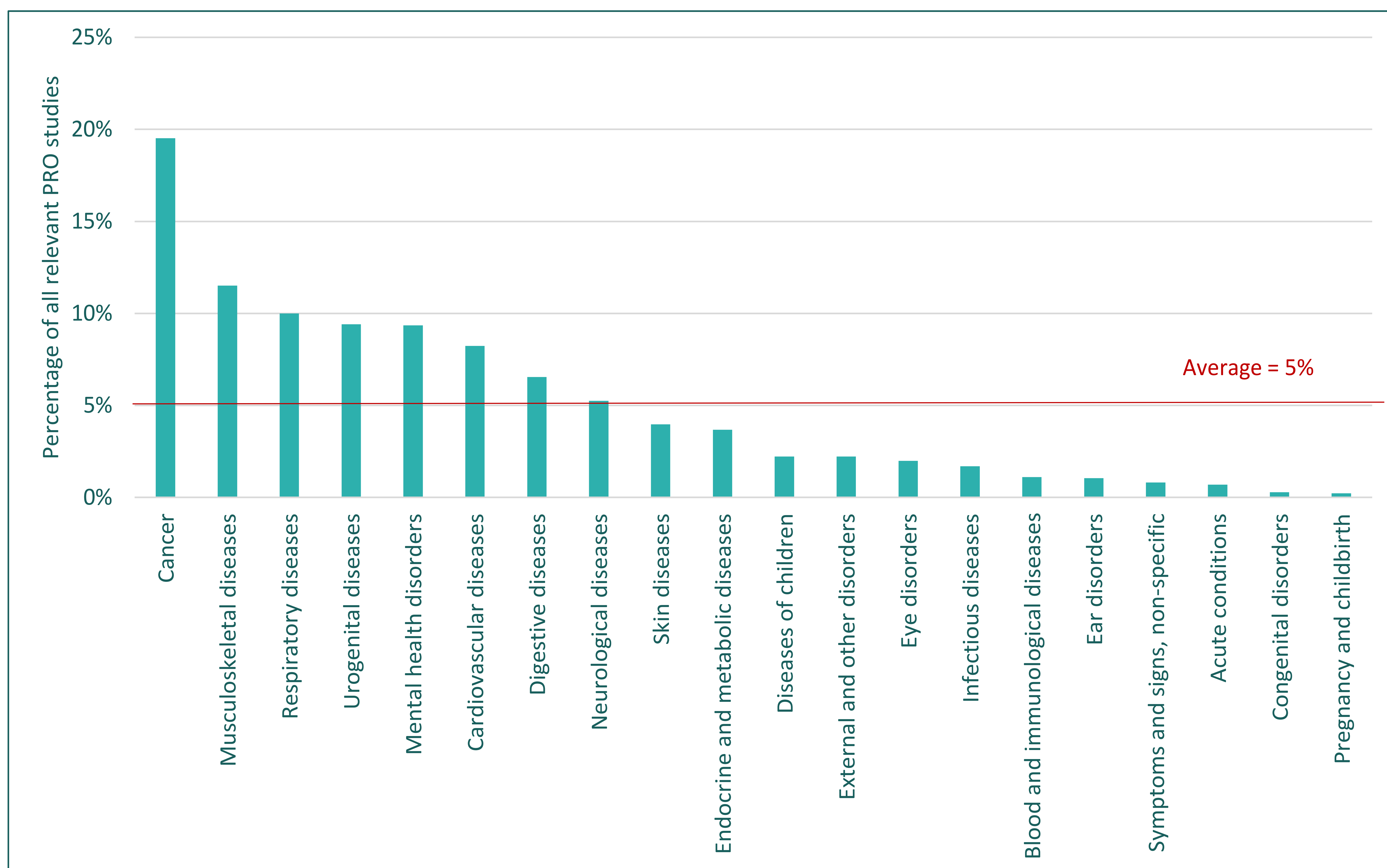
The search was limited to studies indexed in the PubMed database, in humans, with abstract, published in English in the previous 5 years before the search date of 18 May 2015; study methodology was limited to clinical trial, comparative study, controlled clinical trial, evaluation study, observational study, RCT, systematic review or validation study.

Results

The search identified 1,980 articles published in 2014. Of these, 1,711 abstracts reported the use of one or more PRO tool, or stated that quality of life or other patient-reported outcomes were recorded.

Of the 1,711 relevant studies, 17% were conducted in patients with cancer, 10% in musculoskeletal disorders, 9% in respiratory disorders, 8% in urogenital disorders, 8% in mental health disorders, 7% in cardiovascular diseases, 6% in gastrointestinal disorders and 5% in neurological disorders. All other disease areas were relatively under-represented, accounting for 3% or fewer of the relevant publications.

Distribution of abstracts published in 2014 that report quality of life or other patient-reported outcomes, by disease category



Conclusions

The preponderance of patient-reported outcome studies in patients with cancer reflects the focus of pharmacological research on this topic. Disease areas such as endocrinology and diabetes (3% of abstracts), infectious diseases (1% of abstracts), acute trauma (1% of abstracts) and pregnancy (<1% of abstracts) have been relatively under-researched for their impact on quality of life, despite their substantial impact on morbidity and mortality internationally.