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## European Journal of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine 2012 December;48(4):543-8

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language: English

### Steady Growth Seen for Research in Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine: where our specialty is now and where we are going

Negrini S. 1,2

<sup>1</sup> Director, Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine, University of Brescia, Brescia, Italy; <sup>2</sup> IRCCS Fondazione Don Gnocchi ONLUS, Milan, Italy

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**BACKGROUND:** The aim of this article is to focus some numbers of research in Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine (PRM): from a better understanding of these data new insights can be gained about where we are and where we are going.

**METHODS:** We performed a bibliometric search in May 2012 using the Medline MeSH term "Rehabilitation", whose definition is: "Restoration of human functions to the maximum degree possible in a person or persons suffering from disease or injury". We used the instruments of the research engine GoPubMed® as an independent search device.

**RESULTS:** The number of papers published in PRM every year has risen steadily in PubMed. This is even more true for rehabilitation, where the rise has been more rapid (114% more than PubMed growth). This increase in research interest in the last ten years is more marked in some countries, mainly in the Mediterranean area (e.g. Italy +207%), than in others. In the top ten countries in Pubmed, the Australasian area is publishing relatively less in PRM than in general. Specifically, Europe takes a leading role mainly owing to the high rank of the northern countries.

**DISCUSSION:** These results clearly show a steady increase of research in PRM. Some reasons include the relatively recent development of specific measurement tools and research methodologies, as well as that of the general reference framework for our specialty (ICF). One consequence is the increasing number of journals and their Impact Factor (from a maximum below 2 in 2000, to around 4 now).



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CONCLUSION: The PRM growth parallels the evolution of the Western countries (aging and burden of chronic diseases). Somehow, our specialty is relatively gaining power and resources when compared to others. Consequently, PRM is attracting also physicians from other specialities. Only by properly accommodating this growth, we will be able to harness the surging forces we have already encountered and will presumably continue to face in the years ahead.

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