

Cancer research performance in the European Union: a study of published output from 2000 to 2008

Andrea Micheli¹, Francesca Di Salvo¹, Claudio Lombardo², Donatella Ugolini³, Paolo Baili¹, and Marco A Pierotti⁴

¹Descriptive Studies and Health Planning Unit, Fondazione IRCCS Istituto Nazionale dei Tumori, Milan; ²National Institute for Cancer Research of Genoa, Genoa, and Alleanza Contro il Cancro, Rome; ³Epidemiology and Biostatistics Unit of the National Institute for Cancer Research of Genoa and Department of Oncology, Biology and Genetics of the University of Genoa, Genoa; ⁴Scientific Director of Fondazione IRCCS Istituto Nazionale dei Tumori, Milan, Italy

ABSTRACT

Aims and background. Although several studies have assessed cancer research performance in individual European countries, comparisons of European Union (EU27) performance with countries of similar population size are not available.

Methods. We compared cancer research performance in 2000-2008 between EU27 and 11 countries with over 100 million inhabitants. Performance should not have been affected by the 2007-2009 recession. We examined 143 journals considered oncology journals by Journal Citation Reports, accessing them via Scopus. Publications were attributed to countries using a published counting procedure.

Results. For number of publications, the USA held a clear lead in 2006-2008 (yearly averages: 10,293 USA *vs* 9,962 EU27), whereas the EU27 held the lead previously. EU27 was also second to the USA for total impact factor. China markedly improved its cancer publications record over the period. Compared to the USA, EU27 and Japan, the other countries (all developing) had a poor publications record.

Conclusions. Comparative cancer research spending data are not available. However from 2002 to 2007, gross domestic expenditure on research and development (UNESCO data) increased by 34% in North America, 161% in China and only 28% in EU27. Thus the European Union is lagging behind North America and may well be eclipsed by China in research and development spending in the near future. We suggest that these new findings should be considered by policymakers in Europe and other countries when developing policies for cancer control.

Key words: bibliometric study, cancer publication performance, China, EU27, USA.

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Correspondence to: Dr Andrea Micheli, Descriptive Studies and Health Planning Unit, Fondazione IRCCS Istituto Nazionale dei Tumori, Via Venezian 1, 20133 Milan, Italy.
Tel +39-02-23903559;
fax +39-02-23903528;
e-mail
andrea.micheli@istitutotumori.mi.it

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