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Authorship in review articles: Trends towards better representation?

Constantinos Bezos[a], Emma Conran[a], Tony Ferrar[b], Huw Jones[a]

[a]Porterhouse Medical Group, Reading, Berkshire, United Kingdom
[b]Porterhouse Medical Group US, Holmdel, New Jersey, United States of America

Background

Evidence suggests a shift in medical publication authorship to greater numbers of authors per publication,[1] although disparities in geographical representation persist.[2]

Objective

We sought to understand patterns of collaborative authorship in terms of the number and location of authors to inform future publication practices, sampled from review articles in chronic kidney disease and endometrial cancer.

Research design and methods

Search:
'Chronic kidney disease' OR 'endometrial cancer' (*filters:* Humans; Review; 2014 onwards)

Data preparation:
Author name and country extracted
Country mapped to World Bank region[3]

Inclusion and exclusion criteria:
✓ Publication year: 2014, 2019 or 2024
✗ Missing affiliation data for all authors
✗ ≥16 authors (to minimise the effect of international guidelines)

Analysis:
Kruskal–Wallis ANOVA, Chi-squared test

Results

- In total, 1,933 review articles met the inclusion criteria (422 in 2014, 827 in 2019, and 684 in 2024).
- The percentage of publications with authors from North America decreased steadily, whereas the percentage of publications with authors from East Asia and the Pacific and South Asia regions increased **(Figure A)**.
- The median number of authors per publication increased over the years (median [IQR]: 3 [2–5], 3 [2–5], and 5 [3–7], respectively; *P*<0.001) **(Figure B)**. This trend was seen in both CKD (n=1,673; *P*<0.001) and EC (n=260; *P*<0.001).
- The percentage of publications with authors from more than one country (≥2) increased, although the results were not statistically significant **(Figure C)**.

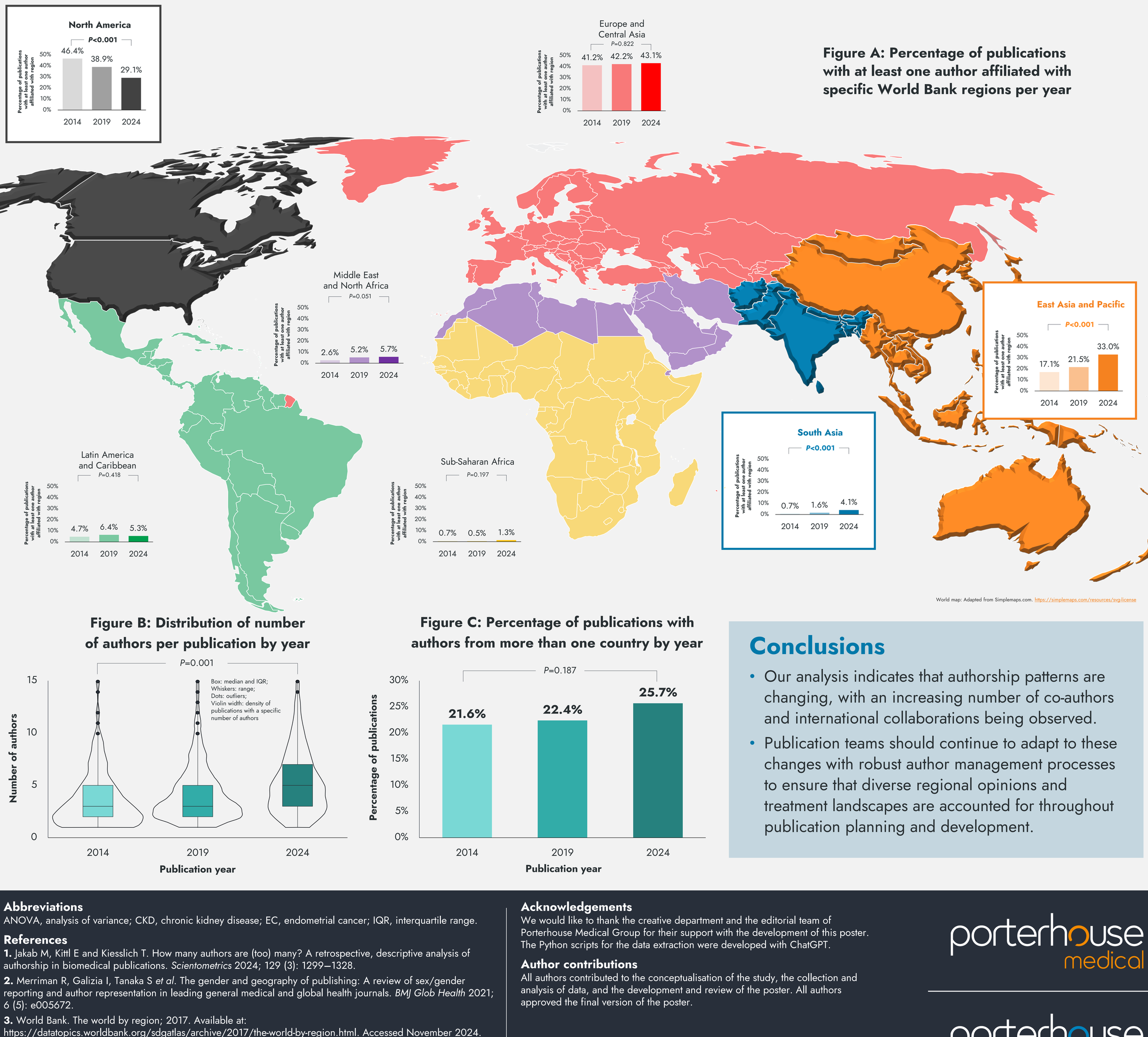


Figure A: Percentage of publications with at least one author affiliated with specific World Bank regions per year

World map: Adapted from Simplemaps.com. https://simplemaps.com/resources/svg-license

Figure B: Distribution of number of authors per publication by year

Figure C: Percentage of publications with authors from more than one country by year

Conclusions

- Our analysis indicates that authorship patterns are changing, with an increasing number of co-authors and international collaborations being observed.
- Publication teams should continue to adapt to these changes with robust author management processes to ensure that diverse regional opinions and treatment landscapes are accounted for throughout publication planning and development.

Abbreviations

ANOVA, analysis of variance; CKD, chronic kidney disease; EC, endometrial cancer; IQR, interquartile range.

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Author contributions

All authors contributed to the conceptualisation of the study, the collection and analysis of data, and the development and review of the poster. All authors approved the final version of the poster.

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