

Credibility of references cited in scientific publications: Extent of adherence to ICMJE recommendations

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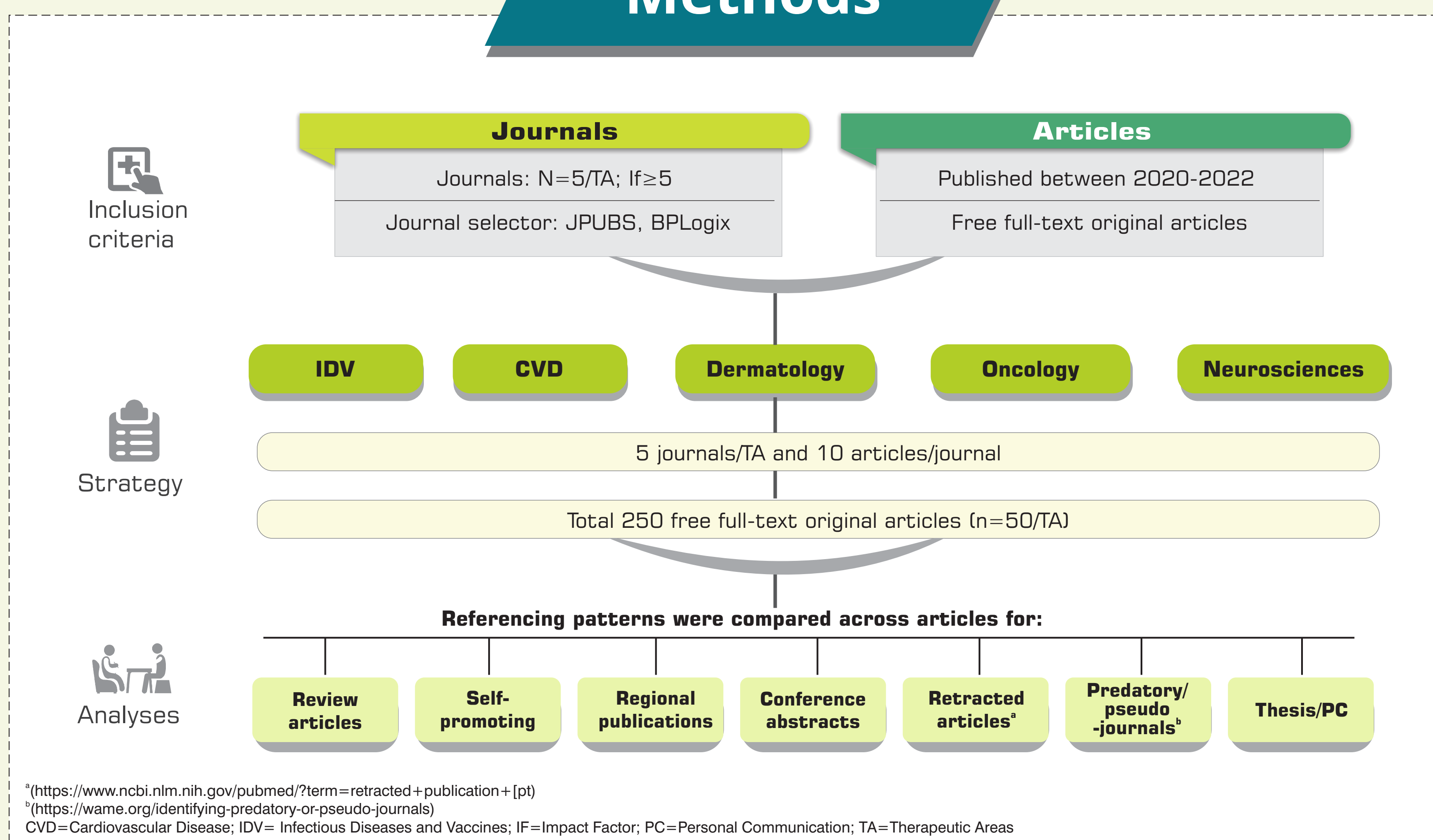
Background

- Responsible and accurate referencing lends the desired credibility to a scientific publication, since references are the foundation of a scientific paper upon which the legitimacy of the research rests.¹
- The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) issued several recommendations² to improve the quality and accuracy of references used in scientific publication.
- The primary focus of these recommendations is to:
 - Encourage the use of direct references to original research whenever possible.
 - Discourage authors, editors, or peer reviewers from citing references for self-promotion.
 - Limit the usage of review articles and conference abstracts.
 - Prevent the citation of articles from predatory or pseudo-journals, as well as retracted publications.²

Objective

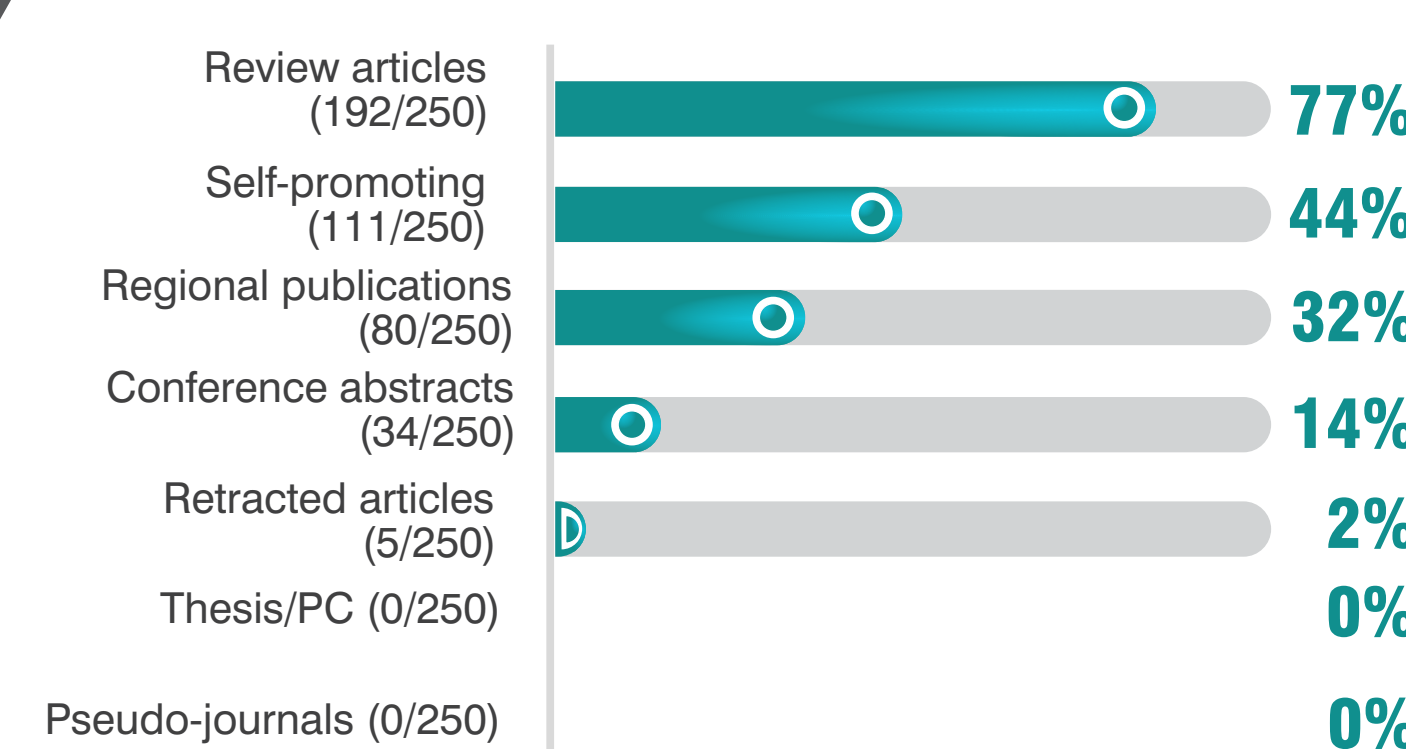
- This study aims to assess the gap between ICMJE referencing recommendations and actual referencing in journals.

Methods

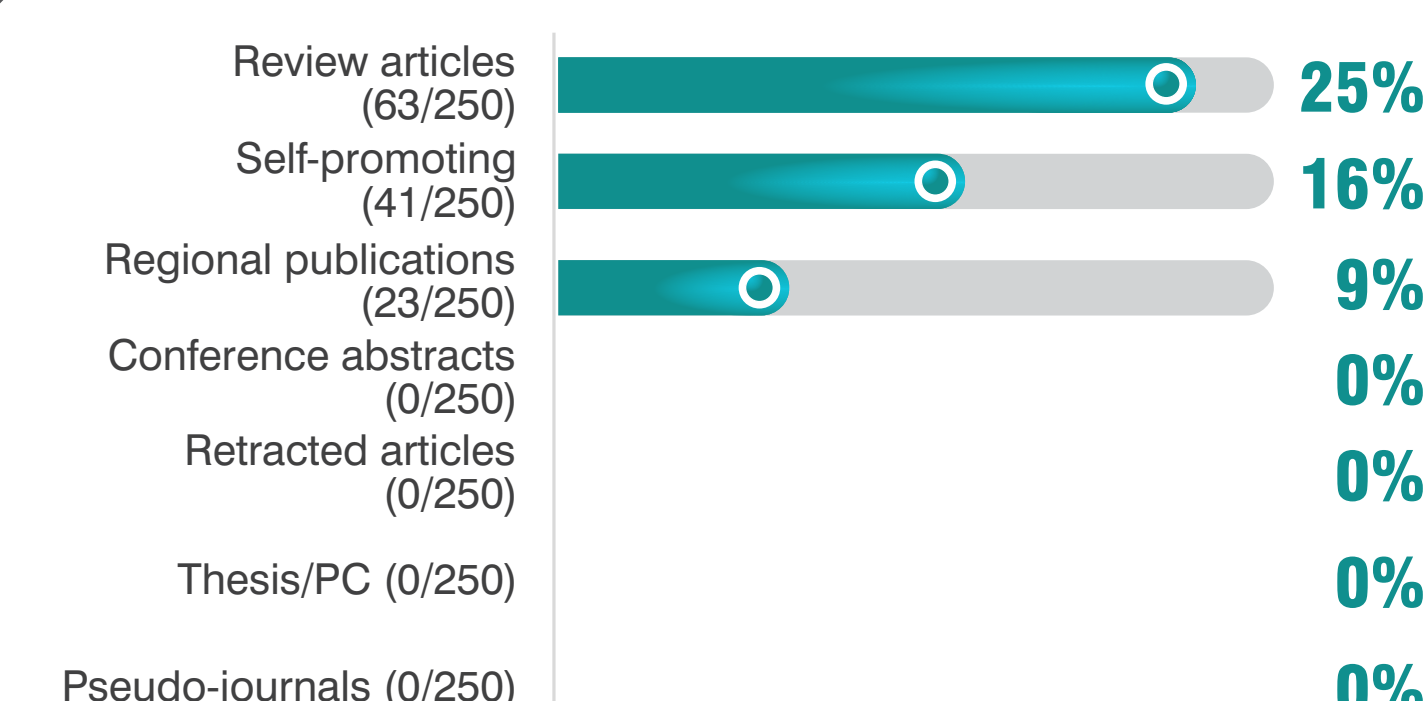


Results

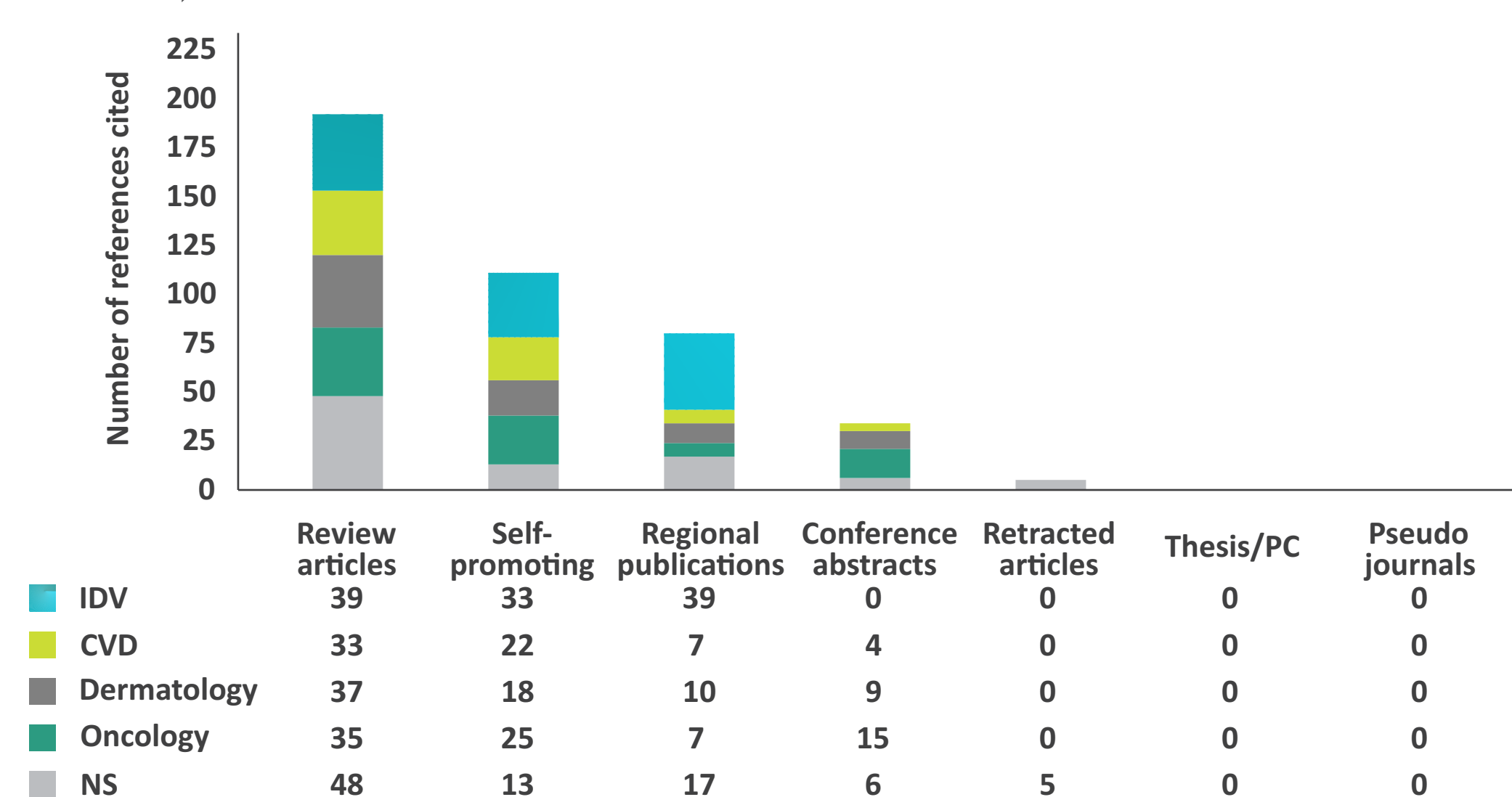
Percentage of references/category (overall)



Percentage of articles citing ≥5 references of each category



Types of references cited therapeutic area-wise



CVD=Cardiovascular Disease; ICMJE=International Committee of Medical Journal Editors; IDV=Infectious Diseases and Vaccines; NS=Neuroscience; PC=Personal Communication; TA=Therapeutic Area.

Conclusions

- Articles evaluated from reasonably good impact factor journals demonstrated non-adherence to ICMJE-referencing recommendations by including citations of more review articles, conference abstracts, regional publications and those promoting authors' self-interest.
- Although ICMJE recommends limited use of review-articles, >25% articles referenced ≥5 reviews per article.
- Overall, the survey highlights the need for aligning journal guidelines with ICMJE-referencing recommendations and increasing awareness about these guidelines.

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References:

- Penders B. *PLoS Comput Biol* 2018. 14(4): e1006036.
- International Council of Medical Journal Editors. Recommendations for the conduct, reporting, editing, and publication of scholarly work in medical journals. [Accessed: March 2023]. <https://www.icmje.org/recommendations>

Disclosures:

All authors are employees of SIRO Clinpharm Pvt Ltd.

Acknowledgment:

Sandeep Chavan (SIRO Clinpharm Pvt. Ltd., India) provided graphic design assistance for the development of this poster.