

Cost implications of industry trends in publications

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Objective

Examine the impact of evolving industry expectations on publication development hours and timelines

Conclusions

- Manuscript development hours are not dependent on project duration alone.
- We observed higher development hours for expedited manuscripts and similar trends for those with simultaneous presentations, both of which had shorter project durations.
- The higher development hours for oncology vs non-oncology manuscripts requires further exploration. Many were submitted to the highest-impact factor (IF) journals, which were associated with higher development hours. Other variables to explore include the amount of supplementary data and numbers of internal reviewers and authors.
- Although not directly assessed here, it is a fair assumption that increasing hours would increase costs, which could have implications for fixed/framework cost structures.
- Agencies and clients will both benefit from understanding drivers of increased development hours and collaborating toward process efficiency.
- These results are hypothesis-generating only, and limitations include the retrospective nature of the study and potential agency-, product-, and client-specific confounds.

Background

- IPG Health Medical Communications comprises 8 medical communications agencies, 4 of which have a substantial proportion of their business in publications planning and delivery.
- Pharmaceutical companies and medical communications agencies largely operate on fixed/framework costs for publications execution, where fees for regular deliverables are agreed in advance, with intent to limit budget negotiations for individual projects.
- Shifting requirements and expectations that impact the hours required to develop a publication can affect the fitness of these cost structures.
- For example, expectations have evolved to more regularly require expedited development, simultaneous presentations, and submission to higher-tier journals, particularly in oncology.

Methods

Research Design

- This research was conducted across 4 IPG Health Medical Communications agencies: Caudex, Complete HealthVizion, CMC Affinity, and CMC Connect. It was approved by the Head of Compliance and Ethics, IPG Health Medical Communications.
- Project start/completion dates and development hours through first submission were collected for manuscripts submitted for publication between Jan 1, 2019 and Nov 30, 2022.
- Only manuscripts for which the agency provided full writing support from initiation through submission (≥ 140 h) were included. Editorials, letters to the editor, brief reports, and white papers were excluded.
- For each project, the supporting agency also indicated manuscript type (original research vs review), therapy area (oncology vs non-oncology), journal for initial submission, and whether the manuscript was expedited (standard timeline accelerated; yes/no) or involved a simultaneous congress presentation.

Data analysis

- All data were deidentified.
- Descriptive statistics (mean [range]) were used to assess project duration and development hours for the full data set.
- Simple linear regression was used to assess the relationship between overall project duration and development hours.
- Mean (SE) and 2-tailed t-tests were used for the subgroup analyses.

Results

- Average project duration was 408 days (range 84–1141) and average development time was 340 hours (range 143–1221).
- Project development time (hours) and duration (days) were poorly correlated overall (Figure 1) and in all subgroups (data not shown); a manuscript delivered more quickly did not necessarily require less hours.
- Despite expedited publications having the expected shorter project duration, they required significantly more development hours vs non-expedited publications (Figure 2A). Publications with vs without simultaneous presentation showed similar trends (Figure 2B).
- Oncology and non-oncology publications showed no difference in project duration, but oncology manuscripts had significantly higher development hours (Figure 3).
- Mean project duration was shorter for the highest-tier vs lowest-tier journals, but development hours were significantly higher (Figure 4).

Figure 1. Project Development Time vs Duration

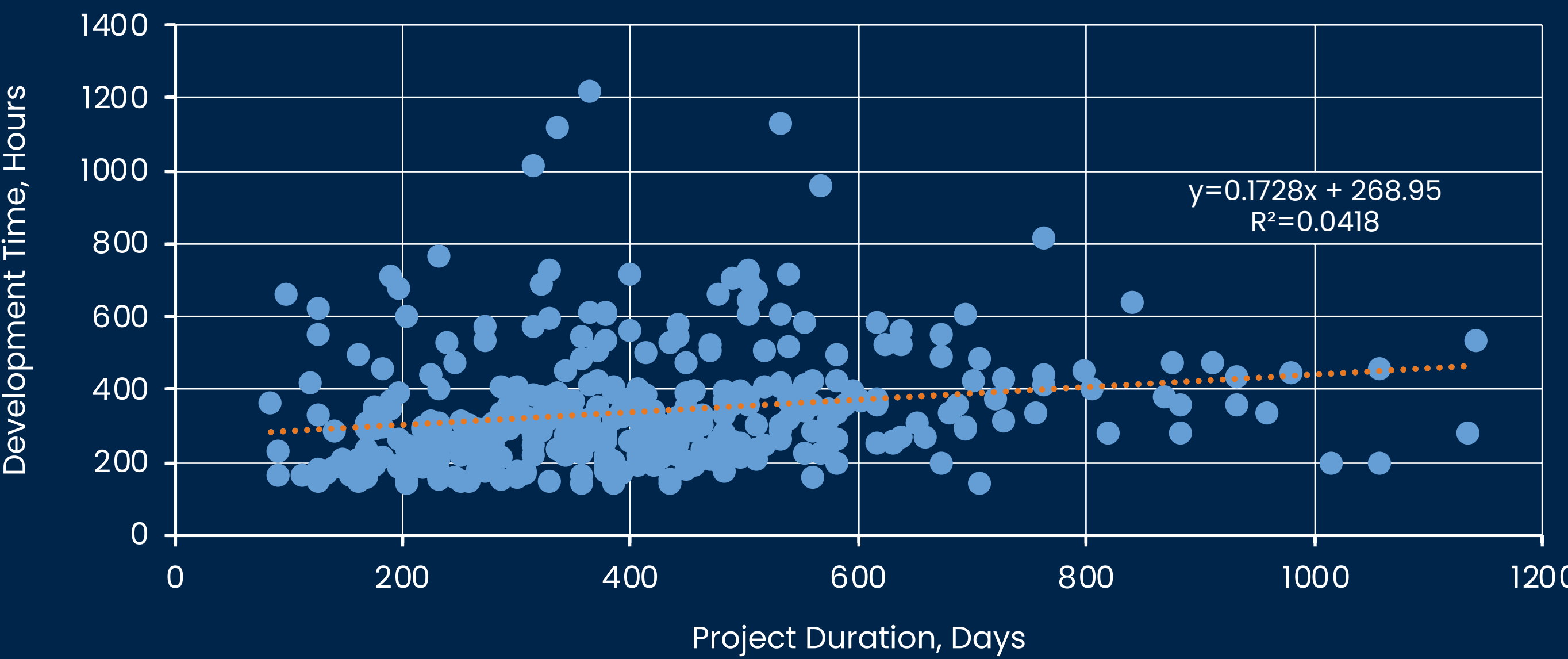


Figure 2. Duration and Development Time for (A) Expedited vs Non-Expedited Manuscripts and (B) Manuscripts With vs Without Simultaneous Presentation

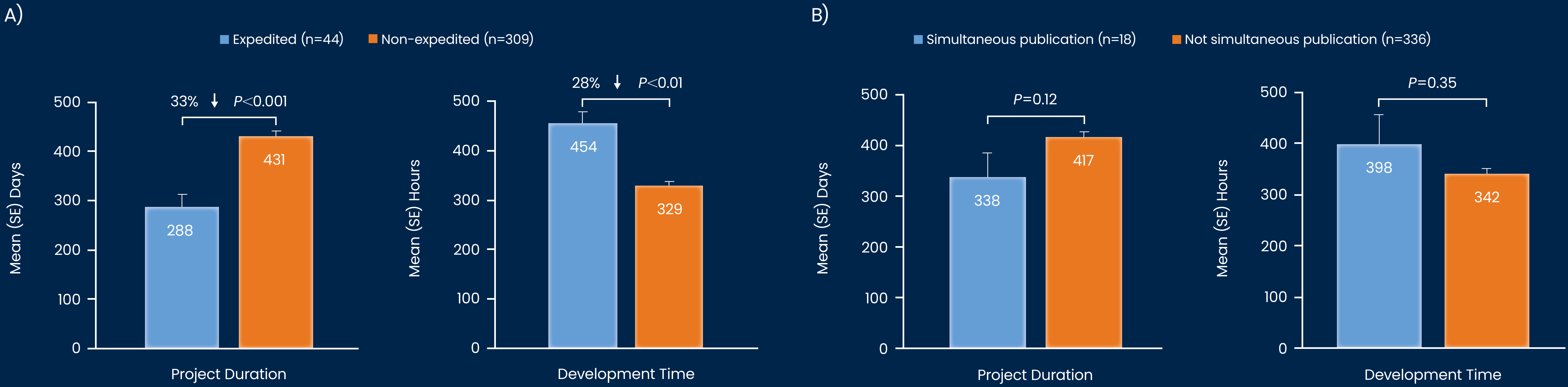
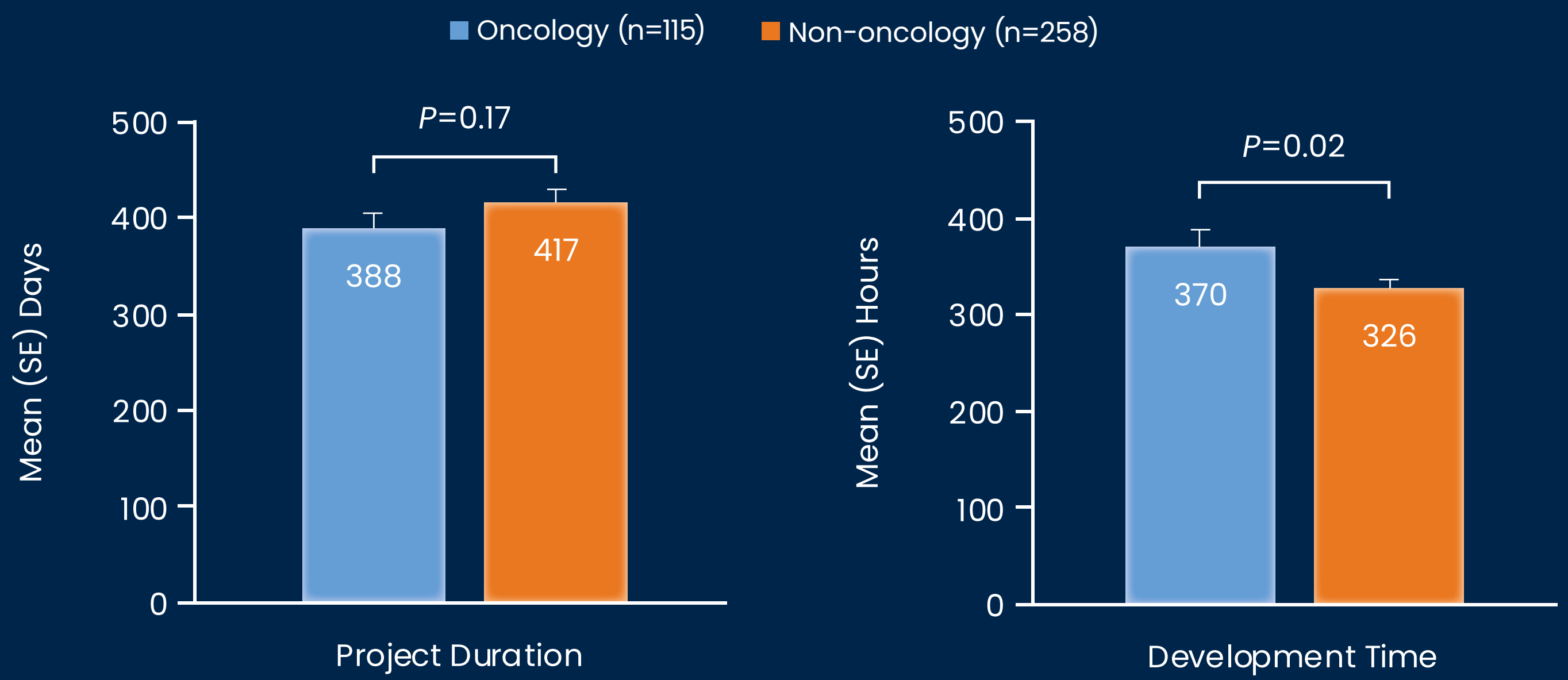


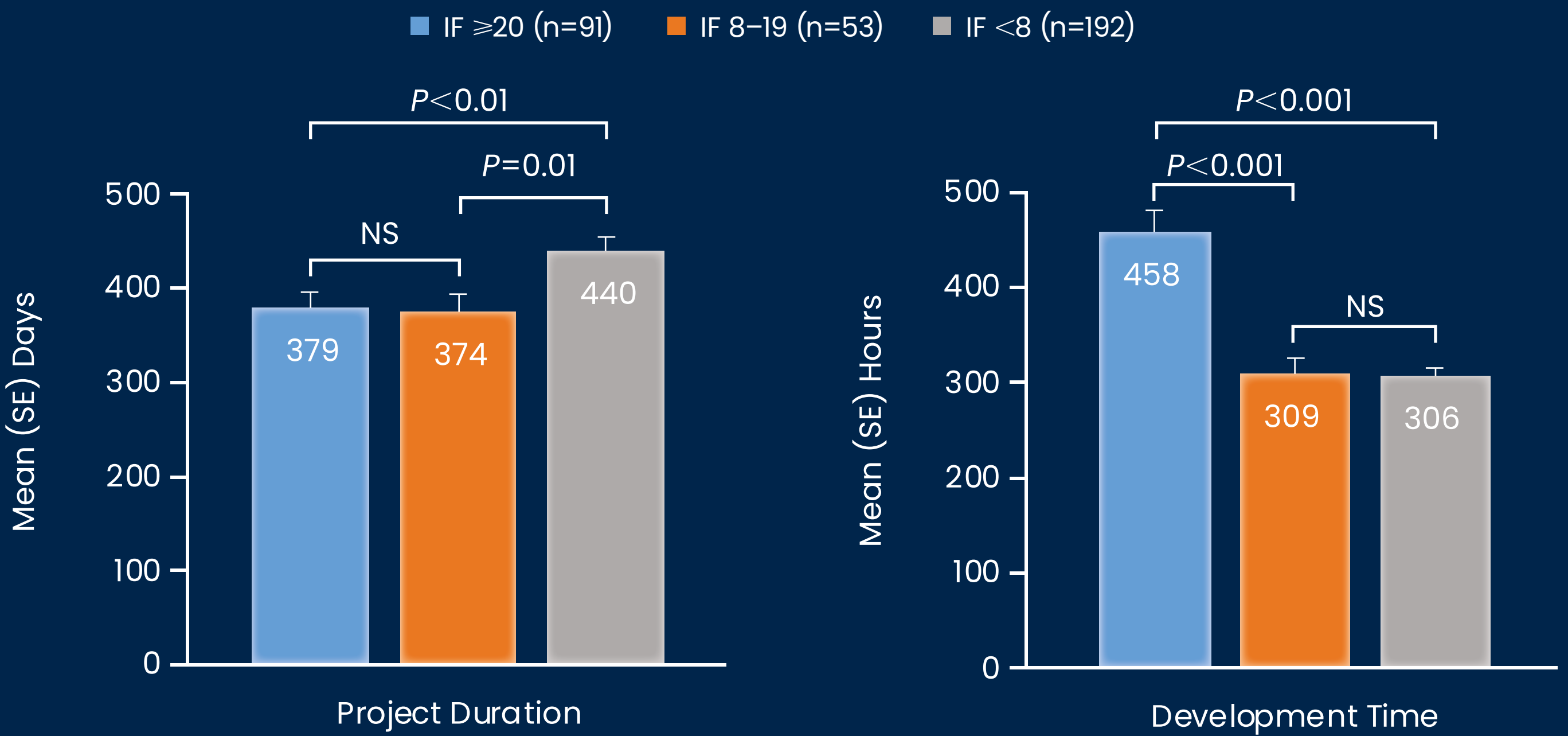
Figure 3. Duration and Development Time: Oncology vs Non-Oncology



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Figure 4. Duration and Development Time by Impact Factor



Conflict of Interest Statement

All authors are employees of IPG Health Medical Communications.

