Public availability and scope of publication policies

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Communication of industry-sponsored research is coming under increasing scrutiny

- **Codes of conduct, such as Good Publication Practice,[1] provide clear guidance on expected standards in medical publications**

- **Individual companies releasing their medical publication policies into the public domain is believed to enhance ethical best practice**

  - 2009: four of 20 pharmaceutical companies had publicly available policies[2]

  - 2014: in a survey of ISMPP members, 38% of industry and 35% of medical communications agency employees were aware of their company having made their publication policy externally available[3]

1. Bartlett S, *et al*. ISMPP 5th Annual Meeting. Philadelphia, USA, 20–22 April 2009; Poster; 2. Wager E, *et al*. BMJ Open 2014; 4: e004780; 3. Graf C, *et al*. BMJ 2009; 339: b4330.

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Objectives and methodology

- **Validate the findings of the ISMPP survey by retrieving publicly available publication policies and assessing their scope**

- **Web-based search performed with pre-specified terms to retrieve publication policies from 20 industry and 20 medical communication agency sources**

- **Policies examined against pre-defined audit question (Table 1)**

| Table 1. Policy audit questions |
| --- |
| 1. Does the policy cite professional body publication guidelines or codes of practice (as listed in GPP2[3])? |
| 2. Is the ICMJE definition of authorship included in the policy?
   • Does the policy recommend medical/scientific writers to be acknowledged? |
| 3. Does the policy define what a publication is? |
| 4. Does the policy outline guidance on specific types of publications?
   • If 'Yes', what types of studies/publications are supported?
   • If 'Yes', where will the results be reported? |
| 5. Does the policy outline guidance on the transparency of reporting study results (including negative results)? |
| 6. Does the policy include a time limit for submission?
   • If 'Yes', what is the target time limit? |
| 7. Does the policy state a commitment to publishing in peer-reviewed journals? |

Companies with publicly available publication policies

- **Publication policies accessible from 65% of Industry and 25% of Agency websites. Notable increase on 2009 figure (20% of top 20 pharma companies)[1]**

- **17 of 20 pharma companies included in both studies. Of these, 24% had public policies in 2009 vs. 71% in our study**

1. Wager E, *et al*. BMJ Open 2014; 4: e004780.
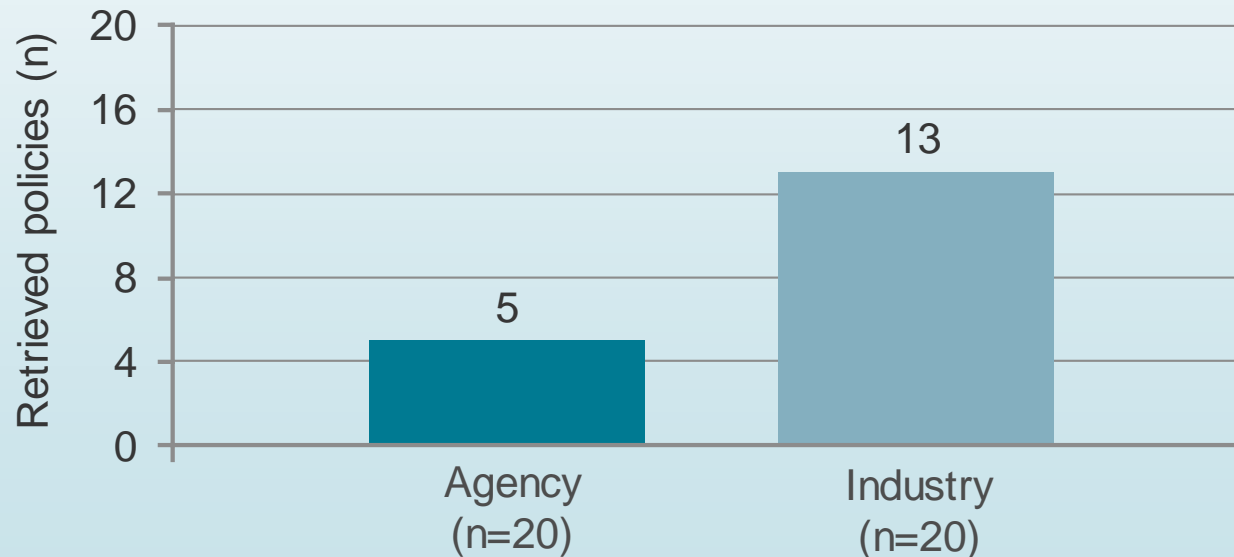
Citation of external medical publication professional bodies, publication guidelines or codes of practice*

- **Of the 18 publication policies identified, 15 (83%) cited an external medical publication professional body, publication guideline or code of practice**

   – ICMJE recommendations were most widely cited in both Industry and Agency polices
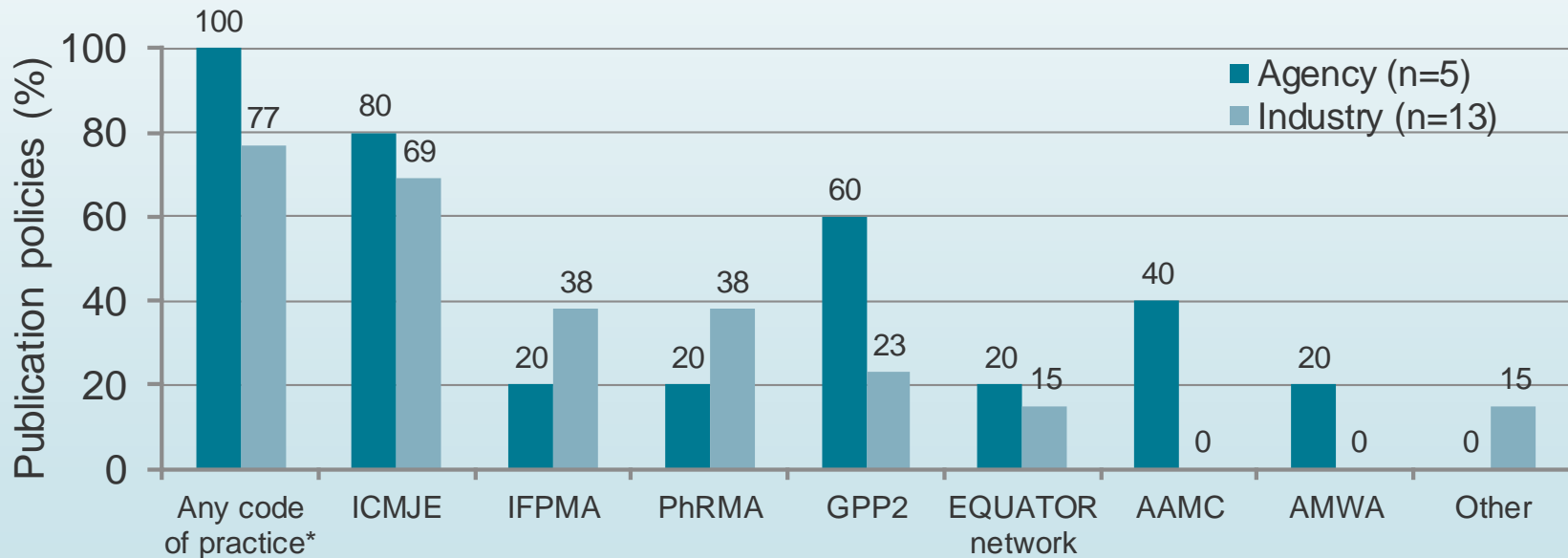
* As listed in GPP23, see reference for details. AMWA = American Medical Writers Association; EQUATOR = Enhancing the QUAlity and Transparency Of health Research; GPP2 = Good Publication Practice 2; ICMJE = International Committee of Medical Journal Editors; IFPMA = International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations; ISMPP = International Society for Medical Publication Professionals; PhRMA = Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America
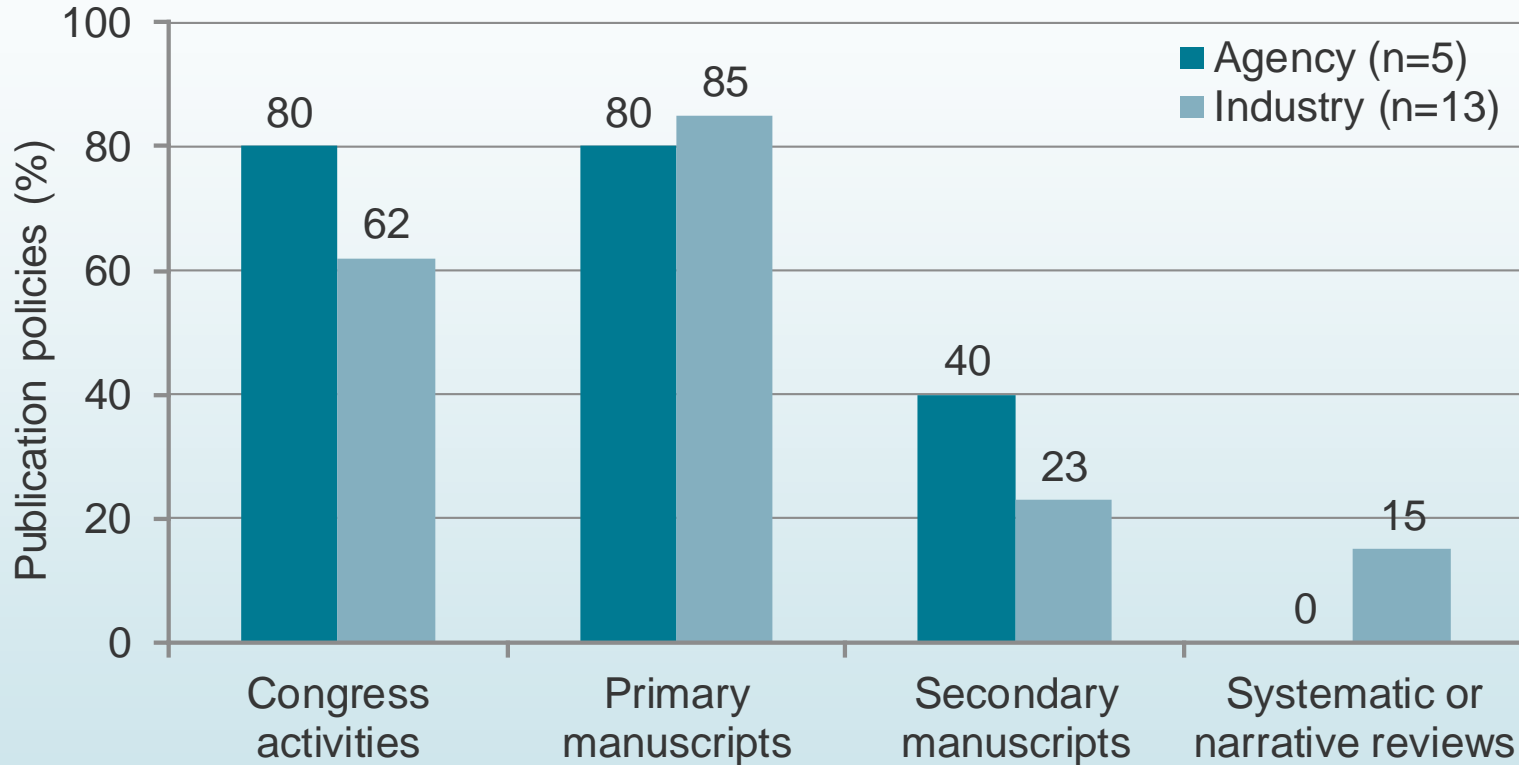
Overall scope of publication policies retrieved
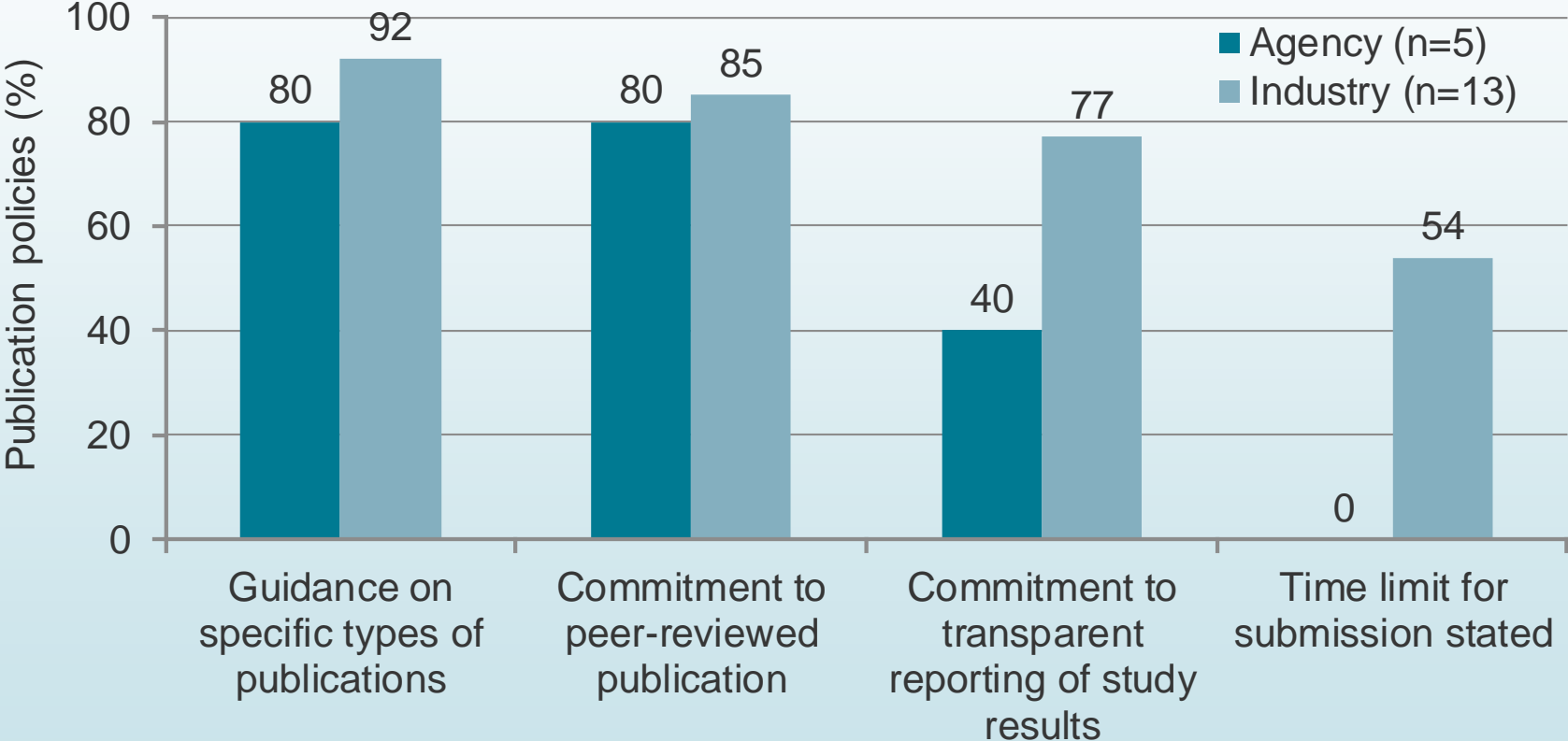
Study types specified within the scope of industry policies identified
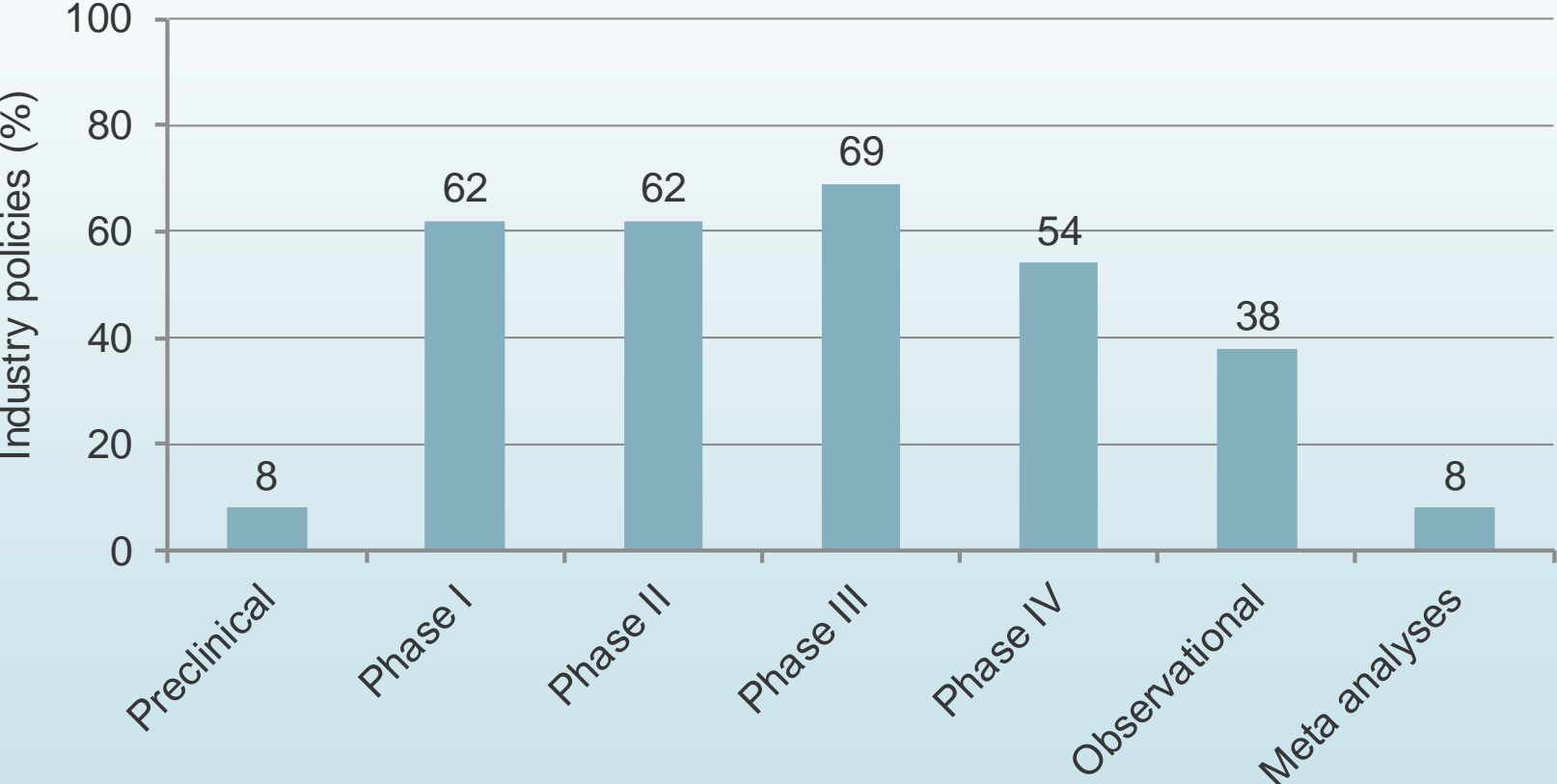
Publication types specified to be peer-reviewed

The majority of policies stated a commitment to peer-reviewed publication for congress activities and primary manuscripts

Conclusions

- **Increase since 2009 in the number of pharmaceutical companies making their publication policy externally available on their website**

- **Scope of policies varied, but the majority cited an external medical publication professional body, publication guideline or code of practice**

- **Our findings will help with developing and updating future publication policies and contribute to greater transparency**

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