Clinical trials: do the patients get the thanks they deserve?

Anthony B, Bhatia R
**Introduction**

- Patient-centric initiatives are becoming more common
- On 10 June, 2014, *The BMJ* launched a new strategy to promote patient partnership
- *The BMJ* will assess whether patient-dependent articles (i.e., using patient data) address the questions in the Table\(^1,2\)

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\(^1\) *The BMJ* author guide accessed on December 4, 2014, at [http://www.bmj.com/about-bmj/resourcesauthors/article-types/research](http://www.bmj.com/about-bmj/resourcesauthors/article-types/research)

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Purpose

To investigate how often patients are thanked in patient-dependent publications in *The BMJ*
Methods

Publications dependent on patient data identified

- We conducted a search in PubMed in August 2014, limited to the journal field for “BMJ”
- The search was ordered by most recent publications first

Publications assessed

- Acknowledgements
  - Thanking patients
  - Thanking others
- Funding source

Further categorization of acknowledgements

- Study design
- Patient population
- Therapeutic area
- Geographical location
Results: patient acknowledgements

- Of 125 articles investigated,
  - 87 (69.6%) were randomised-controlled trials
  - 94 (75.2%) involved adult-only populations and 17 (13.6%) paediatric-only populations

~50% of patient-dependant manuscripts thanked the patients
Results: acknowledgement by group

- Clin Trial Worker / Centre workers / Study nurses
- Collaborators
- Patients / Subjects
- Statistical / Data
- Clin Trial Centre / Clinic / Doctors
- Funders

Patients were only the 3\textsuperscript{rd} most commonly thanked group
Results: patient population

- A total of 39/94 (41.5%) adult-only population studies thanked patients
  - Of 17 studies involving only paediatric patients, 13 (76.5%) thanked patients
  - In mixed population studies, 8/14 (57.1%) studies thanked the patient group for their data

Paediatric patients were the most commonly thanked population
Results: therapeutic area

Managed care/Pharmacoconomics
Paediatrics
Physical medicine/Rehabilitation
Respiratory medicine
Obstetrics/Gynaecology
Psychology/Psychiatry
Other
Infectious disease
Cardiology/Vascular disease
Oncology

Acknowledged (%)

Few papers in the Oncology therapeutic area thanked patients for their data
Results: patient acknowledgement by geographical location

The RoW-based manuscripts most commonly thanked patients
Conclusions

• In patient-focused publications in *The BMJ*, patients were thanked ~50% of the time

• Publications were more likely to include a thank you to patients if:
  – The study population included paediatric patients
  – If the therapeutic area was Managed care/Pharmacoconomics or Paediatrics
  – If the corresponding authors was based in the RoW

• Publication professionals could use our results to highlight to authors and sponsors the importance of thanking patients in patient-dependent publications
Acknowledgements

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