Brief summary of MSF medical publications, 2010

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Background / Objective

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) regularly publishes medical data and research from its field programs in the peer-reviewed literature. This review of articles in medical/scientific journals was conducted to quantify MSF medical publication output in 2010. Research topics, journal topic areas, and open access to publications were analyzed.

Methods

Journal articles in this analysis were identified according to the following inclusion criteria and search methodology:

Inclusion criteria:
• Article published in a **peer-reviewed** scientific, technical, or medical (STM) journal
• Published **online January-December 2010**
• At least one **author** whose affiliation was listed as **MSF, Epicentre**, or Campaign for Access to Essential Medicines **(CAME)**
• **English** language

Search methodology:
• PubMed: keywords "medecins sans frontieres" and "epicentre"
• Google Scholar: keywords "medecins sans frontieres" and "epicentre"
• MSF Field Research repository (http://fieldresearch.msf.org/msf/)
• MSF-USA Research Articles listing (http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/publications/research/)

Articles were classified per the following definitions:

Article classification definition:
• **Research**: reporting primary data
• **Commentary**: commentaries, perspectives, viewpoints, reviews, editorials, MSF-authored news
• **Letter**: letter/correspondence to the editor or journal, subclassified as:
 • research (reporting primary data)
 • non-research

Each article was assigned a primary research topic and analyzed according to this single topic. If applicable, secondary topics were assigned.

Journals were grouped into topic areas, and designated as either open access (OA) or not OA. OA articles are freely available immediately upon publication.

Sensitivity analyses included verification against internal references, including 2010 publication lists of Epicentre, MSF-Belgium, MSF-Spain, and MSF-Switzerland.

Results

Per this analysis, **MSF published a total of 104 medical/scientific articles in 2010**: 75 (72.1%) research, 22 (21.2%) commentary, and 7 (6.7%) letters. Total **output of peer-reviewed original research in 2010 was 78 articles** (75 research articles + 3 research letters).

Medical publications by primary topic, 2010

Primary Topic	Research	Commentary	Letter	Total
HIV/AIDS	32	9	1	42
TB	10	2	1	13
Malaria	7	0	0	7
Malnutrition	5	0	0	5
Measles	5	0	0	5
Kala azar	3	0	1*	4
Operational research	0	4	0	4
Surgery	2	2	0	4
Human African trypanosomiasis	0	2	1*	3
Diarrheal diseases	1	0	1*	2
Violence	1	1	0	2
Other**	9	2	2	13
TOTAL	75	22	7	104

*denotes research letters.

**Other = 1 article each on acute kidney injury, diagnostics, filariasis, gonorrhea, hemorrhagic fever, meningitis, mental health, non-communicable diseases, varicella (Research); ethics, healthcare access (Commentary); dracunculiasis, vaccination (Letter).

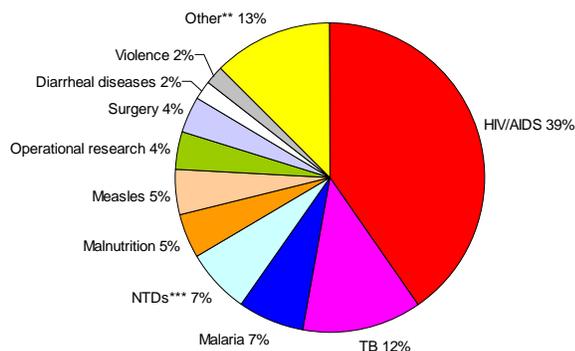### Journals
• All articles were published in 45 unique journals

• Medical publications by **journal topic**:
 • 34 (32.7%) in a general, multidisciplinary medical journal
 • 31 (29.8%) articles were published in a tropical medicine journal
 • 13 (12.5%) in a HIV/AIDS journal
 • 10 (9.6%) in an infectious diseases journal
 • 5 (4.8%) in a TB journal

Authorship
• 25/104 (24.0%) articles included an author affiliated with Epicentre.
• All articles with an Epicentre author were Research, except for 2 (both Commentaries)

Medical publications by primary topic, 2010

Pie chart: HIV/AIDS 39%, TB 12%, Malaria 7%, NTDs*** 7%, Malnutrition 5%, Measles 5%, Operational research 4%, Surgery 4%, Diarrheal diseases 2%, Violence 2%, Other** 13%

***Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) = visceral leishmaniasis (kala azar), human African trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness), Chagas disease, and Buruli ulcer

• For primary topics, **78.8%** (82/104) of all articles were on **infectious diseases**.

• Grouping the primary topics of the four WHO IDM **NTDs**, a total of **7 articles** were published, making IDM NTDs the third-most frequently published topic, tied with malaria.

• For **secondary topics**, among all articles: TB-HIV co-infection = 4; drug-resistant TB = 1; mortality = 5; diagnostics = 8; pediatrics = 6; drug safety = 3

Open Access
• Of the 45 journals in which all articles were published, 15 were Open Access journals

• A total of 31 articles were published in Open Access Journals
 • 13 articles were published in Public Library of Science (PLoS) journals
 • 13 articles were published in BioMed Central (BMC) journals
 • 2 articles were published in Emerging Infectious Diseases
 • 1 article was published in Canadian Family Physician
 • 1 article was published in Indian Journal of Medical Research
 • 1 article was published in Open AIDS Journal

Discussion / Conclusions

• **Publication output decreased slightly** from 2009
 • Total peer-reviewed publications decreased to 104 in 2010 from 123 in 2009
 • Publications containing original research decreased to 78 from 87
 • The percentage of publications that contained **original research increased slightly** (75% in 2010 vs. 70% in 2009)
 • The percentage of **OA publications decreased** from 40% in 2009 to 32% in 2010

• Primary topics where publication **increased in 2010:**
 • **HIV/AIDS:** 43 in 2010 vs. 38 in 2009
 • **Measles:** 5 in 2010 vs. 2 in 2009
 • **Operational Research:** 4 in 2010 vs. 3 in 2009

• Primary topics where publication **decreased in 2010:**
 • **Malaria:** 7 in 2010 vs. 10 in 2009
 • **Surgery:** 4 in 2010 vs. 11 in 2009
 • **Malnutrition:** 5 in 2010 vs. 8 in 2009
 • **Mental Health:** 1 in 2010 vs. 4 in 2009

This publication analysis should be utilized as a tool to help address the following questions:
 • How does publication output compare with **operational priorities and témoignage**?
 • How does publication output compare with **advocacy- and policy-related goals**?

Continued analysis of publication output is imperative in order to address these questions.

Limitations

• Limited sensitivity in literature searches may have excluded articles

• Assignments for primary/secondary topics, article type, and journal topic were subject to researcher bias and arbitrariness