

Training authors to write better papers

Jitendra Khanna

Responsible Officer

Department of Reproductive Health and Research

World Health Organization. Geneva

UNDP/UNFPA/WHO/World Bank Special
Programme of Research, Development and
Research Training in Human Reproduction
(HRP)

HRP

- Conducts and coordinates research in reproductive health
- Promotes the use of research results at national and international levels
- **Strengthen research capacity** in developing countries



HRP external evaluation 1988

- Researchers not trained in writing
- Training in research methods not enough
- Much research remains unpublished



HRP's communication philosophy

- A researchers job is not over until the findings:
 - have been peer-reviewed and published
 - have been disseminated to all audiences (including lay)
 - (where applicable) have led to policy impact.



HRP workshop

- Scientific writing workshops
- Communication workshops for scientists and policy-makers
- Information management workshops
- Writing a research proposal

- Critical appraisals of papers



Scientific writing

- Since 1991
- More than 30 workshops in 15 countries
- More than 500 researchers trained



Scientific writing workshops

To help biomedical researchers acquire the skills needed to write an original scientific research paper for publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

New workshop for social scientists



Key aspects of HRP workshops

- Build understanding
- Sharpen skills (thinking)
- Pragmatic "stepping-back" approach to teaching



Building understanding

- IMRAD and its logic
- The Vancouver guidelines
- The peer review process
- Journal editors' mindset



Key skills

- The research question
- The importance of relevance (writing an abstract)
- Presenting data (tables and illustrations)
- Language style

- Proof-reading



Method

- 3-day intensive programme
- Learning by doing
- Learning to work with colleagues
- Absolute minimum lecturing
- Respect for participants
- Building group dynamics



Participants

- 50% junior researchers
- 40% experienced researchers
- 10% highly experienced researchers
- Occasionally, editors of journals



Scientific writing workshops Evaluation

Number of participants and responses by centre (year)

Centre (year)	No. of participants	No. of responses
Argentina (1992)	17	10
Brazil (1993)	18	15
Chile (1991)	32	12
Mexico (1993)	15	12
Total	82	49 (58%)



Scientific writing workshops Evaluation

What the respondents said about the benefit of training

Statement	% Agree
I am more aware of what makes a well written and well structured paper	92
I feel more confident about my ability to write papers	69
I am able to write my papers in less time than I took before	43
I am able to revise my papers in less time than I took before	49
The quality of my papers has improved	57
I feel I am able to get my papers published more easily than before	22
I am able to get my papers published in more prestigious journals than before	14
I am better able to guide my junior colleagues in writing research papers	53



Lessons learnt

- Great need
- Huge demand
- Language a barrier, but....
- Introduction and Discussion hardest to write
- Training makes a difference



Thank you



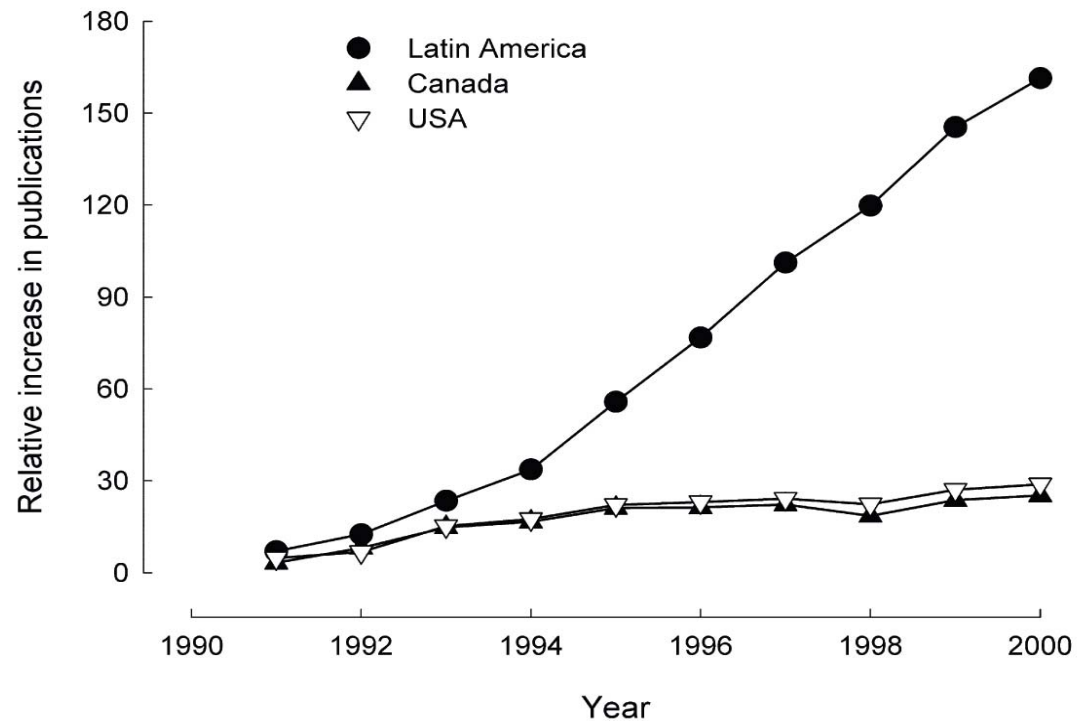


Figure 1. Relative Increase in Scientific Publications in the Americas

This figure shows the relative increase in publication in the Americas measured as the proportional change (%) in the number of SCI publications compared with the number of publications in 1990 (RICYT 2002).

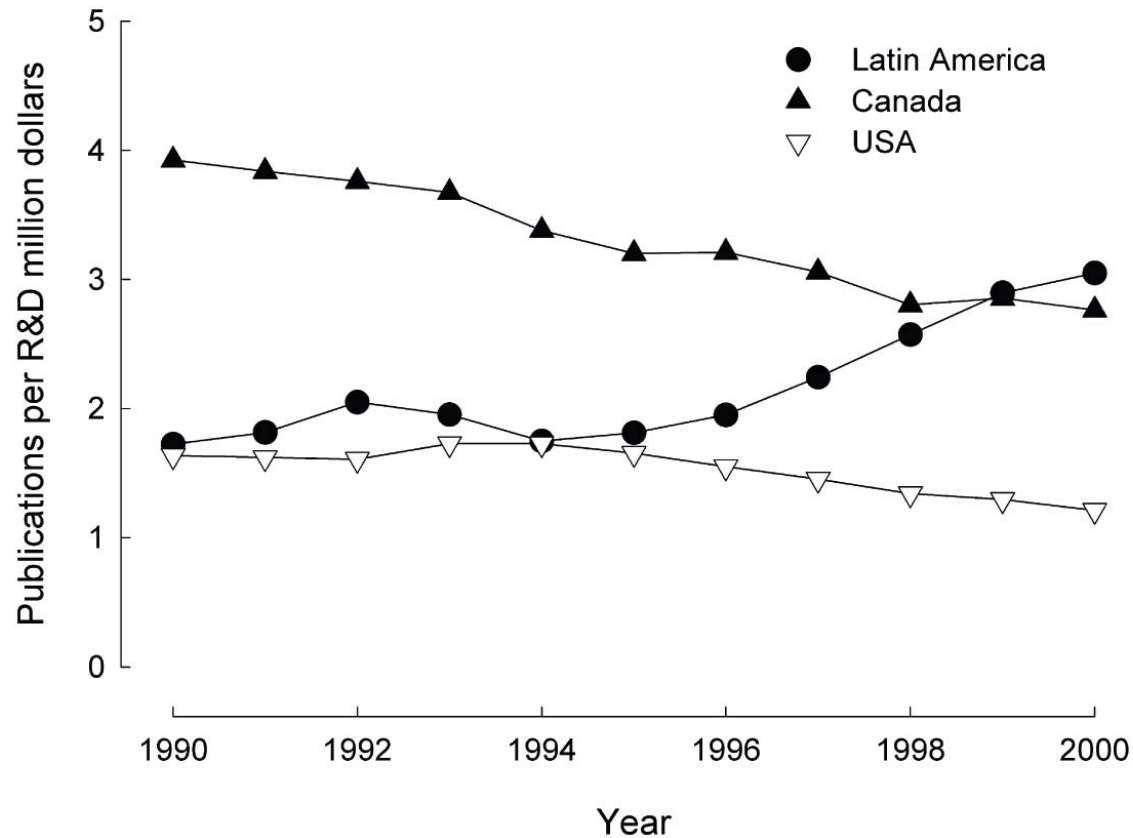


Figure 2. Number of SCI Publications per Million Dollars
This figure shows the number of SCI publications per million dollars that are invested in research and development in the Americas (RICYT 2002).