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Breast-cancer related lymphedema: Publication trends from 2007-2016

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Breast cancer-related lymphedema (BCRL) has been a poorly-researched topic; however, research productivity has increased within the last decade. We conducted a bibliometric analysis to characterize recent BCRL research and to understand which countries, institutions, and groups contribute most to the surge in publications over the last decade. A search for indexed English abstracts was performed in PubMed using search terms of (“lymphedema”[tiab] or “lymphoedema”[tiab]) AND “breast cancer”[tiab] from 2007 to 2016. Inclusion criteria were original research articles involving human subjects. Data collected for each article included: name(s) of the first and last author(s), journal of publication and impact factor (IF), publication year, country of author(s), income level of country, institution(s) of author(s), study type, and lymphedema study purpose. A total of 1,144 publications were identified, of which 570 met inclusion criteria. The ratio of publications by year is as follows: 2007 (5.6%), 2008 (5.4%), 2009 (7.7%), 2010 (7.7%), 2011 (9.6%), 2012 (11.2%), 2013 (11.2%), 2014 (11.1%), 2015 (14.2%), and 2016 (16.1%). The most common lymphedema study purpose is diagnostic/educational(35.5%), followed by treatment (30.2%), risk/risk factor (25.3%), and prevention (9%). The greatest number of articles was the USA (32.8%), Australia (9.6%), South Korea (6.7%), the United Kingdom (5.3%), China (3.7%), and Turkey (3.7%). Eight of the top ten BCRL research institutions are in the USA, with the remaining two from Australia. The top ten producing countries are all upper-middle- or high-income countries. BCRL research is predominantly being performed in the USA and other developed countries. BCRL research is starting to grow as healthcare providers start to focus on quality of life-impairing aspects of breast cancer. It is vital to describe BCRL research in order to emphasize the need for further investigation into BCRL.

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