

Italian performance in cancer research

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ABSTRACT

Aims and background. Italian performance in cancer research from 2000 to 2007 was assessed and compared to that of the other 19 wealthiest countries in the world which carry out the bulk of cancer research.

Methods. Performance was evaluated quantitatively as the number of publications in 125 journals indexed as 'oncological' by Journal Citation Reports and qualitatively as the total impact factor (TIF). Number of publications and TIF were adjusted for the population and gross domestic product (GDP) of each country. The Scopus database was used as publication source.

Results. Italy ranked 5th, with the US ranking 1st, over the entire study period for number of cancer publications, which increased over that period. Italy ranked 4th in 2006-2007 for GDP-adjusted and 5th for population-adjusted publication number, losing ground in the GDP-adjusted ranking and gaining ground in the population-adjusted ranking over the study period. When the quality of research publications was considered, in 2006-2007 Italy was in 5th place for crude TIF (US 1st), in 4th place for GDP-adjusted TIF (Sweden 1st), and in 6th place for population-adjusted TIF (Sweden 1st). Over the study period, Italy was stable for crude and population-adjusted TIF but declined somewhat for GDP-adjusted TIF.

Conclusions. Italy's performance in cancer research over the eight years to 2008 was better than expected considering its GDP and population. Nevertheless, the slight decline evidenced by the present study should induce scientists and policy makers to find ways to reverse the situation.

Key words: cancer research, impact factor, Italy.

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