Assessing PubMed metatag usage for plain language summary discoverability

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OBJECTIVES

We aimed to:

• establish the journal-level and article-level OA status of records with PLS
• determine the proportion of PubMed records correctly using the PLS tag and the reasons for incorrect usage

OA status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OA status</th>
<th>Number of records, n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open</td>
<td>2155 (77.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>1593 (58.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid</td>
<td>409 (14.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>69 (2.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronze</td>
<td>64 (2.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paywalled</td>
<td>607 (22.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>5 (0.2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Article-level OA status (n = 2747)

RESULTS

PLS TAGGING

• The entire PubMed database was downloaded (up to February 9, 2022) and searched for PLS indexed with an Extensible Markup Language (XML) plain-language-summary tag in the ‘Other Abstract’ field. Records were de-duplicated, and incorrectly tagged PLS were programmatically excluded for improper tag usage (i.e. non-PLS content) and confirmed with manual spot checks.

Overall, our results suggest that publishers need more guidance on how to correctly use the PLS tag on PubMed. This is important because tagging PLS correctly can facilitate publishers to increase the impact of an article, so that it can be found and used by readers.

DESIgn

BACKGROUND

• PubMed is one of the most widely used platforms for accessing biomedical research.
• When tagged correctly, text-based and concise plain language summaries (PLS) hosted on PubMed can maximize discoverability by a broader audience.1
• Open access (OA) publishing can also enhance discoverability, which increases publication accessibility and usage.2

• To date, all PLS available on PubMed are published in journals with OA options, and more than half are published in full/gold OA journals. These journals are likely to benefit from a PLS through increased discoverability and publication accessibility.

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• All 105 journals were fully open access or had open access options. We also looked at how many of the individual articles were open access. Of the 2747 articles with correctly tagged PLS, 983 (35.6%) were open access. Overall, our results suggest that publishers need more guidance on how to correctly use the PLS tag on PubMed. This is important because tagging PLS correctly can facilitate publishers to increase the impact of an article, so that it can be found and used by readers.

• There is an unmet need for explicit guidance on both the process of indexing and the correct usage of the plain-language-summary tag, which could help improve uptake and correct tagging.

• To date, all PLS available on PubMed are published in journals with OA options, and more than half are published in full/gold OA journals. These journals are likely to benefit from a PLS through increased discoverability and publication accessibility.

• Ultimately, these findings highlight an opportunity for publishers to increase the impact of their journals’ content and reach a broader audience by ensuring correct PubMed tagging as they expand their PLS offerings.

REFERENCES


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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES

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