

Inequity in health research publication in Africa – and some suggestions

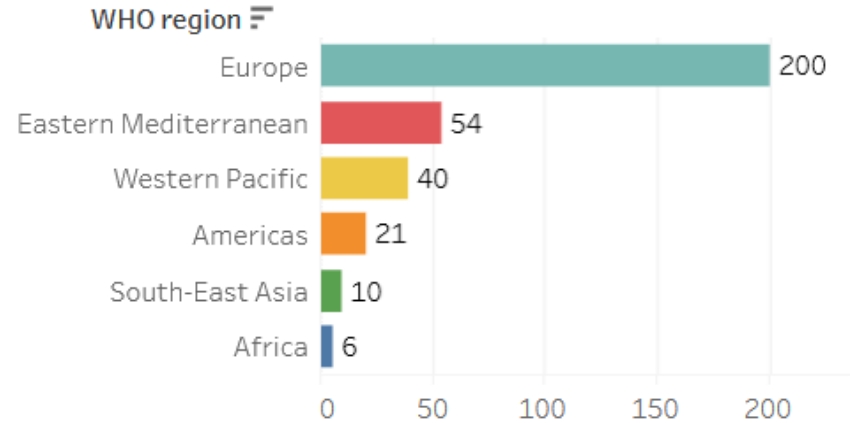
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A. Health researchers by WHO region

(FTE per million inhabitants)

Based on 74 countries



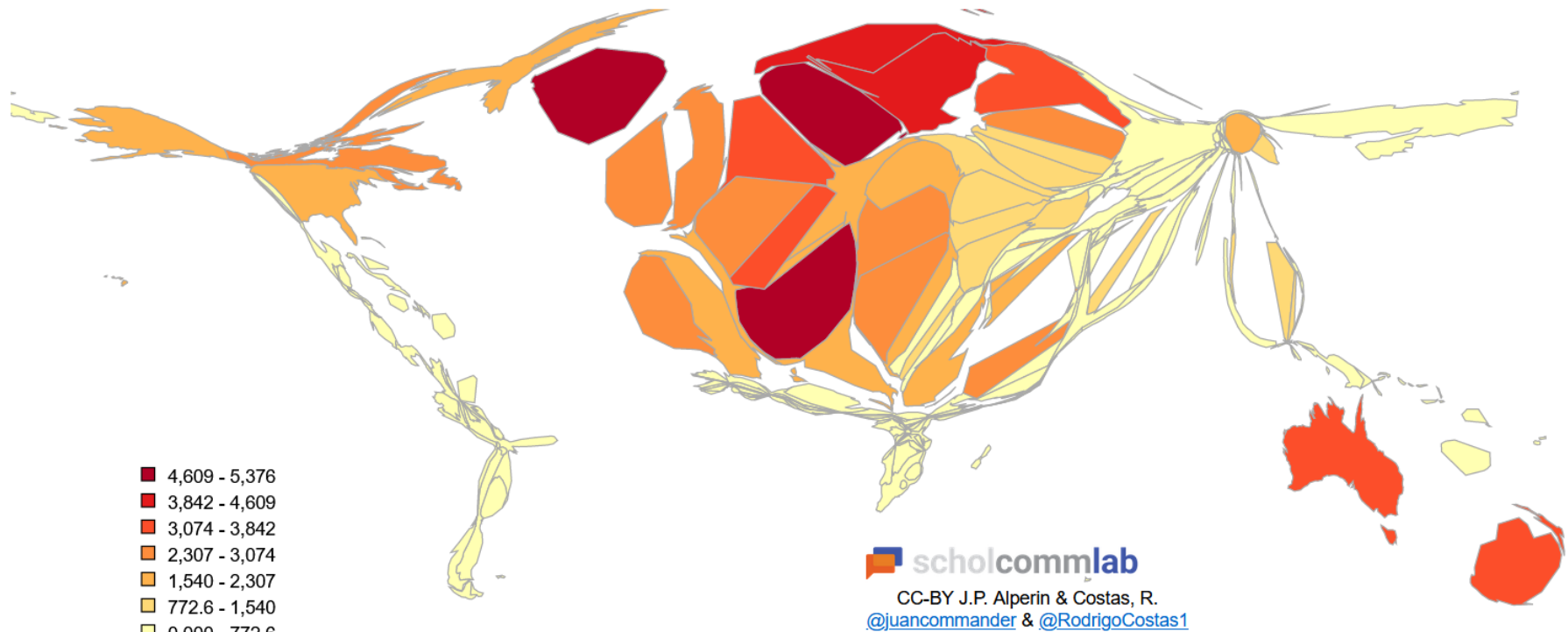


What I hope to cover

- Global inequity in publishing research
- Results of two research projects on African health research publication
- Capacity building in Peer Review and Open publishing
- How can distributing education and knowledge creation improve equity in access to education and knowledge
- Coalition for Open Publishing of Public Health in Africa (COPPHA)
- What practical steps might SHAJ and similar journals take

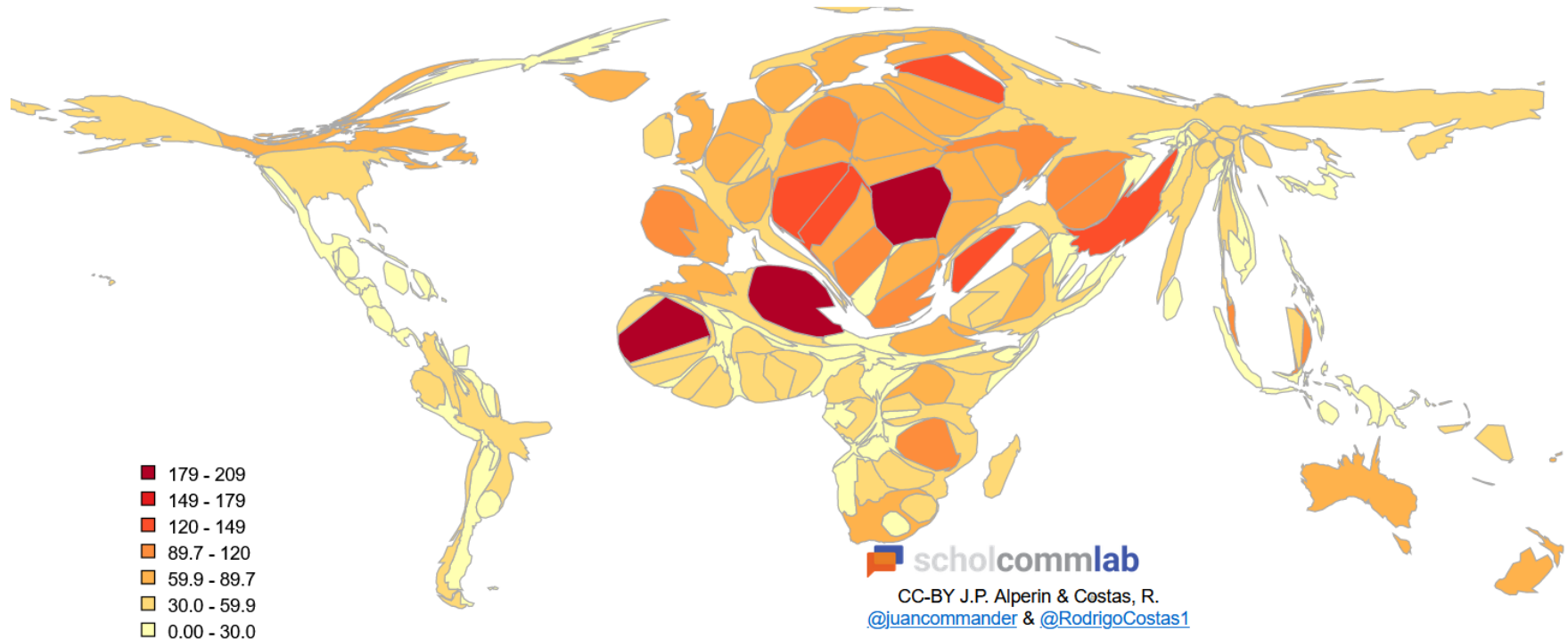
Global inequity in scientific publications

World scaled by number of documents published in 2017
with authors from each country as a proportion of the population in 2017



Global inequity in scientific publications (adjusted for GDP)

World scaled by number of documents published in 2017
with authors from each country as a proportion of the GDP in 2017




Causes of inequity

- Opportunities for research are limited
 - Relatively few trained researchers and career opportunities
 - Colonisation of research continues
- Opportunities for publishing research are limited
 - Quality of journals problematic
 - High costs (APCs) limit submission
 - Institutional policies favour international journals
- Access to subscription journals limited due to paywalls

What proportion of African journals, in the broad field of Public Health, publish articles in various categories of open access?

- Search for journals published in each country using AJOL (African Journals Online), AIM (African Index Medicus), local knowledge
- Country journals investigated: 13 countries
- Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe
- Data collected by country investigators and validated by an expert librarian to standardise results



What proportion of African journals, in the broad field of Public Health, publish articles in various categories of open access?

- 173 journals explored with numbers varying from 1 to 85 in each country.
- 78 published by universities and 95 by learned societies (some jointly)
- 89 published twice a year or annually.

What proportion of African journals, in the broad field of Public Health, publish articles in various categories of open access?

- 111 of the 173 journals (64%) were open access and available for free download
- 68 (39%) used a Creative Commons licence
- 22% were indexed in PubMed, 8% on MEDLINE, 28% on DOAJ, but 67% on AJOL
- Article Processing Charges: APC: 93 (54%): Of these, 32 (34%) fully or partially waived



What proportion of African journals, in the broad field of Public Health, publish articles in various categories of open access?

- African researchers wishing to publish public health research in local journals have varying opportunities
- Many face Article Processing Charges
- Research findings will be difficult to be found by others, as very few journals are indexed
- There is scope for improvements in open publishing of research in local African journals



Needs survey among 91 African public health practitioners

To identify:

Knowledge of and barriers to open access research publication

Expressed need for a programme to boost capacity for open publishing of public health research in Africa

Needs survey among 91 African public health practitioners

Fewer than half of the respondents:

- had experience with open access publications in the previous three years
- appreciated the benefits of ready availability, added visibility and citations and transparency of the open publishing model
- identified either opportunities for or threats to open access publishing in public health in Africa

Needs survey among 91 African public health practitioners

Perceived needs for training and mentoring

- 73% of the respondents would like access to free online courses of relevance to them
- 68% would be interested in joining a mentoring programme

Two online courses



Course 1. Peer review

Fundamentals and Challenges of the Peer Review Process

AI and the Review Process

How to Review a Journal Article

Performing a Peer Review Assignment

Course 2. Open publishing and open peer review

Online peer review course for Africa 1136 registrants

Career stage

Early: 830

Mid: 261

Senior: 45



Online peer review course for Africa has 1136 registrants

	Number of Papers Submitted to Journals				
Number of Peer Reviews	None	1-5	6-10	> 10	Total
None	253	238	39	20	550
1-3	43	204	70	45	362
4-10	7	46	37	80	170
>10	1	4	5	44	54
Total	304	492	151	189	1136

Peer review and research

- There is a strong relation between having the skills for peer review and for performing and publishing your research
- Many of the course participants discussed motivation issues in peer review (as a reviewer as well as an author)
- There may be similar issues in motivation for research itself



Knowledge creation

- Need to create knowledge before it can be published
- Then the created knowledge should be published and disseminated in ways that make it available to increase the likelihood that the research findings will be incorporated into policy and action across populations.



Distributing knowledge creation

Three issues demonstrate the need for distributing knowledge creation

1. Research under-represents diverse populations.
2. Research publications are biased towards the Global North
3. Educational resources are biased in the same way.

Distributing knowledge creation

Factors to make distributing knowledge creation work

- Structural change
- Co-creation of knowledge
- Publication options
- Incorporation into educational programmes
- Building capacity in this area through: Research capacity building; Development of publishing options; Creation of educational resources.

COPPHA: Coalition for the Open Publishing of Public Health in Africa

- Online courses
- **BAOBAB** repository provides a preprint platform for researchers to share their findings promptly, ensuring rapid dissemination
- **PublishNow** Review Platform complements this by facilitating open peer review of preprints. Reviews are publicly accessible.
- Overlay journals
- Community of interested institutions, journals, researchers, reviewers

COPPHA: Coalition for the Open Publishing of Public Health in Africa

- An overlay journal is a scientific journal whose articles are held in one or more repositories. Published documents are not hosted on the journal's website, but on an open repository or preprint server such as arXiv, HAL, Zenodo, bioRxiv, medRxiv, edRxiv etc.
- All journals are Diamond Open Access journals:
- There are no access fees.
- There are no publication fees
- We hope that COPPHA will host one for African public health research

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COPPHA: Coalition for the Open Publishing of Public Health in Africa

How can SHAJ and GHA be involved?

- Relevance of publishing models
- Further capacity building
- Join COPPHA
- Other?