

THE ECOSYSTEM OF EVIDENCE

Navigating the future
of the ecosystem of evidence

Artificial intelligence and digital transformation
in research and healthcare

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Survey of barriers and enablers to publishing sub-Saharan African (SSA) Randomised trials

Implications for AI-enabled reporting support

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Personal Declaration

No conflict of interest to declare

I have no actual or potential conflict of interest in relation to this presentation.

I have no financial interest, arrangement, or affiliation with any organisation(s) that could be perceived as a direct or indirect conflict of interest in the context or content of this presentation.

However, the SAMRC provided seed funding to help start the project, with no perceived conflict of interest.

Acknowledgement

The South African Medical Research Council recognises the catastrophic and persisting consequences of colonialism and apartheid, including land dispossession and the intentional imposition of educational and health inequities.

Acknowledging the SAMRC's historical role and silence during apartheid, we commit our capacities and resources to the continued promotion of justice and dignity in health research in South Africa.

Background

Open science depends on timely, complete reporting



47%

of completed trials never reached full publication

SSA: the least studied, most affected region.

Source: Showell et al., Cochrane Database Syst Rev 2024

Aims & Methods

A cross-sectional survey of SSA-based principal investigators

Why aren't SSA trials being published?

6,056

Invited via WHO ICTRP

EN · FR · PT

Anonymised REDCap survey

409

Consenting PIs

Results

High awareness meets a different reality

THE MINDSET

62.7%

Aware of duty to publish

71/100

Perceived severity score

THE REALITY

63.1%

Published within 24 months

23.6%

Never able to publish

n = 362 (awareness/severity) · n = 347 (publication practice)

Results

Time, analysis and rejection drive delay - training is largely absent

47.9%

Time constraints

38.9%

Time-consuming analysis

36.8%

Journal rejection

74.1%

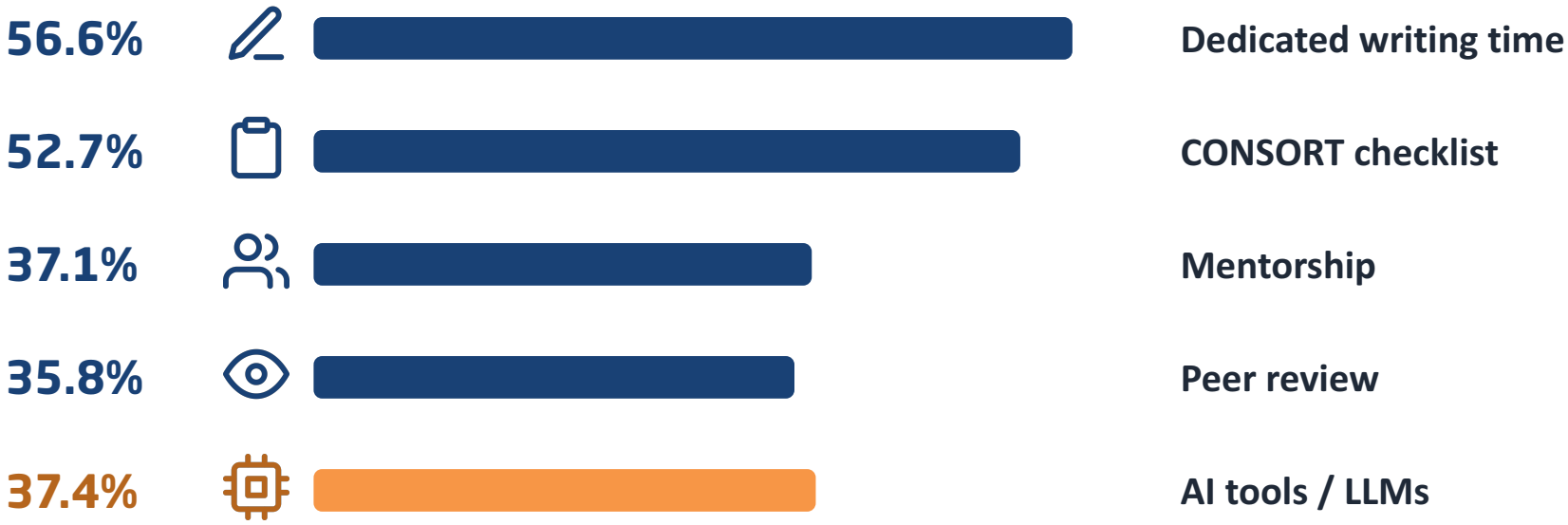
Never received formal training

Reasons for delay beyond 24 months (n = 143)

A skills and support gap - not a motivation problem.

Results

Investigators favour structural support over emerging technology



AI tools are promising, not yet a silver bullet.

Discussion

This isn't a responsibility problem - it's a structural one

90%+

agree publishing is the PI's duty

Awareness is not the barrier.

WHAT ACTUALLY BLOCKS THEM

- **Global North gatekeeping**
- **Language & APC barriers**
- **Time poverty**
- **Limited training**

Implications

AI-enabled reporting support must target the real, structural leaks

Time-poor · 47.9% → **AI drafting assistance**

Data → first draft

No training · 74.1% → **AI structuring guidance**

CONSORT-aligned support

Rejection · 36.8% → **Pre-submission checks**

Catches issues early

Next: co-design with SSA trialists.

Limitations & Conclusion

Towards transparency and equity across the global evidence ecosystem

STUDY LIMITATIONS

- Modest response rate
- Self-reported, recall bias
- Francophone/Lusophone gap

Time & skills support

+

Co-designed AI digital tools

Timelines, transparency & equity

Next: stakeholder consultation with SSA trialists.