

Service rendering in mainstream and alternative medical research: a study of journal articles' paratexts

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ABSTRACT (496 words)

BACKGROUND

Acknowledgments (ACK) have developed rather sporadically in the scientific communication process, and it is only in the 1960's that they became widespread practice. Their presence is today a routine feature of most scientific journals in the hard as well as in the soft disciplines (McCain 1991, Cronin et al. 1992, 1993, 2003, 2004). As a matter of fact, ACK play such an important role in today's Anglo-American scholarly communication that they are at the heart of bitter disputes concerning the blurred relationship between authorship and collaboration. It has even been suggested that ACK be used in a researcher's academic audit process along with authorship and citations, thus completing a scientific "*Reward triangle*" (Cronin 2005: 176). Only recently has this "part genre" been the object of linguistics and applied linguistic inquiry (cf. Giannoni 1998, 2002, 2005; Hyland 2003, 2004; Hyland and Tse 2004).

OBJECTIVE, CORPUS and METHODS

The aim of this paper is to analyze from a socio-pragmatic perspective the ACK paratext in two different kinds of English-written medical research: 25 ACK from conventional/mainstream/academic/scientific medicine (SC) articles and 25 from complementary/alternative medicine (CAM) papers published in top-ranking journals between 2004 and 2005. These 50 ACK metatexts were all drawn from experimental research papers. The following variables were recorded in each ACK space: the number of co-authors along with their institutional affiliation; the length of the ACK space; the number of acknowledgees and what they were acknowledged for (i.e., moral, editorial, technical, instrumental, financial and/or conceptual support), and the number and type of fundings bodies credited (e.g., pharmaceutical laboratories, funding agencies, educational institutions and companies or corporates).

RESULTS

Eighty four percent of SC papers and 52% of CAM papers were written by Anglophones authors. The average number of authors per paper and of named acknowledgees was much greater in the SC category than in its CAM counterpart. All the papers in the SC category contained an ACK statement, whereas only 88% of those in the CAM category did. ACK were much longer in SC papers, and more SC papers than CAM ones reported having received funds to conduct their research. The average number of funding sources per paper was also much higher in the SC paper category than in its CAM counterpart. Significantly more authors

of the SC papers than of the CAM papers reported having received funds from sponsors and more SC authors mentioned that financial sponsors were directly involved in the research design/review/submission. The three most frequent ACK motivations in both research types were financial, instrumental/technical and academic/conceptual. Pharmaceutical companies were the most frequently acknowledged sponsors in the SC category of paper followed by governmental corporations. By contrast, corporation funds followed by educational institutions were found to most frequently support CAM research.

INTERPRETATION

We conclude that CAM research tends to be less collaborative and interdependent than SC research is, thus underlining the recency of CAM research as a field of scientific inquiry and, consequently, the recency of its sociotechnical and sociocognitive networks.

Key words: *complementary/alternative medicine, acknowledgements, scientific/conventional medicine, sociocognitive/sociotechnical networks*

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