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Practices and perceptions in research data management: a cross-sectional study based in a Brazilian university hospital

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Introduction: Proper data management is essential to ensure the integrity, transparency, and reuse of data in scientific research. **Objectives:** This study aimed to investigate the practices and perceptions related to data management among researchers at a university hospital in southern Brazil. **Methods:** This was a cross-sectional, exploratory study. Consecutive sampling was used to invite researchers with at least one active human research project. Data collection was conducted between April and November 2024 through an electronic questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Practices (37 items across six dimensions) and Perception (10 items). Document analysis (14 items) was carried out through duplicate review of research protocols. Additionally, a project structure assessment was performed in the REDCap platform (11 items). **Results:** Of the 375 researchers invited, 184 agreed to participate; 166 responded to the section on data management practices, and 160 completed the entire questionnaire, answering both the practices and perception sections. The analysis of practices revealed significant use of spreadsheets (62.7%), electronic forms (78.9%), and paper forms (43.4%). The main tools reported for data entry included platforms such as Google (68.7%), MS Excel (57.2%), and REDCap (39.8%). Although 69.9% of participants reported preserving their research data, only 10.2% planned to use public repositories. Researchers' perceptions were positive in 9 out of 10 items on a 5-point scale. However, non-response rates for items such as interoperability (13%) and data transparency and accessibility (7%) highlight gaps that need to be better understood. Additionally, 544 research projects registered at the institution were analyzed through document review, of which 103 (17.6%) had databases registered on the REDCap platform. The results revealed shortcomings in data management planning, with 52.8% of projects not specifying tools for this purpose, as well as variations in storage and security practices. Despite the growing use of platforms such as REDCap, many researchers still lack adequate training. **Conclusion:** It is concluded that strengthening institutional policies and investing in researcher training can improve research quality and integrity, promoting a more transparent and collaborative scientific culture.

Primary authors: Prof. UMPIERRE, Daniel (Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul); DA SILVA, ROBERTO (Hospital de Clínicas de Porto Alegre)

Co-authors: Ms FERNANDES, Cibeli (Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul); Ms MICHELS, Evelin (Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul); CARVALHO, Jessica; Ms SCHERER, Raphaella (Universidade Luterana do Brasil); Ms HIRAKATA, Vania (Hospital de Clínicas de Porto Alegre)

Presenters: Prof. UMPIERRE, Daniel (Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul); DA SILVA, ROBERTO (Hospital de Clínicas de Porto Alegre)

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