



OBJECTIVE

To investigate the landscape of news media coverage of spinal cord injury (SCI) research in English-speaking countries (Canada, the USA, Australia, the UK, and Ireland) with significant research activity.

BACKGROUND

- For ~20.6 million people living with SCI¹, news media are a vital source for novel research developments^{2,3}.
- News media feature both health-promoting and health-compromising content².
- To meet the standard of beneficence, news media coverage must be accessible, scientifically accurate, and appropriately balanced³.

METHODS

- We mined 3 news aggregators (LexisNexis, Factiva, Canadian Newsstream) using the terms spinal cord injury and research, and their variants (Jan 2012 to Dec 2022).
- Articles were included if SCI and research were the foci. We present news media coverage of research on human models only.
- Data were extracted and coded by multiple reviewers for thematic analysis to identify research trends and ethics themes.

RESULTS (N=172)

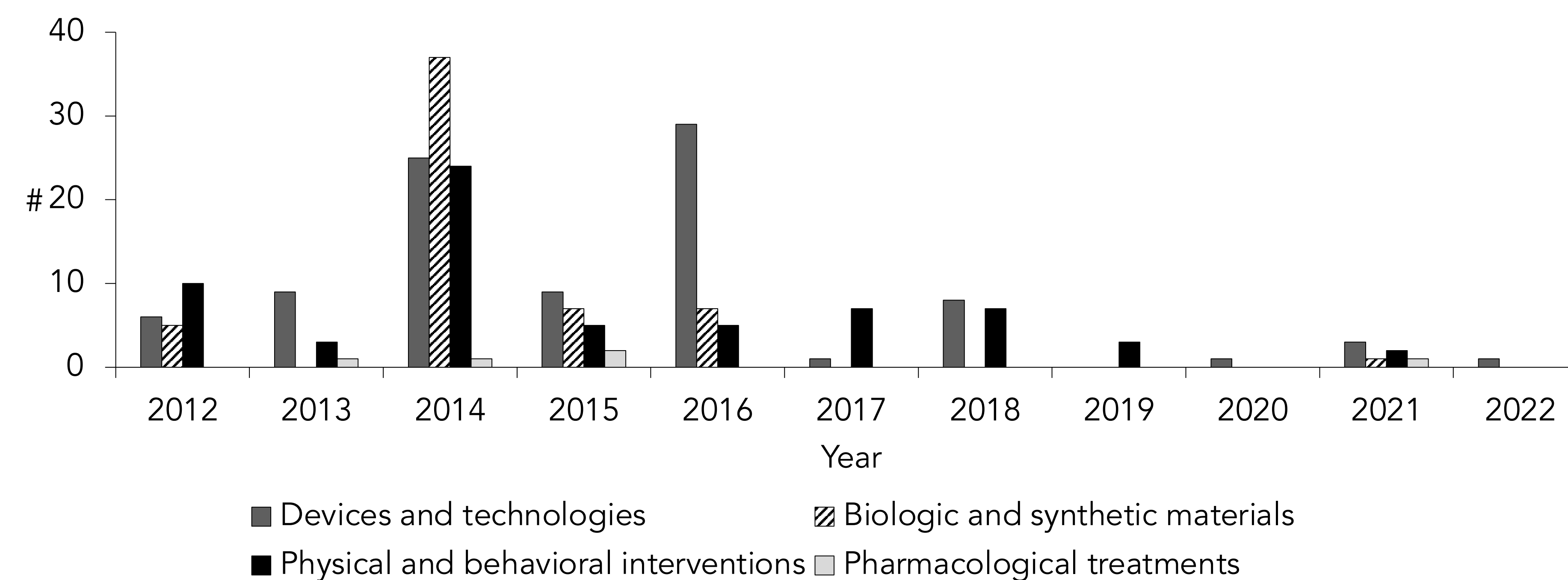


Figure 1. Frequency of news articles reporting on SCI research.

	CAN (N=42) %	USA (N=39) %	AUS (N=23) %	UK (N=60) %	IRL (N=8) %
Devices and technologies	36	72	52	58	25
Biologic and synthetic materials	33	21	39	35	63
Physical and behavioral interventions	62	41	22	30	13
Pharmacological treatments	0	5	4	3	0

Table 1. International news media coverage per intervention type.

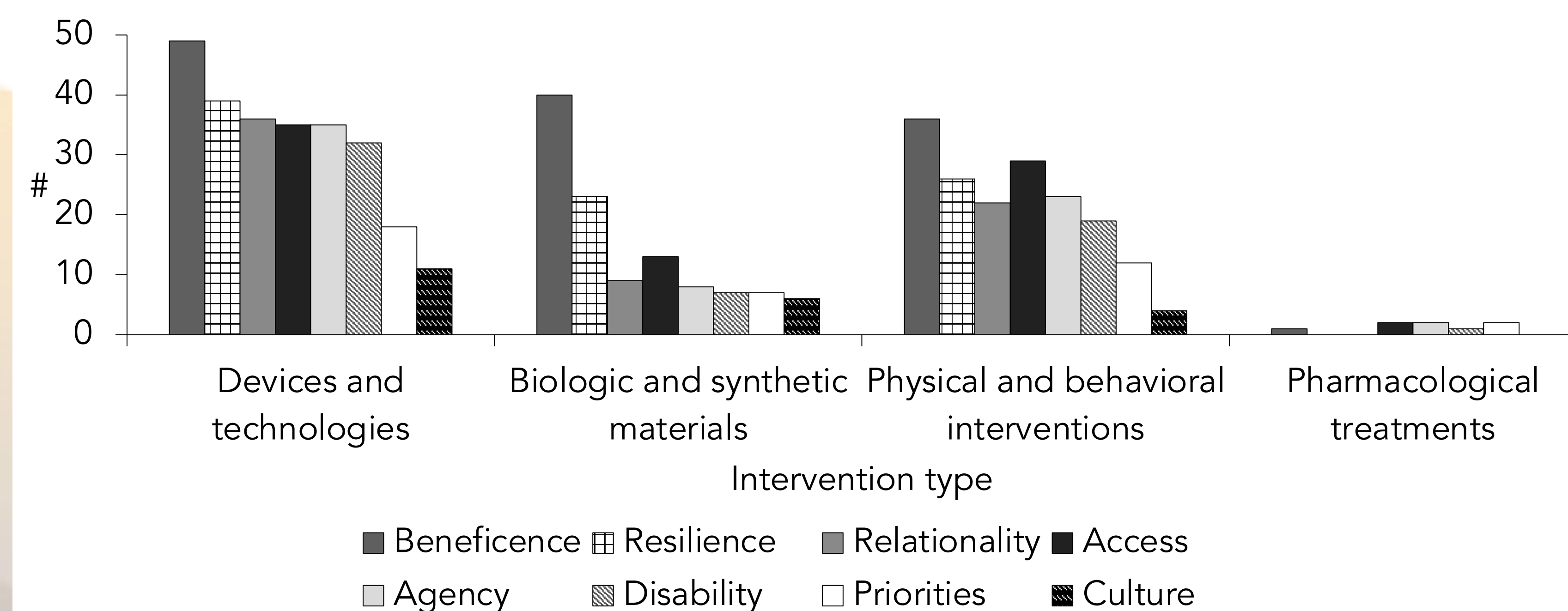


Figure 2. Ethics clusters per intervention.

- News articles from Canada and the USA convey research in a balanced tone; articles from Australia, the UK, and Ireland contain a generally optimistic tone.
- Reporting for biologic and synthetic materials are conveyed most optimistically.
- Quality of life and mobility are the primary target outcomes covered.

DISCUSSION

- There is a sharp drop-off in news coverage of SCI research after 2016.
- Canadian news focus on physical and behavioral interventions; the USA and the UK on devices and technologies; and, Ireland on biologic and synthetic materials.
- Beneficence and resilience are the primary ethics foci in news reporting.

CONCLUSION

Findings underscore the complex interplay between news media representation and ethical considerations in shaping discourse on SCI research.

REFERENCES

- ¹ GBD Spinal Cord Injuries Collaborators (2023), *The Lancet. Neurol.*; ² Levin-Zamir, D., & Bertschi, I. (2018), *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health.*; ³ Lennox, A., et al. (2018), *Top Spinal Cord Inj Rehabil.*

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Go, S.P., et al., From the bench to the public: A systematic review of news media coverage on advances in spinal cord injury research. *In preparation.*