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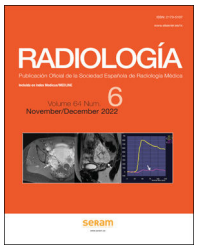

EDITORIAL

A step forward in digital communication: Visual abstract in the journal *Radiología*

Un paso adelante en la comunicación digital: el abstract visual en *Radiología*

The digital age has changed our world through the creation of cyber infrastructures that enable information exchanges between people located in the most distant parts of the world. Today, social networks are a means of both social interaction and access to knowledge, and there has been a proliferation of scientific and professional online profiles. Due to the immense amount of information sources available at the click of a button, users increasingly expect messages to be clearer and more concise. The dissemination of scientific literature needs to adapt to the 'rules of the game', from which it is not exempt. Several scientific journals are adapting to this context by creating visual abstracts to share the results and main conclusions of the articles they publish.

A visual abstract is a graphical representation of the same key points that are normally contained in a textual abstract.[1] This new way of communicating professional findings has a number of advantages over conventional methods, such as the increased effectiveness of using succinct visual formats to convey data to readers, and greater dissemination through digital media. This increased visibility of the article is intended to improve the metrics of the authors and the journal. A study analysing the impact of articles on nephrology that were shared on Twitter revealed that those articles that were promoted using a visual abstract received more than twice as many views as those that only used citations, and user engagement with comments was also five times greater.[2] Another study that focused on the dissemination of articles on Twitter compared the impact of papers on geriatrics that used visual abstracts with those that did not. The result was that the former obtained more than five times the number of views, almost five times the number of retweets, and three times as many 'likes', in half the time.[3] Yet another study, this time examining the impact of articles on surgery that were shared on Twitter, yielded even better results, with up to an eight-fold increase in views and retweets for papers with visual abstracts.[4] While this data set is complementary to traditional metrics, it is not always easy to interpret its real impact on the dissemination of a scientific article. With this in mind, several companies have emerged which offer services related to the quantification of these new parameters (number of mentions, captures, citations, sources, authors, usage, etc.) and the creation of more objective and comparable indices, such as Altmetric, PlumX Metrics, Impactstory or PLOS Article-level metrics.[5]

The incorporation of visual abstracts in *Radiología* was announced by Dr. García Villar in a previous editorial,[6] and we hope to consolidate the practice during 2023, applying it to all 'Update in Radiology' and 'Original' articles. A standard template and brief guide have been created and made available in the journal's author guidelines in an attempt to aid authors and encourage a degree of uniformity in design.[7] As with manuscripts and other documents submitted to the Editorial Manager® platform, visual abstracts will be evaluated by the reviewers and editor assigned to the article, who may propose changes to ensure they meet the established criteria. This undoubtedly implies a little extra effort on all sides; it may also necessitate specific training or time spent searching for resources on statistics and data visualisation, icons, fonts or infographics. In short, it provides our community with a new learning opportunity, a digital communication strategy to be explored, and another step forward for *Radiología* in its unwavering commitment to continuous improvement[8] and quality.

For maximum effect, a visual abstract has to be clear, concise and effective.[9] It must therefore be meticulously planned, with a focus on summarising the information as much as possible to achieve a harmonious and balanced layout that comprises visual elements (icons, graphs, tables, etc.); it should be arranged in a uniform style with a minimum amount of text. Readability can be improved and content made more appealing with a top-to-bottom or left-to-right organisation and the use of images and fonts of different types and sizes, without the need for headings. The ultimate goal is to generate immediate interest in the

reader, so that they will decide to share the visual abstract on social media or access the full text of the article.

Although not fully exploited at present, visual abstracts have great potential. They can make our work more visible and are a useful tool for the scientific community whose members—given the huge number of radiology publications that exist—find it hard to identify and cite new studies, even when they include important contributions.[10] Being an image-based speciality, radiology has the opportunity to spearhead the development of visual abstract models that are didactic and appealing to the reader, without sacrificing scientific quality. In response to the prevailing demand for brief content that characterises social networks, the future dissemination of radiology research will undoubtedly involve visual abstracts.

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