

The Research Activities of Ontario's Large Community Acute Care Hospitals: a Scoping Review

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INTRODUCTION

- In Canada, community hospitals provide the majority of patient care while academic hospitals conduct most clinical teaching and research.^{1,2}
- The disconnect between where patients receive their care and where health research is conducted leads to poor recruitment into clinical studies and decreased generalizability of research results.³
- Recently, efforts have been made to increase community hospital research engagement with the goal of improving patient outcomes and organizational efficiency, as well as enhancing career satisfaction for clinical staff.^{3,4}
- DiDiodato and colleagues conducted a scoping review of the research publications of Ontario's large community hospitals (LCHs) from 2013-2015. Total research output for 44 hospitals was 798 publications, representing an annual output of 266 publications.² No updated review of Ontario's LCH research productivity has been conducted.

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this scoping review was to provide an updated picture of the research activities undertaken by Ontario's acute LCHs, describing the extent of research, type of publications and frequency of collaboration within and between Ontario's community hospitals.

METHOD

A scoping review was conducted using the methodological framework by Arksey and O'Malley⁵:

Step 1: Identifying the Research Question

- For research articles published between 2016 and 2022 whose author(s) is affiliated with any of Ontario's LCHs, what are the extent, type and collaborative nature of Ontario's LCHs' research activities?

Steps 2 & 3: Identifying Relevant Studies & Study Selection

- 3 medical databases (PubMed, Embase, and the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature) were systematically searched for publications from January 2016 to December 2022 that included at least one author affiliated with an Ontario acute LCH (based on data from the Ontario Hospital Association).
- All publication types were included but the topic had to be hospital or health-related.

Step 4: Charting the Data

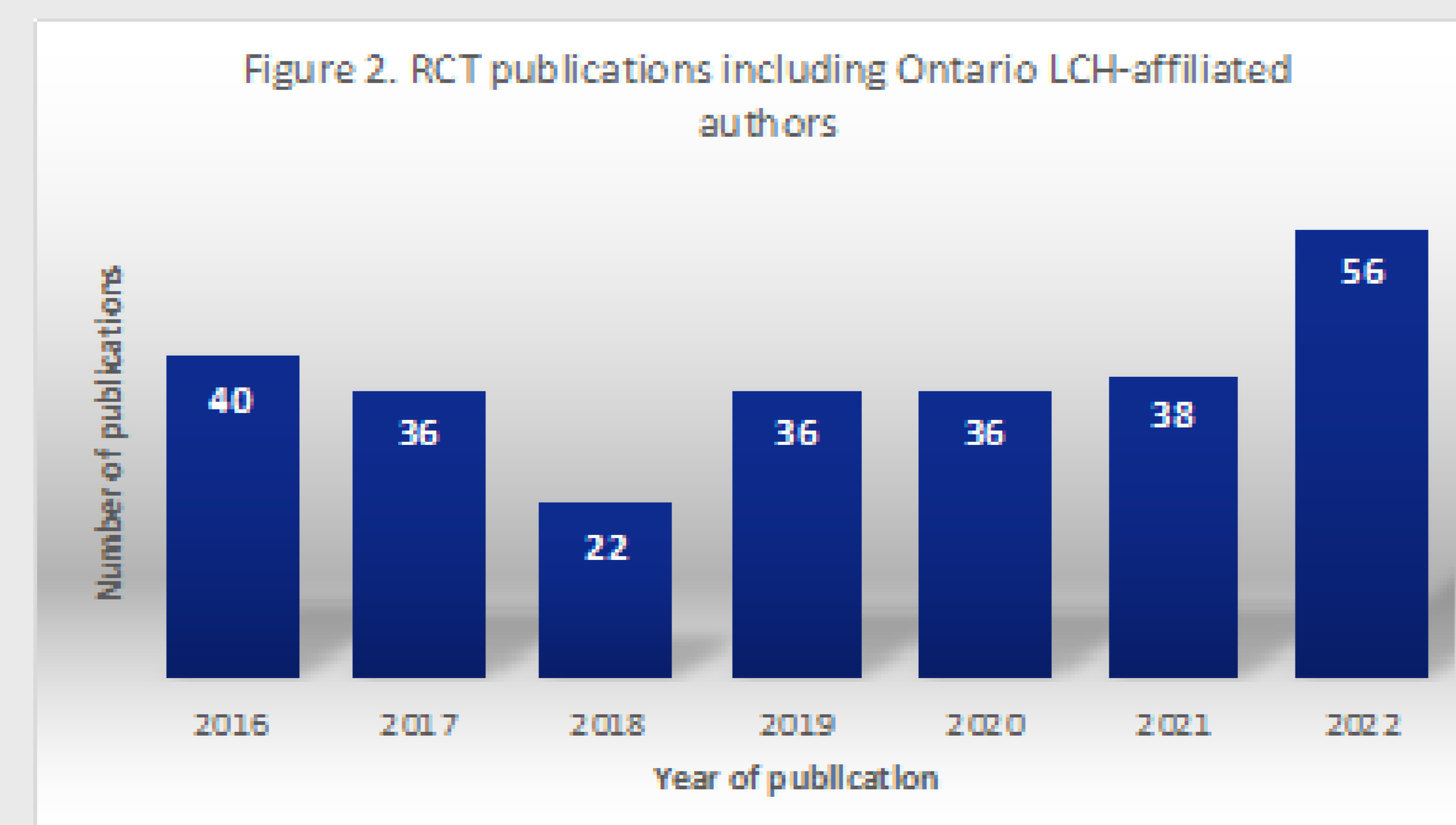
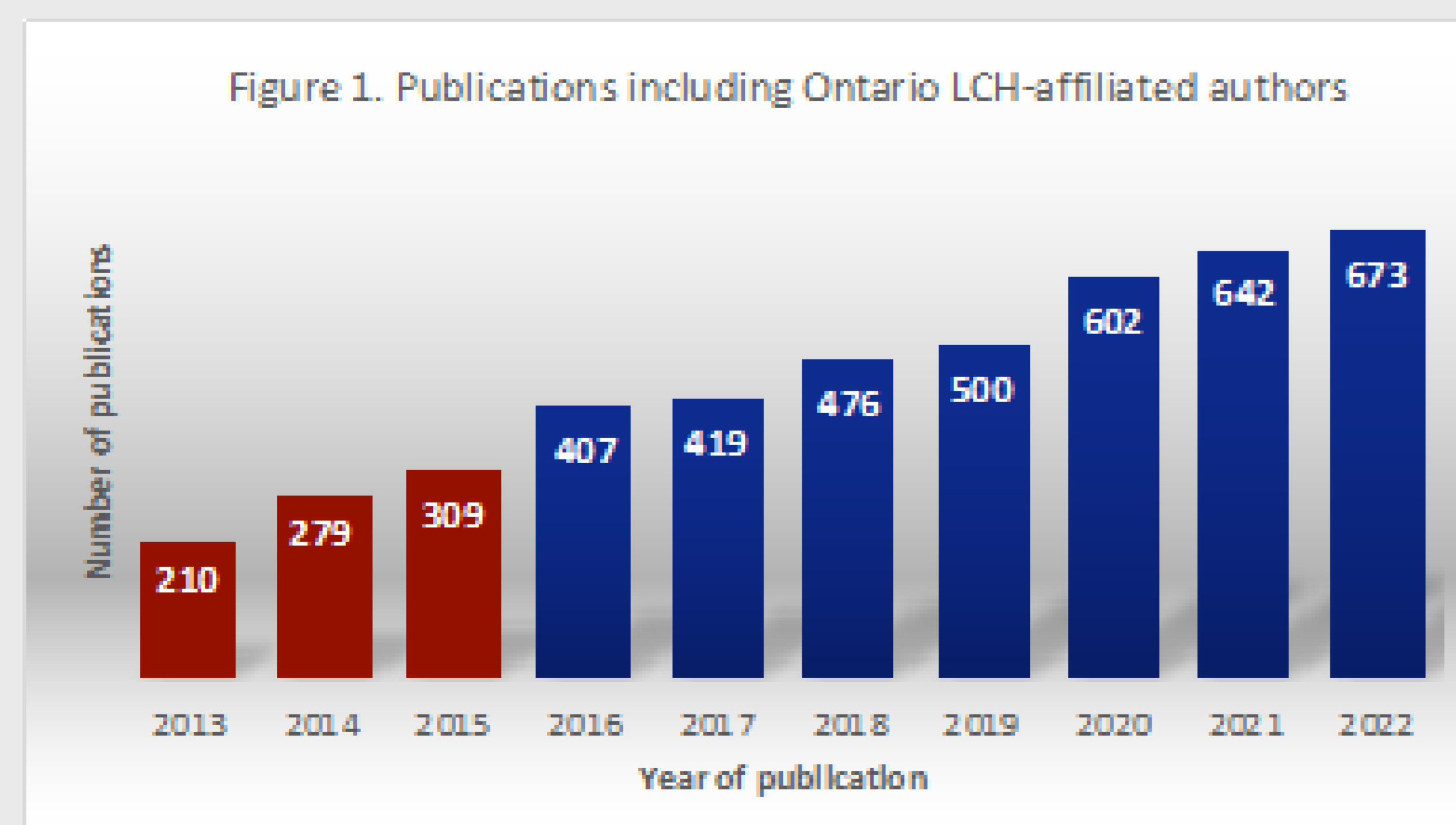
- Screening and extraction occurred concurrently by four members of the research team. The first 20 articles were screened and extracted by all screeners and compared to ensure consistency.

Step 5: Collecting, Summarizing and Reporting Results

- Extraction sheets were compiled, cleaned and analysed by one member of the research team. Results were described using descriptive statistics and data visualization tools.

RESULTS

- Of 6,730 articles screened, 3,719 publications had at least one author from one of 47 Ontario LCHs.
- The most common publication type were observational studies (n=1,652; 44%), followed by review articles (n=350; 9%), randomized controlled trials (n=324; 9%), and qualitative research (n=230; 6%)
- LCH-affiliated first authors and senior authors were identified in 997 (27%) and 962 (26%) articles, respectively
- Amongst the 1,510 studies with LCH-affiliated first or senior authors, 708 (46%) included collaborators from the same LCH and 243 (16%) included collaborators from other Ontario LCHs



CONCLUSION

Health research by clinicians and researchers affiliated with Ontario's LCHs has increased markedly over the last decade, however participation in randomized clinical trials is unchanged. Our concurrent qualitative study has demonstrated that there are many barriers to clinical research participation in community hospitals. Financial and infrastructure support are required to increase RCT participation by LCHs. In addition, funders should encourage pragmatic RCTs that are relevant to the LCH setting.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to acknowledge **Maiya Bolibruck of Brock University**, for assistance with data extraction and **Ian D. Gordon, Brock University Library Teaching & Learning Librarian**, for assistance with database selection, searching, screening and citation management.

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Figure 1. Publications including Ontario LCH-affiliated authors

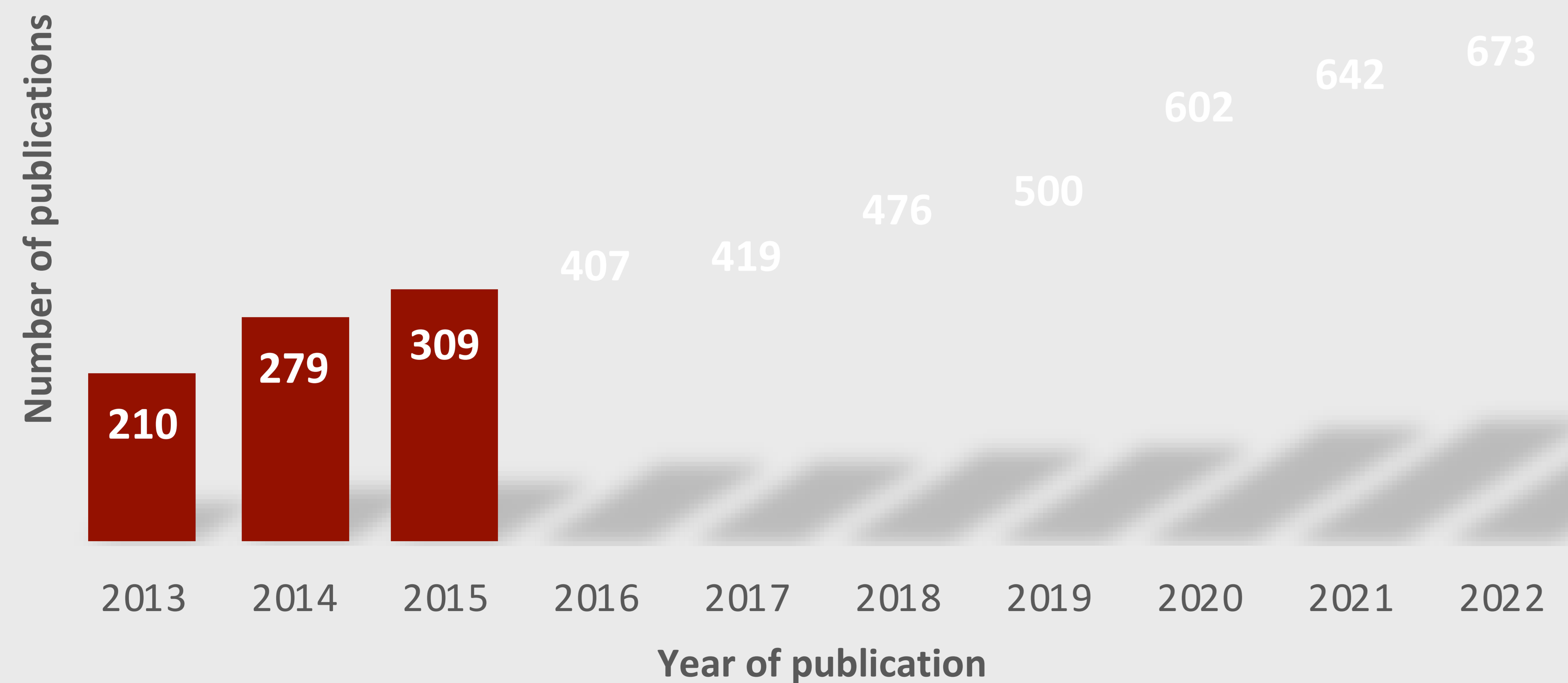
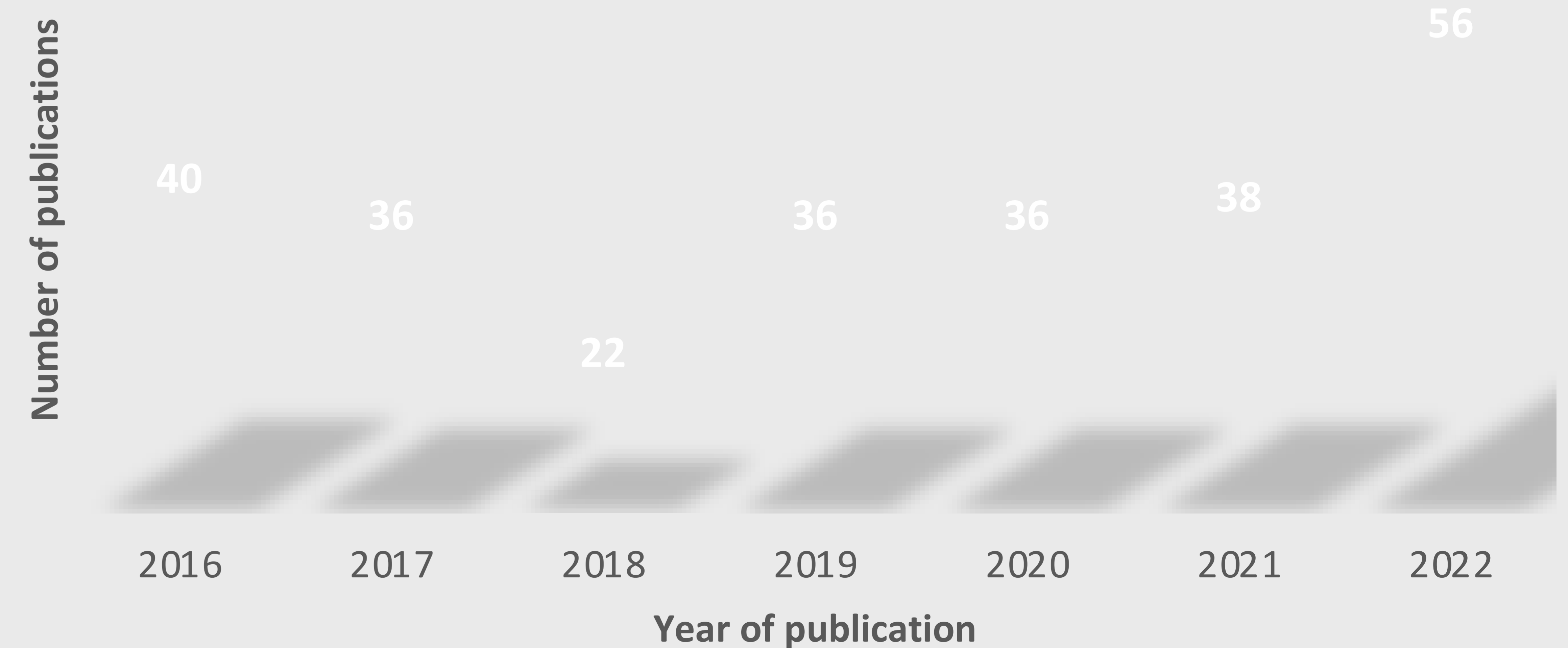


Figure 2. RCT publications including Ontario LCH-affiliated authors



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