



Lyme Borreliosis in the French Media (2018-2024)

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Introduction

Lyme borreliosis is not generally considered a public health priority, yet it has gained attention in the media and among the public. In France, Professor Perronne, the controversial country's leading Lyme Doctor, has been a central figure in this shift. Since Dr. Clélia Pascal's 2017 study on French media coverage, significant events have occurred, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the creation of Tick-Borne Diseases Reference Centers (CRMVT).

Methods

Following Dr. Pascal's methodology, we analyzed the media coverage of Lyme borreliosis and Professor Perronne's representation on national television channels and the 19 most widely circulated national newspapers between 2018 and 2024. The analysis focused on speaking time, antibiotic treatment discussions, patient interviews, and the presence of a medical counterpoint reflecting official recommendations.

Results

A total of 151 articles were identified between 2018 and 2024, but the number of publications decreased from 46 in 2018 to 10 in 2024. From 2021 onwards, there were no interviews with Professor Perronne in major print media (Fig 1). Similarly, television coverage dropped from 71 min 7 of reporting time in 2018 to 8 min 47 in 2023. There were no reports in 2024. From 2021, no further interviews with Professor Perronne were conducted (Fig 2). However, both print and broadcast media increasingly focused on prevention topics, such as tick knowledge, bite prevention, and monitoring bite sites.

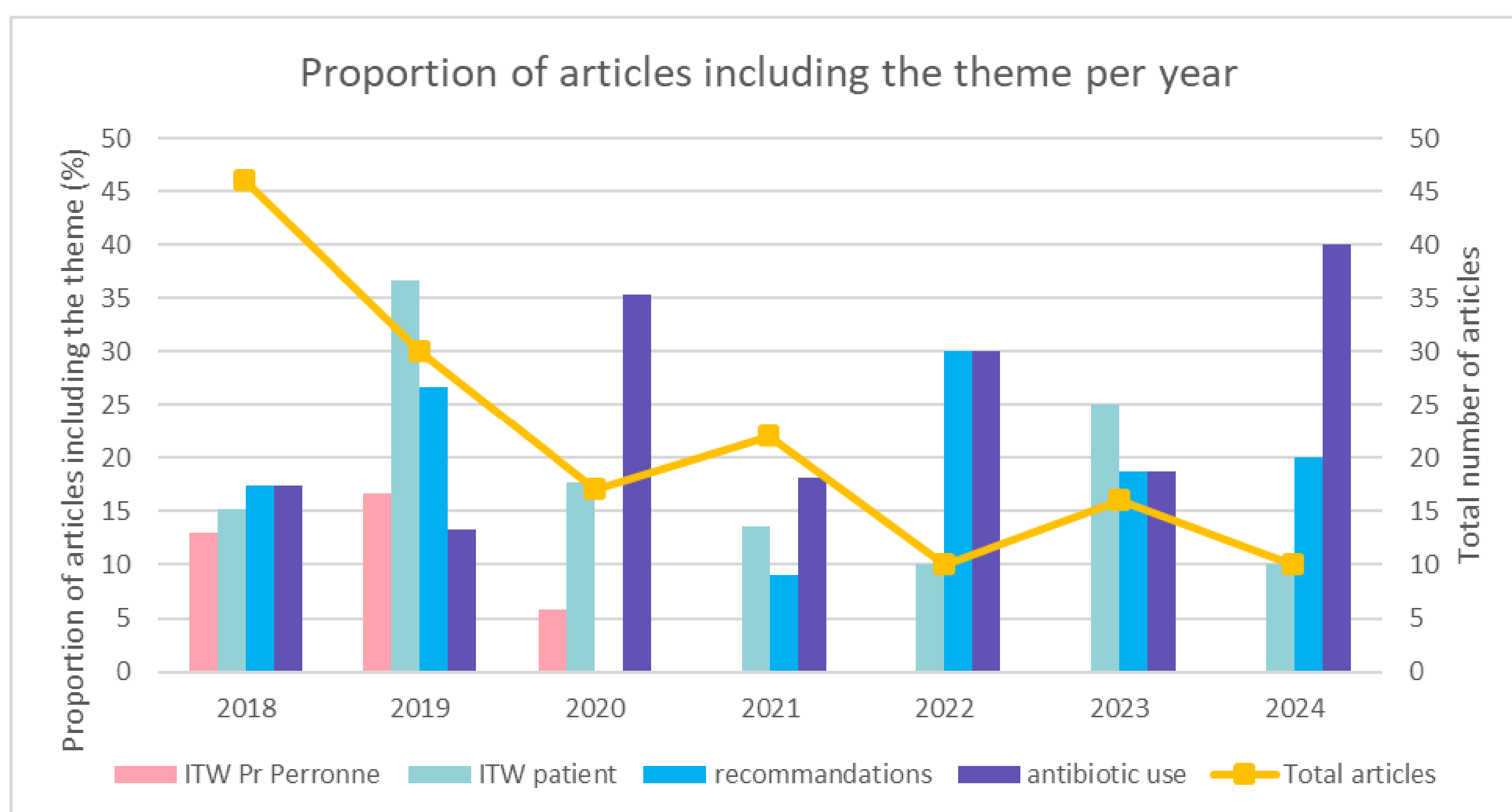


Figure 1. Proportion of written articles including the theme and total number of written articles containing the key words per year

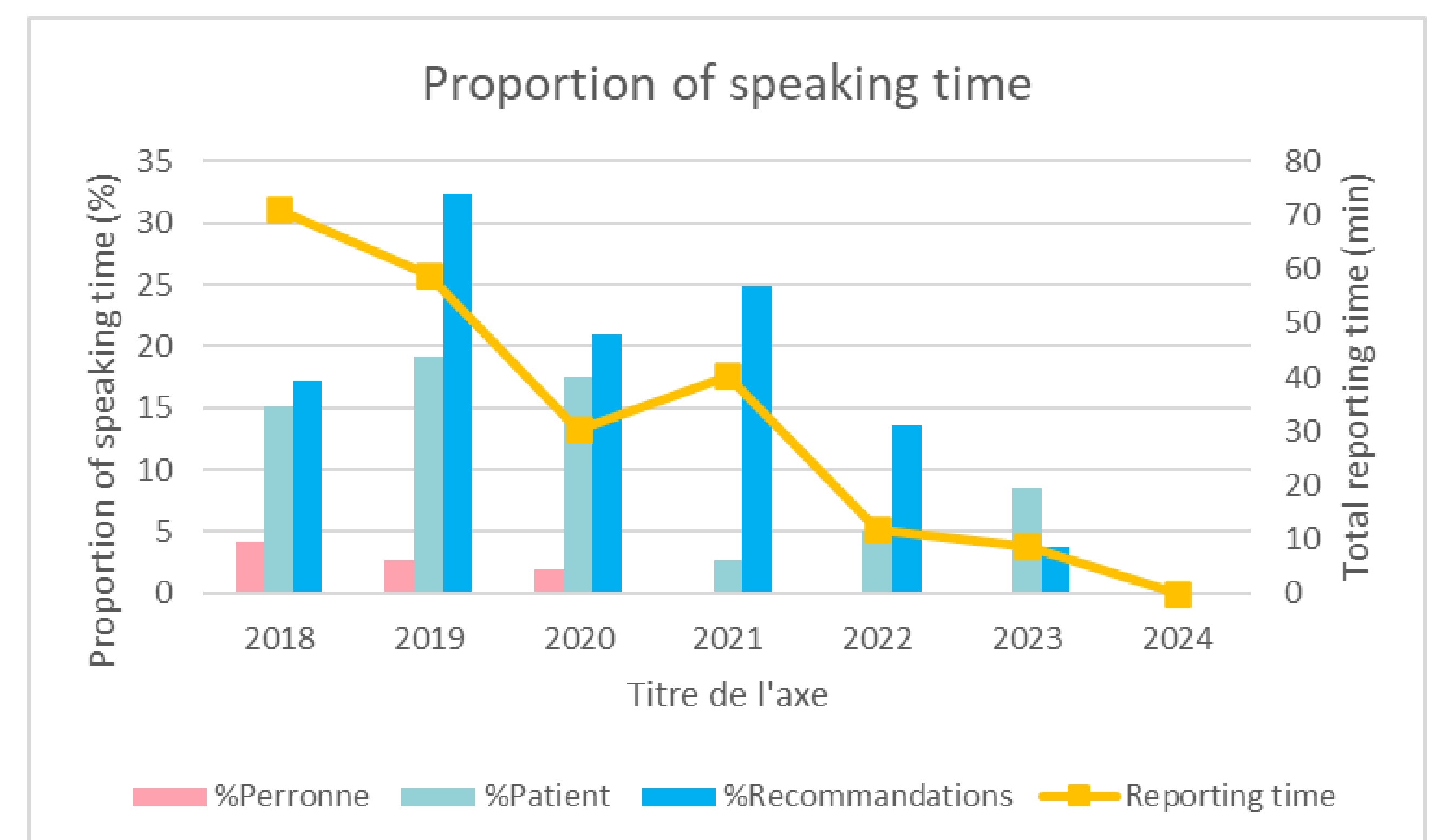


Figure 2. Proportion of speaking time out of total reporting time per year and total number of reportage containing the key words per year

Conclusion

Media coverage of Lyme borreliosis has dramatically declined since 2019, along with the proportion of patient interviews and Professor Perronne's interventions. While the COVID-19 pandemic likely played a role, there has been no resurgence in media attention on Lyme borreliosis. The impact of the Tick-Borne Diseases Reference Centers and their media visibility remains to be studied. With the rise of the internet, the role of traditional media has diminished, and an online media analysis would provide a fuller picture.