

SCIENTIFIC LETTER

Scientific research in family medicine in Latin America: A bibliometric analysis



Investigación científica en medicina familiar en América Latina: un análisis bibliométrico

Family medicine is a rapidly growing discipline in developing regions such as Latin America. With the emergence of new medical-surgical specialties and subspecialties, its value is recognized in disease prevention and management of the health of families, considering as a reference on the multidimensional socio-environment of the patient.¹ Family medicine today also uses the approach of evidence-based practice that provides the best findings for clinical decisions.² Despite that, there is still a lack of research on family medicine in certain regions, such as Latin America. That is why it is pertinent to investigate the sci-

entific production of this discipline in this region to provide guidelines, recommendations and standards that allow the different medical faculties and care sites at all levels of health to promote or improve the scientific production of the speciality.

A bibliometric analysis was done, using available information retrievable in three bibliographical databases to assess the status of family medicine-related literature worldwide. PubMed, Scopus, and SciELO, using the application Publish or Perish® v.8, were examined, using the terms “family medicine” and “Latin America” in the article title as the primary search operators, up to December 31, 2023.

Only 319 family medicine articles were indexed in Scopus, 1162 in PubMed, and 2503 in SciELO. The median of articles was 1, 15, and 47, respectively. From 2000 to 2002, there was a significant change in the number of articles (Fig. 1), reaching the highest in Scopus in 2022 (30 articles). The top countries with more publications are Mexico, Brazil and Cuba (Fig. 1), corresponding to institutions such as

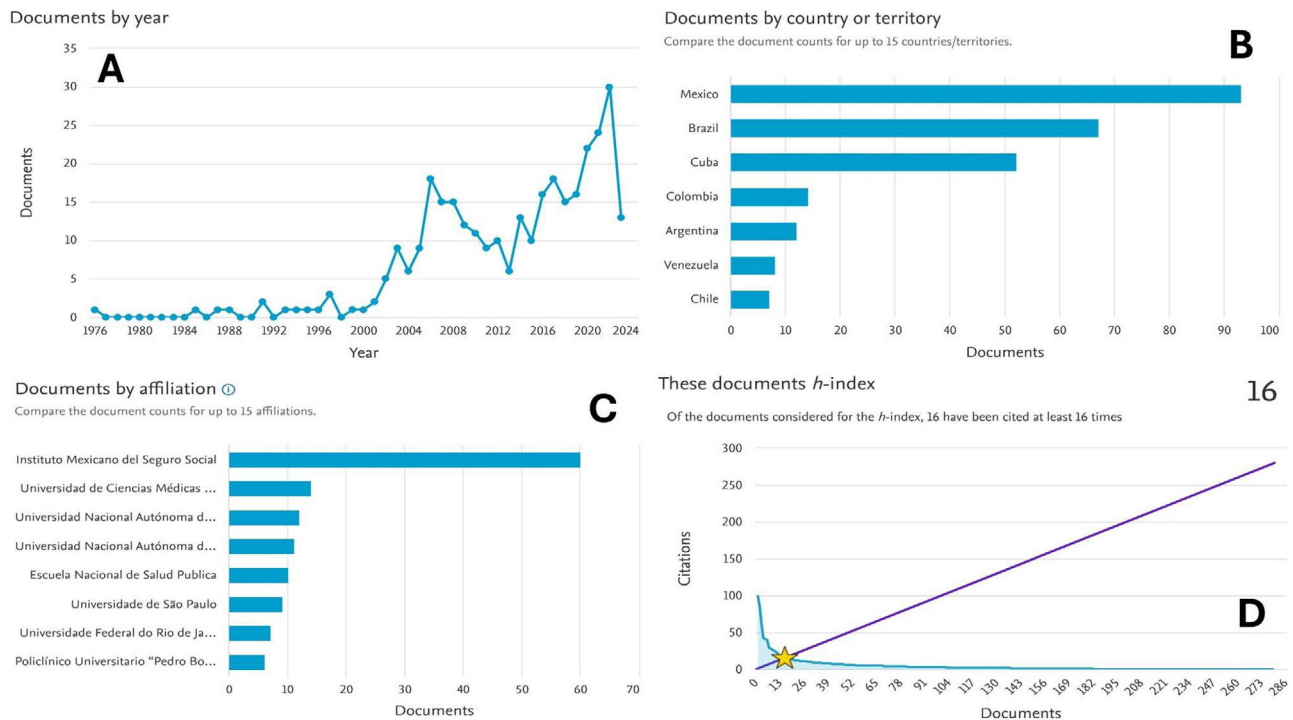


Figure 1 Research trends by year (A), geographical origin (B), institutions (C), and H index (D), on family medicine in Latin America, from 1976 to 2023, at Scopus.

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the Instituto Mexicano de Seguridad Social, Universidad de Ciencias Médicas de La Habana (Cuba), and the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, among others (Fig. 1). At Scopus, the *H*-index of the topic is relatively low, with a value of 16 (Fig. 1). The highest-cited article has 100 citations so far,³ a study designed to evaluate the validity and applicability of the Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview (MINI) used by family medicine residents in primary health care in Brazil.³

Scientific research in family medicine is crucial for Latin America due to its direct impact on health equity, quality of care, and policy development; however, as observed, it is still important to promote it as it lacks in the region. Family medicine research helps tailor healthcare to the region's unique demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural contexts, addressing prevalent issues like chronic diseases, infectious diseases, and maternal-child health. Research identifies and addresses disparities in access to care, outcomes, and resources among diverse populations.⁴ It informs strategies to provide equitable, culturally competent care to underserved communities. Research-based guidelines improve diagnosis, treatment, and prevention strategies for local health challenges. This enhances primary care quality, reducing hospitalisations and improving patient outcomes. Research supports formulating health policies responsive to the region's needs.⁵ Data-driven insights guide public health interventions, resource allocation, and healthcare system improvements. Research fosters the continuous education of family medicine practitioners, integrating the latest findings into medical training programs, thus preparing physicians to meet emerging health challenges effectively.⁶

In summary, scientific research in family medicine is pivotal for advancing healthcare in Latin America, leading to more effective, equitable, and culturally sensitive health systems.

Ethical considerations

Not applicable.

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Conflict of interest

None. All authors.

Appendix A. Family Medicine Residents Research Group 2023 IUVA

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[◇] Please see a list of the members of the Family Medicine Residents Research Group 2023 IUVA in [Appendix A](#).