

ALCOHOLISM AND AGING IN HEALTH RESEARCH: A BIBLIOMETRIC PROFILE

Alcoolismo e envelhecimento nas pesquisas em saúde: um perfil bibliométrico

Alcoholismo y envejecimiento en las investigaciones en salud: un perfil bibliométrico

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Tevaluate scientific publications about alcoholism and aging. **Methods:** It included analysis of items available in the database of the LILACS, EBSCOT and MEDLINE, in the period from 2010 to 2016. **Results:** The findings of this review show increasing bibliometric search on the subject in several countries, in recent years, enhancing the importance of the contributions on the subject in terms of public health, as well as researchers working in different areas of knowledge. **Conclusion:** It is important that health professionals and the elderly debate about alcohol consumption as a component of chronic disease management and that the health care network ensures quick intervention or referrals. Despite the relevance, studies on the subject are still scarce in the national research scenario, and more scientific production is needed.

Descriptors: Primary health care, Rural health, Men's health, Health management.

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RESUMO

Objetivo: Avaliar as publicações científicas sobre o alcoolismo e o envelhecimento. **Métodos:** estudo bibliométrico, realizado por meio da análise de artigos disponíveis na base de dados da LILACS, EBSCOT e MEDLINE, no período de 2010-2016. **Resultados:** os achados demonstram a crescente busca sobre a temática em diversos países, nos últimos anos, aperfeiçoando a importância da contribuição da mesma quando se pensa em saúde pública, bem como os pesquisadores atuam em diversas áreas de conhecimentos; o que possibilita descobertas para o desenvolvimento e a implementação de ações de prevenção e promoção da saúde mental no envelhecimento. **Conclusão:** é importante que os profissionais de saúde e a população idosa discutam sobre consumo de álcool como componente do manejo da doença crônica e a rede de saúde garanta intervenção breve ou referências. Apesar da relevância, ainda são escassos os estudos sobre a temática, no cenário de pesquisa nacional, sendo necessário mais produção científica.

Descritores: Pesquisa, Bibliometria, Idoso, Envelhecimento, Alcoolismo.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Evaluar las publicaciones científicas sobre el alcoholismo y el envejecimiento. **Métodos:** Estudio bibliométrico, realizado por medio del análisis de artículos disponibles en la base de datos de LILACS, EBSCOT y MEDLINE, en el período 2010-2016. **Resultados:** Los hallazgos de esta revisión demuestran que la creciente demanda sobre la temática en diversos países, en los últimos años, perfeccionando la importancia de la contribución de la misma cuando se piensa en salud pública, así como los investigadores actúan en diversas áreas de conocimientos; lo que posibilita descubrimientos que pueden informar el desarrollo y la implementación de acciones de prevención y promoción de la salud que reflejan las necesidades de salud mental del envejecimiento. **Conclusión:** Es importante que los profesionales de salud y la población anciana discutan sobre el consumo de alcohol como componente del manejo de la enfermedad crónica. En los casos de consumo de alcohol, los proveedores tienen la oportunidad de proporcionar una intervención breve o ofrecer referencias. A pesar de la relevancia, todavía son escasos los estudios sobre la temática, en el escenario de investigación nacional, siendo necesario más producción científica.

Descriptores: Investigación, Bibliometría, Anciano, Envejecimiento, Alcoolismo.

INTRODUCTION

It is relevant to explore currently available national and international publications, focusing on aging and alcohol use, in order to deepen the knowledge on the subject, and with the help of statistical and mathematical techniques to contribute to the field of literature and existing databases.

Due to health problems inherent to aging and the use of various medical substances, the elderly become the most vulnerable to alcohol consumption population group. While this issue deserves attention, same as its diagnosis and treatment, the subject is little addressed in scientific research¹, especially in developing countries, where the rate of population aging is increasing².

Dependence on alcohol in the elderly can cause health, social and emotional problems, and as elderly alcoholics often do not receive adequate treatment, their quality of

life becomes compromised³. Data raise concern about the damage that the abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs can cause in various segments of society, therefore it is relevant to address the biopsychosocial aspects in research and scientific interventions.

One study showed that among the psychoactive substances most used by the elderly alcohol stands out, although it is not verbalized due to shame, fear and loneliness. This makes it difficult to identify the problem and start early treatment⁴.

Alcohol dependence is a very serious health problem worldwide. In fact, there has been an increase in the number of older people who resort to substance abuse and alcoholism over the past decade. Elderly alcohol abusers are not only plagued by psychological problems, but also by a large number of physical complications. Thus, the research question arises: What are the bibliometric indicators of scientific production on alcoholism and aging.

In light of the information gathered, we sought, under the bibliometric review method, to evaluate scientific publications on alcoholism and aging. It is justified because increased use of alcohol by the elderly proves to be a public health problem, an important risk factor for certain morbidity and mortality, consequently reflecting on the quality of life of the elderly population.

METHODS

This study consists of a bibliometric study, as it enables a quantitative analysis of productions and publications of a given subject⁵. Study was performed through the analysis of articles available in the LILACS, EBSCOT and MEDLINE database, available online between 2010 and 2016. The descriptors "alcoholism and aging" were used to locate the articles. The following criteria were adopted as inclusion criteria to systematize the search: published as scientific article (original or review); available in full text; published between the years 2010 to 2016; and concern aspects related to aging and alcoholism. The following exclusion criteria were selected: publications that were not available in full text; duplicated in the databases and / or those that were not relevant to the research theme or manuscripts such as letters to the editor; theses; dissertations; monographs; books; manuals; and summaries.

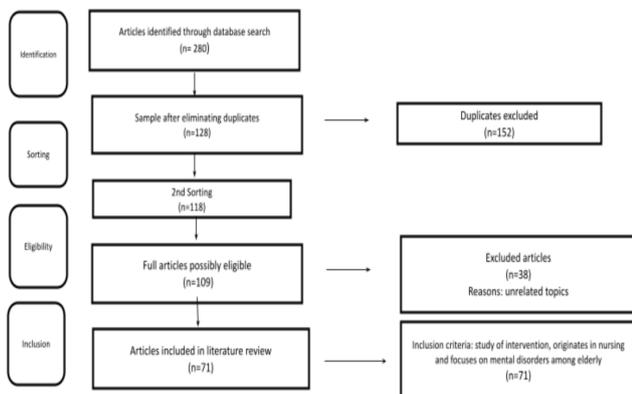
The collection period was between June and July 2017. After identifying the studies, the articles were analyzed analytically using a script to describe the variables: authors' formation; highest academic title of the authors; H index; institution of the authors; journal; year of publication; impact factor of the journal; research location; research design; research objective; and the most relevant results.

The extracted data were recorded and organized in a table format with the aid of the Microsoft Excel[®] program, built from the established variables. Data analysis was performed using simple descriptive statistics (absolute and

percentage frequency).

To visualize the selection process of the sample of publications, the PRISMA diagram was used, as this instrument for summarizing the methodological path allows demonstrating evidence and accuracy in defining the final sample used in the work ⁶.

Figure 01 - Prism Diagram. João Pessoa, PB, Brazil, 2017



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The authors reviewed the articles published according to the inclusion criteria and selected articles that included the theme of alcohol, substance or prescription drugs abuse among elderly aged 50 years or older; And they were identified through the descriptors aging and alcoholism through word searches of titles and abstracts. The full text of each article was reviewed by the authors and the inclusion in the final sample was determined by consensus.

Of the articles published in the main gerontological and substance abuse journals, 78 articles met the inclusion criteria of reports related to alcoholism and aging, as shown in **figure 1**. **Table 1** shows the variables related to the authors responsible for the articles.

Table 1: Number of variables referring to the authors responsible for the articles, bibliometric research. João Pessoa, PB, Brazil, 2017

| Variables | N | % |
|-------------------------------------|-----|------|
| ACADEMIC TRAINING OF AUTHORS | | |
| medicine | 185 | 42,1 |
| not informed | 124 | 28,2 |
| psychology | 58 | 13,2 |
| nursing | 18 | 4,1 |
| statistics | 14 | 3,2 |
| pharmacy | 14 | 3,2 |
| sociology | 6 | 1,4 |
| nutrition | 5 | 1,1 |
| anthropology | 4 | 0,9 |
| economics | 4 | 0,9 |
| engineering | 4 | 0,9 |
| computer science | 1 | 0,2 |
| light | 1 | 0,2 |
| geography | 1 | 0,2 |
| AUTHOR'S TITLE | | |
| doctorate degree | 271 | 61,7 |
| master's degree | 48 | 10,9 |
| not informed | 120 | 27,3 |
| TOTAL | 439 | 100 |

Source: Research Authors, 2017. (N): Frequency. (%): percentage.

Regarding the academic background of the authors, 42.1% (185) have a degree in medicine, psychology 13.2% (58), nursing 4.1% (18), statistics 3.2% (14), pharmacy 3.2% (14), sociology 1.4% (6), nutrition 1.1% (5), anthropology 0.9% (4), economics 0.9% (4), engineering 0.9% (4), computer science, law and geography 0.2% (1) each. It was not possible to find the formation on 28.2% (124) authors. Regarding titles, most authors have doctorate 61.7% (271) and masters degree 10.9% (48), and 27.3% (120) did not inform their degree.

Considering the results of this study, medical professionals published the most on this subject, therefore they are the ones with the most important role in the care for the elderly alcohol users, since the treatment is not limited to just inform and guide the population, it also needs treat poisoning / alcohol withdrawal attacks providing the elderly with a comprehensive care.

In this context, the level of training of researchers, whether PhD or Master degree, adds credibility and relevance to what they publish, taking into account the importance of the theme and its consequences for public health.⁷ Regarding the authors' H Index, the range of frequency was an average of 15.4 and standard deviation of 15. In this context, **Table 2** shows the institutions by location of the authors responsible for the articles.

Table 2: Distribution of articles by authors' institution, João Pessoa, PB, Brazil 2017

| Institution of the authors | N | % |
|----------------------------|-----|------|
| United States of America | 187 | 42,6 |
| Australia | 39 | 8,8 |
| Brazil | 39 | 8,8 |
| Italy | 30 | 6,7 |
| United Kingdom | 23 | 5,2 |
| China | 19 | 4,4 |
| Japan | 16 | 3,7 |
| Netherlands | 13 | 2,9 |
| Germany | 12 | 2,8 |
| Chile | 10 | 2,3 |
| Norway | 10 | 2,3 |
| Canada | 8 | 1,9 |
| South Korea | 7 | 1,7 |
| Not informed | 7 | 1,7 |
| Spain | 5 | 1,2 |
| Finland | 4 | 0,9 |
| Sweden | 4 | 0,9 |
| Mexico | 3 | 0,6 |
| India | 2 | 0,4 |
| Ghana | 1 | 0,2 |
| Total | 439 | 100 |

Source: Research Authors, 2017. (N): Frequency. (%): percentage.

Regarding the distribution of institutions, majority (42.6% (187)) are located in the United States of America. The journals in which the articles studied were published vary, since the largest number of articles in one journal was only 6, and the journal focuses specifically on the topic of alcoholism, with a journal on geriatrics in 2nd place with 5 articles.

Table 3: Distribution of articles according to journals and impact factors, João Pessoa, PB, Brazil, 2017

| JOURNALS | N | % | Impact factor |
|--|----|-----|---------------|
| Alcohol Clin Exp Res | 6 | 7,7 | 2.716 |
| Int J Geriatr Psychiatry | 5 | 6,4 | 3.018 |
| J Am Geriatr Soc | 4 | 5,1 | 4.388 |
| J Gen Intern Med | 4 | 5,1 | 3.701 |
| BMC Public Health | 3 | 3,8 | 2.265 |
| International Psychogeriatrics | 3 | 3,8 | 2.423 |
| Addiction | 2 | 2,6 | 5.789 |
| Age and Ageing | 2 | 2,6 | 4.282 |
| Aging & Mental Health | 2 | 2,6 | 2.650 |
| Ann Ist Super Sanità | 2 | 2,6 | 0.098 |
| Drug Alcohol Depend | 2 | 2,6 | 3.222 |
| Addict Behav | 1 | 1,3 | 2.944 |
| Alcohol Research: current reviews | 1 | 1,3 | 2.378 |
| Am J Geriatr Psychiatry | 1 | 1,3 | 2.868 |
| American Academy of Neurology | 1 | 1,3 | * |
| American Journal of Hypertension | 1 | 1,3 | 3.541 |
| American Journal on Addictions | 1 | 1,3 | 1.873 |
| Arch Intern Med | 1 | 1,3 | 17.333 |
| Australasian Journal on Ageing | 1 | 1,3 | 0.825 |
| Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry | 1 | 1,3 | 4.036 |
| BMJ Case Rep | 1 | 1,3 | * |
| BMJ Open | 1 | 1,3 | 2.369 |
| Catheterization and Cardiovascular Interventions | 1 | 1,3 | 2.602 |
| Ciência & Saúde Coletiva | 1 | 1,3 | 0.780 |
| Community Ment Health J | 1 | 1,3 | 1.154 |
| Co-psychiatry | 1 | 1,3 | 4.020 |
| Current Psychiatry Reports | 1 | 1,3 | 3.746 |
| Drug and Alcohol Review | 1 | 1,3 | 2.822 |
| Environ Health Prev Med | 1 | 1,3 | 1.133 |
| European Journal of Clinical Nutrition | 1 | 1,3 | 3.057 |
| Exp Gerontol | 1 | 1,3 | 3.340 |
| Functional Neurology | 1 | 1,3 | 1.855 |
| Indian Journal of Gerontology | 1 | 1,3 | * |
| J Stud Alcohol Drugs | 1 | 1,3 | 2.500 |
| J. Neurovirol | 1 | 1,3 | 3.206 |
| Journal of Aging and Health | 1 | 1,3 | 2.168 |
| Journal of Human Hypertension | 1 | 1,3 | 2.797 |
| Journal of Medical Internet Research | 1 | 1,3 | 5.175 |
| Journal of Gerontology | 1 | 1,3 | 3.064 |
| Pain Med | 1 | 1,3 | 2.820 |
| PLoS Medicine | 1 | 1,3 | 11.862 |
| PLoS One | 1 | 1,3 | 2.806 |
| Psicothema | 1 | 1,3 | 1.344 |
| Quality in Primary Care | 1 | 1,3 | 1.466 |
| R. Enferm. Cent. O. Min | 1 | 1,3 | * |
| Rev Esc Enferm USP | 1 | 1,3 | 0.573 |
| Rev Med Chile | 1 | 1,3 | 0.519 |
| Rev Rene | 1 | 1,3 | * |
| Rev. Bras. Geriatr. Gerontol | 1 | 1,3 | 0.306 |
| Revista de Salud Pública | 1 | 1,3 | 1.353 |
| Social Work in Public Health | 1 | 1,3 | 0.609 |
| Subst Use Misuse | 1 | 1,3 | 1.234 |
| Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior | 1 | 1,3 | 3.252 |
| Western Journal of Emergency Medicine | 1 | 1,3 | 0.796 |
| TOTAL | 78 | 100 | |

Source: Research Authors, 2017. (N): Frequency. (%): percentage. *Was not found. ** Literature review journals.

Regarding the locality of publications on alcoholism and aging, **Table 4** shows geographic distribution, as well as the years of publication and the study designs.

Table 4: Distribution of articles according to research location, year of publication and study design, bibliometric research, 2017.

| VARIABLE | N | % |
|---|----|------|
| RESEARCH PLACE | | |
| U.S | 29 | 37,2 |
| Not applicable** | 12 | 15,4 |
| Brazil | 7 | 9,0 |
| Australia | 5 | 6,4 |
| Japan | 4 | 5,1 |
| China | 3 | 3,8 |
| England | 3 | 3,8 |
| Uninformed | 3 | 3,8 |
| Canada | 2 | 2,6 |
| Netherlands | 2 | 2,6 |
| Africa | 1 | 1,3 |
| Germany | 1 | 1,3 |
| Argentina | 1 | 1,3 |
| Chile | 1 | 1,3 |
| Colombia | 1 | 1,3 |
| Finland | 1 | 1,3 |
| Welsh | 1 | 1,3 |
| Italy | 1 | 1,3 |
| YEAR | | |
| 2010 | 10 | 12,8 |
| 2011 | 13 | 16,7 |
| 2012 | 12 | 15,4 |
| 2013 | 14 | 17,9 |
| 2014 | 13 | 16,7 |
| 2015 | 6 | 7,7 |
| 2016 | 9 | 11,5 |
| 2017 | 1 | 1,3 |
| RESEARCH DESIGN | | |
| Descriptive - Quantitative | 26 | 33,3 |
| Cross - Quantitative | 13 | 16,7 |
| Literature revision | 12 | 15,4 |
| Longitudinal - Quantitative | 7 | 9,0 |
| Prospective - Longitudinal - Quantitative | 3 | 3,8 |
| Prospective - Quantitative | 3 | 3,8 |
| Secondary - Descriptive - Quantitative | 3 | 3,8 |
| Retrospective - Quantitative | 2 | 2,6 |
| Control Case - Quantitative | 1 | 1,3 |
| Descriptive - Cross - Quantitative | 1 | 1,3 |
| Exploratory - Quantitative | 1 | 1,3 |
| Hermeneutic Phenomenological Qualitative | 1 | 1,3 |
| Intervention - Quantitative | 1 | 1,3 |
| Observational - Quantitative | 1 | 1,3 |
| Prospective Cohort - Quantitative | 1 | 1,3 |
| Retrospective - Documentary - Qualitative | 1 | 1,3 |
| Retrospective Review of Health Records | 1 | 1,3 |
| TOTAL | 78 | 100 |

Source: Research Authors, 2017. (N): Frequency. (%): percentage. *Was not found. ** Literature review journals.

There were 37.2% (29) studies on alcoholism and aging in the United States, followed by 9% (7) in Brazil, 6.4% (5) Australia, 5.1% (4) Japan, 3, 8% (3) China, 3.8% (3) England, 3.8% (3) Canada, 2.6% (2) Netherlands, 2.6% (2) Africa, and only 1.3% (1) in Germany, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Finland, Wales, Italy, respectively. 15.4% (12) of articles studied were review articles on the subject.

Table 4 also shows the distribution of publications per year, with an increase in publications in 2013 with 17.4% (14) of articles, followed by 16.7% (13) in 2011 and 2014, 15.4% (12) in 2012, 12.8% (10) in 2010, 11.5% (9) in 2016, 7.7% (6) in 2015 and only 1.3% (1) in 2017.

Regarding the design of the research, the type of study and the approach used, studies of the Descriptive / Quantitative type were the most frequent accounting for 33.3% (26), followed by the Cross-sectional / Quantitative

type with 16.7% (13).

A decrease in the number of publications was observed, with more articles on the theme published in 2010-2013 than during the period from 2015 to 2017, corroborating a previous study on chemical dependence and drug abuse.

The choice of the type of descriptive study was noted, as it focuses on describing reality without intent to explain or intervene in it and such studies are fundamental when little is known about a particular subject.⁸ Quantitative research is used primarily to describe a variable as to its central tendency or dispersion - mean, median, mode- or to divide it into categories and to describe its frequency - rates and risk measures - in large populations.⁹

Analyzing using content analysis technique, the most relevant objectives and results, based on the contents exposed and discussed by the investigated studies, three categories emerged: Characterization of the elderly alcohol user population; Intervention strategies and prevention of alcohol consumption in the elderly; and Quality of life and alcohol consumption by the elderly.

Alcoholism is a very serious health problem, especially in the elderly population, as it leads to not only physical but also psychological problems. Several points on characterization of the elderly population that uses alcohol emerged in studies analysed in this research.

Category 1: Characterization of the elderly alcohol user population.

Alcoholism is frequent in the Brazilian elderly population, drawing attention to some sociodemographic characteristics, such as gender, that may make a difference in the early diagnosis of alcoholism. A study points out that males are predominant among alcohol users. This is explained by the greater vulnerability of men compared to women in dealing with social and psychological factors as well as the natural physiological changes resulting from the aging process.¹⁰

The publications investigated indicate that most elderly alcoholics or smokers have no family relationship, followed by those who have a conflicting relationship with the family. This fact may lead to a greater problem of loneliness among the elderly, which can increase the vulnerability of the elderly, leading in turn to other health problems and increasing their functional limitations.¹¹

Category 2: Intervention strategies and prevention of alcohol consumption in the elderly.

The studies on alcoholism and aging analysed demonstrated the search for a more effective way to reduce alcohol consumption by the elderly, so some strategies were studied, such as cell phone use, multifaceted intervention, Integrative Community Therapy.

A multifaceted intervention, such as a telephone intervention administered by a health educator, was found to be moderately effective in reducing alcohol consumption

within 3 months of enrollment in older adults who received the intervention in the primary care areas. However, the effect was not sustained at 12 months.¹²

In a study conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of Integrative Community Therapy (ICT) in reducing alcohol consumption, the relationship between the findings indicates as positive effect of ICT, with empowerment, bond strengthening and resiliency enabling the individual to reduce alcohol consumption and helping the family to overcome daily dilemmas related to the problem of alcoholism.¹³

In this context, a publication denotes self-help groups as a strategy to reduce alcohol consumption, as groups can provide better physical performance, better overall health, more vitality and better social function. Therefore, social groups help in the daily activities, work and resocialization of the individual. Moreover, those who attend the self-help groups express greater clarity about their health, greater personal and emotional control, factors indispensable for the treatment of alcohol users.¹⁴

Category 3: Quality of life and alcohol consumption by the elderly.

Referring to the aspects or variables associated with alcohol consumption that were studied in the evaluated articles, we observed that the term quality of life, correlated with other variables such as smoking, increased blood pressure, proteic alterations, genetic alterations, work strain, daily food intake, family network, chronic conditions and depression.

A study that assessed the perception of the elderly of their quality of life showed that having quality of life refers to having health, peace, harmony, happiness, satisfaction, being busy and maintaining interpersonal relationships.¹⁶

From this perspective, studies indicate that the perception of the alcohol user influences the quality of life of the individual, since prejudices and beliefs can interfere in the search for treatment as well as recognition of their real situation and, consequently, in the efficacy of the therapeutic interventions.¹⁴

CONCLUSIONS

In this study we evaluated scientific publications on alcohol use among older people, that raise a number of complex challenges and it is important that proactive multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research and intersectoral planning take place so that appropriate public health, prevention and intervention approaches can be developed.

The analysis of the material collected through bibliometric review showed increasing number of queries on the theme in several countries, in recent years, indicating increasing importance the subject as far as public health is concerned.

The findings of this bibliometric review show that researchers work in various areas of knowledge, which enables discoveries that can inform the development and implementation of prevention and health care actions that reflect mental health needs related to aging. It is important that health professionals and the elderly population discuss alcohol consumption as a component of chronic disease management. In cases of alcohol consumption, providers have the opportunity to provide brief intervention or to offer referrals if necessary.

Coping strategies should be included in public policy action plans and methodological alert in the form of exposing the variable alcoholism. One limitation is the scarcity of studies that investigate the trends and consequences of alcoholism among the elderly population. Therefore it is necessary to make this issue a part of healthy aging policies. Despite its relevance, studies on the subject are still scarce in the national research scenario, requiring more scientific production.

Finally, alcoholism itself is an issue of considerable proportions and, in dealing with the elderly, takes on greater complexity (due to comorbidities) in the new age and should be addressed quickly and conscientiously in the future. Therefore, the summary of the scientific production published in the researched literature allows directing knowledge in the public health field to meet the needs of this growing population.

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