

# Health Information

---

## ***Which health journals are most useful?***

*Gilbert Roelants*

*Records are kept in a database of the sources cited in publications currently being received at the library of the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp in the subject areas of health services and endemic diseases in developing countries. The frequency of citations shows which journals are most useful on these two subjects. Although such an analysis necessarily reflects the needs of the institution carrying it out, it helps to form a more complete idea of what is available.*

The library of the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp has designed two special bibliographical databases for students taking courses on health care and tropical medicine in developing countries. All books, reports, journal issues and unpublished documents received at the library are scanned every week for relevant papers to be included and indexed in these electronic databases. The purpose is not to make a survey of everything that exists but to provide students with a well-balanced introduction to the literature.

Journal citation analysis is sometimes used to identify key journals in specific areas of science. In most cases the material comes from large databases, which can produce valuable information but usually only rather general conclusions. It seemed worthwhile to make the same kind of analysis with a relatively small number of preselected papers. Our sample is strongly biased towards articles in

***The purpose is not to make a survey of everything that exists but to provide students with a well-balanced introduction to the literature.***

English and French, as these are the languages in which courses are taught at the Institute (Dutch is also used, but few papers on health care and tropical medicine are being published in that language).

### ***Database on health***

The database entitled *Health* covers publications on the organization of health care in developing countries, classified by country and subject. By the end of 1993 it contained 2821 records consisting of 1187 journal articles, 401 books, 208 book chapters, 279 reports or serial issues, 12 documents, 11 theses and 723 dissertations on public health prepared at the Institute. The subject areas are shown in Table 1, with the number of papers on each.

---

The author is librarian at the Prince Leopold Institute of Tropical Medicine, Nationalestraat 155, B-2000 Antwerpen 1, Belgium.

Table 1

**Subjects covered in the Health database and number of papers included for each subject<sup>a</sup>**

34	Accessibility of health services
75	Bamako Initiative
187	Community health workers
49	Community nursing
233	Community participation
77	Coverage of health services
151	District health care
136	Essential drugs
226	Evaluation of health care
156	Expanded Programme on Immunization
82	Family planning and health care
525	Financing of health care
78	Health information
158	Health manpower
229	Health policy and planning
138	Health projects
77	Health systems
221	Hospitals and health care
55	Integration of health care
96	Management of health services
188	Mother and child health care
566	Primary health care
43	Private sector and health care
44	Referral
54	Risk approach
83	Supervision of health care
99	Traditional birth attendants
100	Urbanization and health
66	Utilization of health services

<sup>a</sup> Language distribution: 1807 English (64%), 948 French (34%) and 66 other (2%).

The results of the count are shown in Table 2, with the number of papers cited for each title. They are ranked in descending order of magnitude. *Social Science and Medicine* publishes by far the greatest number of papers considered to be of sufficient merit to be included in the database, followed by *Health Policy and Planning*. WHO journals and series are also high on the list and have the special advantage of being available in both French and English.

Table 2

**Journal title occurrence in the Health database, ranked according to number of citations<sup>a</sup>**

204	Social Science and Medicine
102	Health Policy and Planning
67	World Health Forum
45	WHO Technical Report Series
41	World Health Statistics Quarterly
38	Studies in Family Planning
37	International Journal of Health Planning and Management
36	Tropical Doctor
35	The Lancet
34	WHO Offset Publications
32	Afrique Médecine et Santé ( <i>ceased publication</i> )
29	Public Health Papers WHO
28	Contact CMC
23	Journal of Tropical Pediatrics
23	International Journal of Health Services
22	Bulletin of the World Health Organization
22	EPC Publication
21	Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene
16	Bulletin of the Pan American Health Organization
15	Annales de la Société Belge de Médecine Tropicale
14	Bamako Initiative Technical Report Series
13	American Journal of Public Health
13	International Journal of Gynecology & Obstetrics
13	South African Medical Journal
12	AFRO Technical Papers
12	International Journal of Epidemiology
10	Bamako Initiative Country Series
9	Boletín de la Oficina Sanitaria Panamericana
9	Cahiers Santé
9	Développement et Santé
9	Tropical and Geographical Medicine
8	Afrique Médicale
8	Journal of Public Health Policy
8	Medical News MSF
8	New England Journal of Medicine
8	Reviews of Infectious Diseases ( <i>continued as Clinical Infectious Diseases</i> )
7	Africa Health
7	British Medical Journal
7	Health & Community Working Paper ITMA
7	Transactions of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene

<sup>a</sup> Journals with one citation only are omitted.

Table 2 (Continued)

**Journal title occurrence in the Health database, ranked according to number of citations<sup>a</sup>**

7	World Health
6	Assignment Children ( <i>ceased publication</i> )
6	East African Medical Journal
6	Health for All Series WHO
5	Annals of Tropical Medicine and Parasitology
4	Annual Review of Public Health
4	Bulletin de la Société de Pathologie Exotique
4	Disasters
4	Essential Drugs: Update
4	Health Policy
4	Medical Care
4	Public Health
4	Tropical Medicine and Parasitology
4	WHO Chronicle ( <i>ceased publication</i> )
3	Children in the Tropics
3	Journal of the American Medical Association
3	Journal of Biosocial Science
3	Médecine d'Afrique Noire
3	Médecine Tropicale
3	NU. Nytt om U-landshälsovård
3	PHP Departmental Publications
3	Public Health Reports
3	UNICEF Staff Working Papers
3	WHO Regional Publications. South-East Asia Series
2	American Journal of Epidemiology
2	American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene
2	Annals of Tropical Paediatrics
2	Central African Journal of Medicine
2	Epidemiological Bulletin WHO/AFRO
2	Ethiopian Journal of Health Development
2	Journal of Health and Social Behavior
2	Nature
2	Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde
2	Revista Cubana de Administración de la Salud
2	Revue d'Epidémiologie et de Santé Publique
2	Southeast Asian Journal of Tropical Medicine and Public Health
2	Tropical Diseases Bulletin
2	Weekly Epidemiological Record
2	West Indian Medical Journal

<sup>a</sup> Journals with one citation only are omitted.

Table 3

**Subjects covered in the Endemic database and number of papers included for each subject<sup>a</sup>**

82	AIDS
27	Amoebiasis
27	Ankylostomiasis
35	Ascariasis
18	Bacillary dysentery
42	Chagas disease
57	Cholera
73	Dracunculiasis
33	Filariasis
36	Gonorrhoea
50	Hepatitis
18	Hydatidosis
43	Leishmaniasis
71	Leprosy
25	Leptospirosis
86	Malaria
54	Measles
37	Meningitis
40	Onchocerciasis
39	Plague
57	Poliomyelitis
38	Rabies
22	Scabies
50	Schistosomiasis haematobium
34	Schistosomiasis japonicum
56	Schistosomiasis mansoni
40	Sleeping sickness
31	Syphilis
54	Tetanus
38	Trachoma
69	Tuberculosis
23	Typhoid fever
16	Typhus
22	Yaws
48	Yellow fever

<sup>a</sup> Language distribution: 915 English (68%), 417 French (31%) and 17 other (1%).

Of the 123 journals and series cited, the top 10 (8%) account for 53% of the citations recorded (excluding duplicate language items). This concentration on a few journals is a familiar phenomenon to documentation analysts.

Table 4

**Journal title occurrence in the Endemic database, ranked according to number of citations<sup>a</sup>**

115	Weekly Epidemiological Record	6	Etudes Médicales ( <i>ceased publication</i> )
113	Bulletin of the World Health Organization	6	Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report
58	The Lancet	5	Acta Tropica
42	Transactions of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene	5	Southeast Asian Journal of Tropical Medicine and Public Health
37	Social Science and Medicine	5	Tropical and Geographical Medicine
35	Reviews of Infectious Diseases ( <i>continued as Clinical Infectious Diseases</i> )	4	Disasters
35	WHO Technical Report Series	4	Genitourinary Medicine
33	Annales de la Société Belge de Médecine Tropicale	4	International Journal of Leprosy
33	Médecine Tropicale	4	Journal of Infection
30	American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene	4	Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde
28	Bulletin de la Société de Pathologie Exotique	4	Science
24	World Health Statistics Quarterly	4	South African Medical Journal
23	International Journal of Epidemiology	4	Tubercle
20	Tropical Doctor	3	Acta Leprologica
19	Journal of Infectious Diseases	3	Advances in Parasitology
18	Annals of Tropical Medicine and Parasitology	3	Africa Health
18	Cahiers Santé	3	Annals of Tropical Paediatrics
15	Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene	3	British Medical Bulletin
15	World Health Forum	3	Bulletin des Séances. Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer
14	American Journal of Epidemiology	3	Clinical Infectious Diseases ( <i>formerly Reviews of Infectious Diseases</i> )
14	Médecine d'Afrique Noire	3	Epidemiologic Reviews
14	Parasitology Today	3	International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics
12	Epidemiology and Infection	3	Nature
11	Bulletin of the Pan American Health Organization	3	Public Health
11	Leprosy Review	3	Revue Internationale du Trachome
11	WHO Chronicle ( <i>ceased publication</i> )	2	Acta Leidensia ( <i>ceased publication</i> )
10	British Medical Journal	2	Afrique Médicale
10	Développement et Santé	2	American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology
10	Health Policy and Planning	2	American Journal of Public Health
10	Medical News MSF	2	Bulletin de l'Institut Pasteur
10	Tropical Medicine and Parasitology	2	Bulletin Épidémiologique Hebdomadaire
9	AIDS	2	Contact CMC
9	Médecine et Maladies Infectieuses	2	European Journal of Epidemiology
8	Afrique Médecine et Santé ( <i>ceased publication</i> )	2	Indian Journal of Leprosy
8	Clinics in Tropical Medicine and Communicable Diseases ( <i>ceased publication</i> )	2	International Journal of Dermatology
8	Journal of Tropical Pediatrics	2	Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes
7	Children in the Tropics	2	Journal of Diarrhoeal Diseases Research
7	Epidemiological Bulletin (PAHO)	2	Journal of the American Medical Association
7	Memisa Nieuws Medische Editie	2	Parasitology
7	New England Journal of Medicine	2	Public Health Papers WHO
7	Revue d'Épidémiologie et de Santé Publique	2	Publications Médicales Africaines
6	Baillière's Clinical Tropical Medicine and Communicable Diseases ( <i>ceased publication</i> )	2	Scandinavian Journal of Infectious Diseases
6	Central African Journal of Medicine	2	Soins Pathologie Tropicale ( <i>ceased publication</i> )
6	East African Medical Journal	2	Tropical Diseases Bulletin
6	Epidemiological Bulletin WHO/AFRO	2	WHO Offset Publications

<sup>a</sup> Journals with one citation only are omitted.

### **Database on endemic diseases**

The database entitled *Endemic* covers literature on the epidemiology of the major endemic diseases in the tropics. By the end of 1993, 1349 records had been selected, consisting of 1117 journal articles, 71 books, 46 book chapters, 80 reports or serial issues, and 35 documents. Table 3 is a list of the diseases covered in this database, with the number of papers on each.

The results of this citation count are shown in Table 4, in descending order of magnitude. The table shows that in the field of endemic disease control the *Weekly Epidemiological Record* and the *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* are the most frequently cited.

The third place of *The Lancet*, a general medical journal, is noteworthy. The traditional journals on tropical medicine rank high on the list, as do almost all WHO journals and serials. A total of 176 journals are cited, the top 10 (7%) of which account for 46% of the citations recorded (duplicate language items excluded).

Given the specific purpose of these two databases, the findings presented here are of limited value as a selection tool for other medical libraries. However, as this kind of information is scarce, especially in developing countries, a strong case can be made for publishing as much of it as possible. ■

### **Older brains**

*Older individuals have more difficulty with the development of concepts and abstract thinking than younger ones. There are also age-related changes in the acquisition, storage and retrieval of information. Older people require more time and effort to encode (enter) information in the nervous system. However, when information has been encoded equally well by young and older people, the extent of memory storage is also similar. In memory tasks, recall (search for and retrieval of information from storage) declines more with age than recognition (matching stored information with information in the environment). Older individuals have more difficulty with recognition tasks when there are a number of responses to choose from. The role of education in this phenomenon is not clear.*

- *Aging and working capacity. Report of a WHO Study Group. Geneva, World Health Organization, 1993: p.14 (WHO Technical Report Series, No.835).*