

# Social and academic impact of the Revista Brasileira de Medicina de Família e Comunidade

Impacto social e acadêmico da Revista Brasileira de Medicina de Família e Comunidade

*Impacto social y académico de la Revista Brasileira de Medicina de Familia e Comunidade*

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## Abstract

The strengthening of Family and Community Medicine and Primary Health Care in Latin America requires, among many other things, the production of scientific journals with high social and academic impact. The Revista Brasileira de Medicina de Família e Comunidade has the potential to be one of these journals. However, the task of managing and increasing the social and academic relevance of small journals, with modest metrics and/or linked to emerging research areas, as in the case of Revista Brasileira de Medicina de Família e Comunidade, is complex. Over the years, we have observed a significant increase in the scientific impact of this journal, such as the increase in its H5 Index (Google). However, there is still a lot of work ahead to achieve indexing in MEDLINE, Scopus, and Web of Science. This editorial is a way of mobilizing the entire academic and care communities in Family and Community Medicine and Primary Health Care to join efforts to strengthen the journal.

**Keywords:** Family and community medicine; Primary health care; Periodical; Journal impact factor.

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## Resumo

O fortalecimento da Medicina de Família e Comunidade e da atenção primária latino-americana requer, entre tantas outras coisas, a produção de periódicos científicos de alto impacto social e acadêmico. A *Revista Brasileira de Medicina de Família e Comunidade* tem o potencial de ser um desses periódicos. Contudo, é complexa a tarefa de gerenciar e aumentar o impacto social e acadêmico de periódicos científicos de pequeno porte, com métricas modestas e/ou ligadas a áreas de pesquisa emergentes, como no caso *Revista Brasileira de Medicina de Família e Comunidade*. Temos observado ao longo dos anos um aumento significativo do impacto científico dessa revista, a exemplo da elevação de seu Índice H5 (Google). Entretanto, ainda há muito trabalho à frente para alcançarmos indexações na Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online (MEDLINE), Scopus e Web of Science. Este editorial é uma forma de mobilizar toda a comunidade acadêmica e assistencial em Medicina de Família e Comunidade e atenção primária a unir esforços para fortalecer a revista.

**Palavras-chave:** Medicina de família e comunidade; Atenção primária à saúde; Publicação periódica; Fator de impacto de revistas.

## Resumen

El fortalecimiento de la Medicina Familiar y Comunitaria y de la Atención Primaria de Salud en latinoamérica requiere, entre otras cosas, la producción de revistas científicas de alto impacto social y académico. La *Revista Brasileira de Medicina de Família e Comunidade* tiene potencial para ser una de esas revistas. Sin embargo, la tarea de gestionar y aumentar el impacto social y académico de revistas científicas pequeñas, con métricas bibliométricas modestas y/o vinculadas a áreas de investigación emergentes, como en el caso de *Revista Brasileira de Medicina de Família e Comunidade*, es compleja. A lo largo de los años, hemos observado un aumento significativo del impacto científico de esa Revista, como el aumento de su Índice H5 (Google). Pero aún queda mucho trabajo por delante para lograr la indexación en MEDLINE, Scopus y *Web of Science*. Ese editorial es una forma de movilizar a toda la comunidad académica y asistencial de Medicina Familiar y Comunitaria y Atención Primaria de Salud a unir esfuerzos para fortalecer la revista.

**Palabras clave:** Medicina familiar y comunitaria; Atención primaria de salud; Publicación periódica; Factor de impacto de la revista.

The health field has one of the most complex and competitive publishing markets, which makes the management of journals dedicated to the fields of knowledge with small participation in the global scientific production more challenging, such as the case of Family and Community Medicine (MFC) and the *Revista Brasileira de Medicina de Família e Comunidade* (RBMFC).

To qualify the journal's production, it is important to make it attractive for researchers with different characteristics. This includes researchers who depend on the profile of their academic production to be ranked in their universities, take positions in postgraduate courses and raise scarce funds from development agencies.<sup>1</sup> In Brazil, *Qualis Periódicos*, which should be used as a tool to assess postgraduate programs, ends up being inadequately used to evaluate researchers and their papers.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the "qualis" score of the journal ends up overlapping the publishing profile and the target-audience of the journal as a factor of choice of the means in which one wants to publish their research.

This can be even more relevant for small journals, with modest metrics and/or those connected to emerging fields of study, as is the case of RBMFC. As described by Merton,<sup>3</sup> the "Matthew effect" means that the scientific contribution of less well-known researchers (journals, countries) can be unfairly taken for granted, reinforcing the hierarchy in the academic universe. Therefore, the strengthening of journals such as RBMFC requires a permanent and wearing effort from sponsors, editors, reviewers and researchers to adjust the journal to the most advanced editorial practices, in a context of voluntary work that is added to the overload of their daily lives.

As discussed in some editorials,<sup>4-9</sup> the editorial board of RBMFC needs to pay attention to the evolution of the open science movement in order to adapt their editorial policies, thus internationalizing the editorial board to the level required by scientific bases, managing the busy editorial peer review flow, screening for plagiarism, administering the editorial management and publishing system (Open Journal

Systems – OJS, in the case of RBMFC), looking after the marketing of the journal in the social media and communication means, analyzing the journal's indexation and participating in the engagement of the scientific community to increase the impact of the published papers.

Because of such a complexity, medium-sized journals such as RBMFC have difficulties to attract qualified papers, which will be read and cited more often, thus creating a virtuous cycle that leads the journal to increase the odds of indexation in bases such as Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online (MEDLINE), Scopus and Web of Science.

Add to that the fact that the “global north” is not really embracing publications from the “global south”, especially from a region such as Latin America. Brazil,<sup>10</sup> for instance, shows that approximately half of the papers produced in the country and 40% of the national journals in the health field are not covered by Web of Science. On the other hand, Mendis and Solangaarachchi<sup>11</sup> show the modest presence of MFC in the scenario of citations of the PubMed base; these papers were produced by a few researchers who are mainly in Europe.

We emphasize our astonishment regarding the refusal report as to the indexation of RBMFC in Scopus and MEDLINE. The reviewers gave the journal a positive evaluation, with good national impact and relevant participation in a still modest field of knowledge, commenting on some publishing issues that are relatively easy to solve and were not in the admission criteria. When it came to assessing the journal's language and giving the final opinion, the option was to refuse the plea. Dealing with scientific “colonialism” may be the most frustrating task for editors from Latin-American journals.

Because of all that, the editors of RBMFC usually analyze the evolution of the journal in the Scopus and Web of Science bibliographic bases. We always like to remember that Brazil has a leadership role in MFC and in Latin American and “global south” primary health care; such a role requires, among many things, the production of a social and academic high impact scientific journal. RBMFC can play that role.

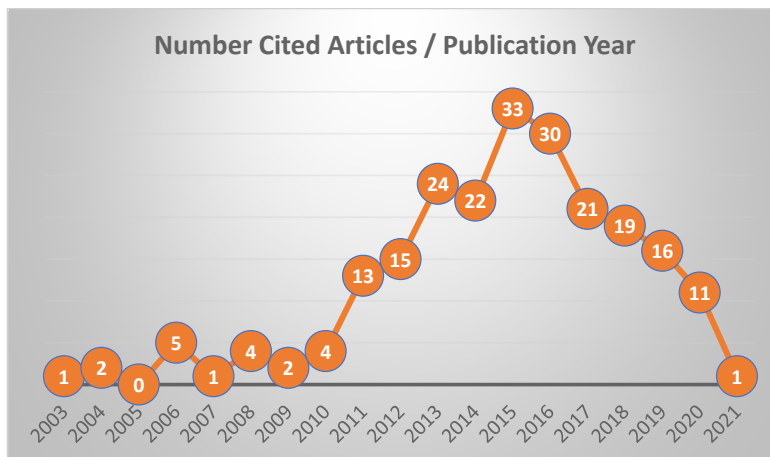
From 2018 to 2021, the number of citations of RBMFC articles published in any year of its existence raised from 77, in 2018, to 83, in 2019; 92, in 2020; and 116 in 2021, accounting for 368 citations in the period.

A historical analysis of the journal shows that the number of citations of its papers has been gradually increasing, suggesting the incorporation of RBMFC to the academic community, especially that of MFC, Primary Health Care, collective health and nursing. As shown in Figures 1 and 2, there has been a significant addition to the number and proportion of papers published after 2010 which were cited at least once.

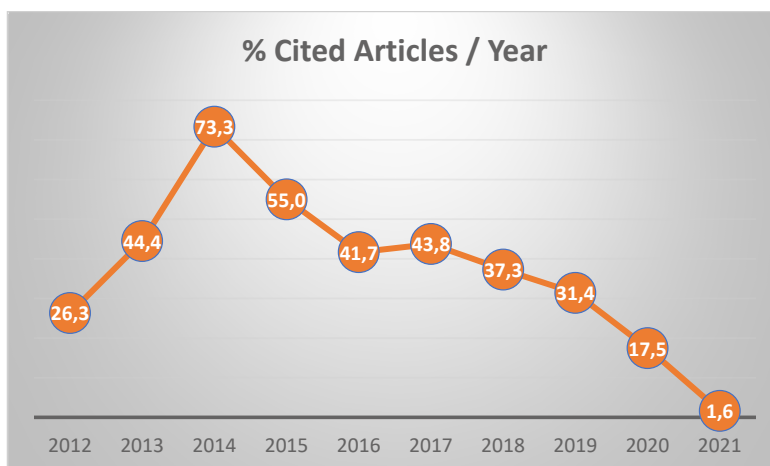
The journals that cite articles published in RBMFC the most are from the Collective Health (*Ciência e Saúde Coletiva*, *Interface*, *Cadernos de Saúde Pública*, *Revista de Saúde Pública* and *Revista Pan-Americana de Saúde Pública*), Nursing (*Revista Brasileira de Enfermagem*, *Revista da Escola de Enfermagem da USP*, *Acta Paulista de Enfermagem* and *Revista Latino-Americana de Enfermagem*) and Primary Health Care (*Atención Primaria*) fields.

And the articles published in RBMFC that were cited ten or more times in any period are described in Table 1. Two main aspects result from this data. Firstly, the articles in RBMFC need some years to reach higher citation rates, which can make it more difficult to increase the metrics of the journals, since these are generally based on data from the past two to five years. Secondly, it is known that the theme of the papers matters. RBMFC has been a relevant media for articles in the initial set of studies about the quality of primary health care in Brazil, verified as a PCATool instrument, which placed it as an essential source for those who research the organization of Primary Health Care in the country.

Therefore, it is up to the academic community around RBMFC to identify relevant themes not only for MFC (even though this should be the focus), but also for other fields, such as collective health and nursing.



**Figure 1.** Number of articles in the Revista Brasileira de Medicina de Família e Comunidade cited by other papers in Web of Science, per year of publication.



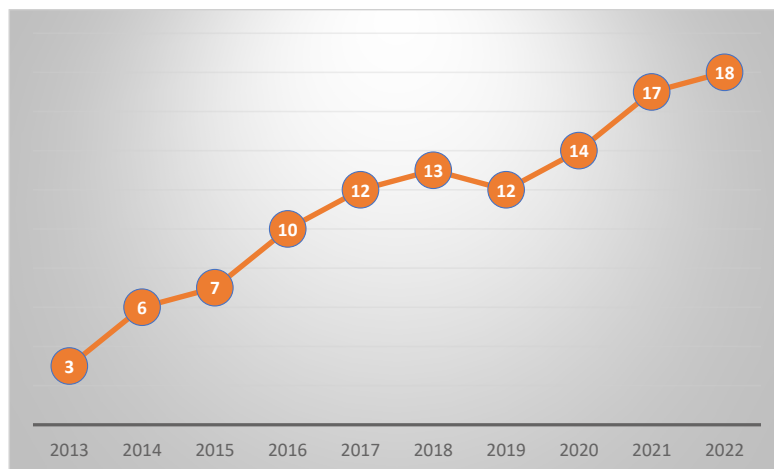
**Figure 2.** Proportion of articles from the Revista Brasileira de Medicina de Família e Comunidade cited by other papers in the Web of Science per year of publication.

**Table 1.** Most cited papers in the history of the Revista Brasileira de Medicina de Família e Comunidade — Web of Science.

Authors	Title	Year	Citations
Harzheim E. et al.	Validation of the Primary Care Assessment Tool: PCATool-Brazil for adults	2013	29
Tesser, CD. et al.	Obstetric violence and quaternary prevention: what it is and what to do	2015	24
Chomatas, E. et al.	Evaluation of the presence and extension of the attributes of primary care in Curitiba	2013	21
Jamouille, M.	Quaternary prevention: first, do not harm	2015	16
Claros M, Gerais M.	Professional profile of healthcare providers holding university degree in Family Health Strategy teams in Montes Claros, Minas Gerais, Brazil	2013	13
Vitoria AM, et al.	Evaluation of primary health care attributes in Chapecó, Brazil	2013	13
Norman AH.	The intersection space of words: the doctor-patient relationship	2015	13
Agostinho MR, et al.	Self-perceived health of adults users of Primary Health Care Services in Porto Alegre, RS, Brazil	2010	12
Savassi LCM.	Quality in public services: the challenges of primary care	2012	11
Oliveira MMC, et al.	PCATool-ADULT-BRAZIL: a reduced version	2013	11
Pimentel TRS.	Description of demand in a Family Health Unit	2011	10

In an “unofficial” exercise to calculate the impact factor of RBMFC from 2020 to 2021, we reached 0.18 (23 citations in 2021 for 125 journals in 2020 and 2021). This is a modest impact factor, but it could place RBMFC in the same pattern as other journals from the field of Primary Health Care, MFC and Collective Health that now have a more relevant indexation status. That is, there is potential for growth in the impact of RBMFC, obviously being careful about the impact factor data analysis, considering the problems with these indicators, as exhaustively reported in the literature.<sup>12</sup>

Such a potential is proven by the evolution of the H-Index 5 (Google) of RBMFC in the past few years: from 3, in 2013, to 18 in 2022 (Figure 3). In 2022, RBMFC reached its best historical position, and ranked 72<sup>nd</sup> among the journals in Portuguese.



**Figure 3.** Evolution of the H-index 5 of the Revista Brasileira de Medicina de Família e Comunidade — 2013 to 2022.

In this scenario of growing scientific impact, the editorial board of RBMFC summons the entire academic and care MFC and Primary Health Care community to join efforts to strengthen the journal, to participate as reviewers, to submit their productions and orientations for the journal, and especially to use it as a reference in their respective fields of work. Therefore, together we can accomplish the acceptance of MFC and Primary Health Care in international bibliographic bases.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Nothing to declare.

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

TDS: Concept, Data Curatorship, Formal Analysis, Writing – First Draft, Writing – Review and Editing. CSM: Concept, Formal Analysis, Writing – Review and Editing. LFF: Concept, Formal Analysis, Writing – Review and Editing. PSC: Concept, Formal Analysis, Writing – Review and Editing.

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