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## MJMHS VOL. 17 NO. 2 - APRIL 2021

Editorial Board (/upload/dokumen/20210406154137Cover\_April\_2021.pdf)

Content (/upload/dokumen/20210406142643Content\_April\_2021.pdf)

Acknowledgements (/upload/dokumen/20210406142758ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS\_APRIL\_ISSUE.pdf)

Authors Guideline (/upload/dokumen/20210406142758Author\_Guidelines-Version\_XI\_JAN\_2021.pdf)

EDITORIAL (/upload/dokumen/20210406142758Editorial\_April\_2021.pdf)

### ORIGINAL ARTICLE

1. Quantification of Muscle Fiberizes Using Proton Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy (1H-MRS) for Incomplete Spinal Cord Injury Patients: Preliminary Study (/upload/dokumen/2021040613445401\_MJMHS\_0548.pdf)
2. The Proportion of Non-retention and Its Associated Factors Among Clients Receiving Methadone Maintenance Therapy in Kelantan, Malaysia (/upload/dokumen/2021040611203902\_MJMHS\_0551.pdf)
3. The Outcomes of Team-based Learning on Test Performance, Cognitive Engagement and Motivation in Preclinical Anatomy Practical Classes (/upload/dokumen/2021040611483503\_MJMHS\_0606.pdf)
4. A Survey of Knowledge and Practices in Enzyme Toxic Waste Among Dental Practitioners in Kuantan, Pahang: A Preliminary Study (/upload/dokumen/2021040612562004\_MJMHS\_0672.pdf)
5. Barriers to Physical Activity and Exercise Amongst Persons With Physical Disability in a Government-funded Teaching Hospital, Kuala Lumpur (/upload/dokumen/2021040612582805\_MJMHS\_0246.pdf)
6. Correlation Between Blood Glucose and Salivary Glucose in Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus Patients (/upload/dokumen/2021040613022706\_MJMHS\_0021.pdf)
7. The Prevalence of COVID-19, Tuberculosis, and Anemia in Hospitalized HIV Patients Admitted in Dr. Soetomo General Hospital, Surabaya, Indonesia (/upload/dokumen/2021040613039307\_MJMHS\_0742.pdf)
8. Factors Correlated With Internet Gaming Disorder Among Malaysian University Students (/upload/dokumen/2021040613034008\_MJMHS\_0356.pdf)
9. Tumour Growth Inhibition and Systemic Responses of *AsopBaspD* Disrupted Salmonella Agona and Salmonella Typhimurium in Mice (/upload/dokumen/2021040613041209\_MJMHS\_0674.pdf)
10. Dosimetric Study of Custom-made Pelvic Perspex Phantom using Single-Energy Mode (SECT) and Dual-Energy Mode (DECT) Computed Tomography (/upload/dokumen/2021040613050210\_MJMHS\_0532.pdf)
11. Association of Temperature and Rainfall with Aedes Mosquito Population in Tsh, College of Universiti Putra Malaysia (/upload/dokumen/2021040613061511\_MJMHS\_0588.pdf)
12. Identify Prognostic Risk Factor of Breast Cancer in North West of Iran (/upload/dokumen/2021040613070112\_MJMHS\_0044.pdf)
13. Positive Predictive Value of Sonographic BI-RADS Final Assessment Categories for Breast Lesions (/upload/dokumen/2021040613072313\_MJMHS\_0559.pdf)
14. Knowledge, Attitude and Practice on Vegetables Intake among Adolescents in Rural Terengganu, Malaysia (/upload/dokumen/2021040613094314\_MJMHS\_0296.pdf)
15. Tuberculosis Infection and Incidence of Loss to Follow Up among HIV Patients at Saiful Anwar General Hospital, Indonesia: A Retrospective Study (/upload/dokumen/2021040613096815\_MJMHS\_0715.pdf)
16. Successful Academic Remediation of Undergraduate Medical Students for Exit Examination: Lessons Learned (/upload/dokumen/2021040613093416\_MJMHS\_0645.pdf)
17. Psychological Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Mental Health Among Medical Students in Malaysia (/upload/dokumen/2021040613095817\_MJMHS\_0736.pdf)
18. The Effect of Balance Exercise Training on Balance Status, and Quality of Life in Elderly Women: A Randomized Controlled Trial (/upload/dokumen/2021040613102518\_MJMHS\_0691.pdf)
19. Work-related Quality of Life and Its Associated Factors Among House Officers Working at Two Hospitals in Selangor (/upload/dokumen/2021040613105319\_MJMHS\_0045.pdf)
20. Analysis of Heavy Metals (Cadmium, Chromium, Lead, Manganese, and Zinc) in Well Water in East Java Province, Indonesia (/upload/dokumen/2021040613114320\_MJMHS\_0789.pdf)
21. Isolation and Characterization of *Clostridium thermophilum* from Feces of Monkeys at Monopoli International University (/upload/dokumen/2021040613129821\_MJMHS\_0643.pdf)
22. Effects of Pulsed Ultrasound with Low Intensity on Recovery of Physical Impairments After Total Knee Arthroplasty: A Preliminary Case-Experimental Study (/upload/dokumen/2021040613130822\_MJMHS\_0187.pdf)
23. Inhibitory Effect of Garlic (*Allium sativum*) Extract on *Streptococcus sanguinis* Biofilm Formation Involving Bacterial Motility Mechanism (/upload/dokumen/2021040613134123\_MJMHS\_0582.pdf)
24. The Effect of Submaximal Incremental Running Test on Heart Rate Variability in University-level Male Football Athletes (/upload/dokumen/2021040613140824\_MJMHS\_2407.pdf)
25. Development of a Patient Safety Training Program for Health Workers in Indonesia: Perspectives of Health Workers and Hospital Secretaries (/upload/dokumen/2021040613142525\_MJMHS\_0694.pdf)
26. Food Craving and Symptoms of Premenstrual Syndrome among University Students (/upload/dokumen/2021040613150326\_MJMHS\_0127.pdf)
27. Mesopic Pupillometry in Pre-LASIK Patients by a Placido-Disc Topographer and Hartmann-Shack Aberrometer (/upload/dokumen/2021040613152927\_MJMHS\_0908.pdf)
28. Features of an Ergonomic Chair Designed for Surgeons Performing Microscopic Surgeries (/upload/dokumen/2021040613153029\_MJMHS\_0779.pdf)
29. Diabetes Knowledge of T2DM Patients in Hospital Pakar Sabazaki Farid, Merau, Iktan, Malaysia (/upload/dokumen/2021040613161725\_MJMHS\_0801.pdf)
30. Types of Nutrition Resource: KIR Needed by Community Living Elderly in Malaysian Health Clinic Setting: A Qualitative Study (/upload/dokumen/2021040613164630\_MJMHS\_0834.pdf)
31. Assessment of Bangladeshi People's Knowledge, Awareness, Precautionary Behavior and Preventive Actions During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Cross-sectional Survey (/upload/dokumen/2021040613462831\_MJMHS\_0947.pdf)
32. Effects of Low Birth Weight Babies on Cochlear Function in Newborns of Dr. Soetomo Hospital Surabaya (/upload/dokumen/2021040613465532\_MJMHS\_0676.pdf)
33. Fibronectin-Binding Protein F1 (FnBP1) Gene Is Highly Distributed in Tetracycline-resistant, Erythromycin-sensitive *Streptococcus pyogenes* Isolates (/upload/dokumen/2021040613492033\_MJMHS\_0821.pdf)

### REVIEW ARTICLE

1. The Potential of Cellulose Acetate as Radiosensitizer for Human Prostate Cancer: A Systematic Review of Preclinical Studies (/upload/dokumen/2021040613495134\_MJMHS\_0832.pdf)
2. Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) On Aedes Mosquito-Borne Diseases Amongst Community Members in Malaysia: A Review (/upload/dokumen/2021040613502035\_MJMHS\_0075.pdf)
3. Review on the In Vitro Cytotoxicity Assessment in Accordance to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) (/upload/dokumen/2021040613502035\_MJMHS\_0075.pdf)

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Newsletter

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MJMHS VOL. 18 SUPP 1 - JANUARY 2022 (/jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmhsc/vol18\_supp\_1\_january\_2022-64824)

MJMHS VOL. 17 SUPP 14 - DECEMBER 2021 (/jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmhsc/vol17\_supp\_14\_december\_2021-64759)

MJMHS VOL. 17 SUPP 13 - DECEMBER 2021 (/jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmhsc/vol17\_supp\_13\_december\_2021-64714)

MJMHS VOL. 17 SUPP 12 - DECEMBER 2021 (/jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmhsc/vol17\_supp\_12\_december\_2021-64719)

MJMHS VOL. 17 SUPP 11 - DECEMBER 2021 (/jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmhsc/vol17\_supp\_11\_december\_2021-64682)

MJMHS VOL. 17 SUPP 10 - DECEMBER 2021 (/jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmhsc/vol17\_supp\_10\_december\_2021-64669)

MJMHS VOL. 17 SUPP 9 - NOVEMBER 2021 (/jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmhsc/vol17\_supp\_9\_november\_2021-64206)

MJMHS VOL. 17 SUPP 8 - OKTOBER 2021 (/jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmhsc/vol17\_supp\_8\_oktober\_2021-64209)

MJMHS VOL. 17 SUPP 7 - OKTOBER 2021 (/jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmhsc/vol17\_supp\_7\_oktober\_2021-64208)

MJMHS VOL. 17 NO. 4 - OKTOBER 2021 (/jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmhsc/vol17\_no\_4\_oktober\_2021-63482)

MJMHS VOL. 17 SUPP 6 - SEPTEMBER 2021 (/jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmhsc/vol17\_supp\_6\_september\_2021-63375)

MJMHS VOL. 17 SUPP 5 - AGUST 2021 (/jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmhsc/vol17\_supp\_5\_agust\_2021-62993)

MJMHS VOL. 17 NO. 3 - JULY 2021 (/jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmhsc/vol17\_no\_3\_july\_2021-63320)

MJMHS VOL. 17 SUPP 4 - JUNE 2021 (/jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmhsc/vol17\_supp\_4\_june\_2021-62002)

MJMHS VOL. 17 SUPP 3 - JUNE 2021 (/jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmhsc/vol17\_supp\_3\_june\_2021-61888)

MJMHS VOL. 17 SUPP 2 - APRIL 2021 (/jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmhsc/vol17\_no\_2\_april\_2021-61186)

MJMHS VOL. 17 SUPP 1 - JANUARY 2021 (/jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmhsc/vol17\_supp\_1\_january\_2021-60323)

MJMHS VOL. 17 NO. 1 - JANUARY 2021 (/jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmhsc/vol17\_no\_1\_january\_2021-59895)

MJMHS VOL. 16 SUPP 16 - DECEMBER 2020 (/jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmhsc/vol16\_supp\_16\_december\_2020-59898)

MJMHS VOL. 16 SUPP 15 - DECEMBER 2020 (/jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmhsc/vol16\_supp\_15\_december\_2020-59892)

MJMHS VOL. 16 SUPP 14 - DECEMBER 2020 (/jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmhsc/vol16\_supp\_14\_december\_2020-59786)

MJMHS VOL. 16 SUPP 13 - DECEMBER 2020 (/jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmhsc/vol16\_supp\_13\_december\_2020-59774)

MJMHS VOL. 16 NO. 4 - DECEMBER 2020 (/jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmhsc/vol16\_no\_4\_december\_2020-59593)

MJMHS VOL. 16 SUPP 12 - NOVEMBER 2020 (/jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmhsc/vol16\_supp\_12\_november\_2020-59361)

- 2021040613508636\_MJMHS\_0637.pdf)
- 4. Investigating the Effect of Sulfon on Anxiety, Fatigue, Labor Pain and Vaginal Childbirth: Review Article (upload/dokumen/2021040613513637\_MJMHS\_0684.pdf)
- 5. Thyrotoxic Heart Failure: A Narrative Review of Pathophysiology and Practical Management (upload/dokumen/2021040613520438\_MJMHS\_0626.pdf)

**COMMENTARY**

- 1. Empathetic Dentistry: Noble Opportunity to Restore Broken Hearts of Malaysian Homes (upload/dokumen/2021040613523439\_MJMHS\_0533.pdf)
- 2. Reforming Fuzgile: Reviews into Dynamic Politics on our own (the 2020) Presidential E. (upload/dokumen/2021040613530940\_MJMHS\_0217.pdf)

**SHORT COMMUNICATION**

- 1. Inconsistency of Lesion Quantitative Assessment in 2D SUV and 3D SUV Quantification Techniques for 18F-FDG PET/CT: A Phantom Study (upload/dokumen/202104061353942345\_MJMHS\_0665.pdf)

**CASE SERIES**

- 1. Case Series on Drug Reaction with Eosinophilia and Systemic Syndrome (DRESS) with Different Ocular Manifestation (upload/dokumen/2021040613545342\_MJMHS\_0213.pdf)

**CASE REPORT**

- 1. A Novel Approach in Treating Diabetic Foot Ulcer With Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy: A Case Report (upload/dokumen/2021040613553243\_MJMHS\_0343.pdf)
- 2. Return to Work Assessment in a Radiographer Assistant Suffering a Hemianopsia due to an Ischemic Stroke (upload/dokumen/2021040613555844\_MJMHS\_0750.pdf)
- 3. The Efficacy of Embolization of Arterial Reversible Phosphotransferase Inhibitors (upload/dokumen/2021040613562146\_MJMHS\_0649.pdf)
- 4. Successful Pregnancy in a Patient With Recurrent Pregnancy Loss Due to Autoimmune Managed With Cyclosporine Prophylaxis in a Resource-limited Setting (upload/dokumen/2021040613565146\_MJMHS\_0578.pdf)
- 5. Severe Pulmonary Tuberculosis With Organizing Pneumonia: A Diagnostic Ambiguity (upload/dokumen/2021040613571067\_MJMHS\_0589.pdf)
- 6. A Case of Acute Stelevation Myocardial Infarction (STEMI) Secondary to Anaphylactic Reaction Type 2 Kounis Syndrome (upload/dokumen/2021040613575348\_MJMHS\_0594.pdf)
- 7. Exceptionally Rare Krukenberg Tumour in a Patient With Dextrocardia and Situs Inversus Totalis / Exceptionally Rare Krukenberg Tumour in a Patient With Dextrocardia and Situs Inversus Totalis (upload/dokumen/2021040613581399\_01\_01115\_0373.pdf)

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MMJMS VOL.16 SUPP 11 - NOVEMBER 2020 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol16\_supp\_11\_november\_2020\_59390)

MMJMS VOL. 16 SUPP 10 - NOVEMBER 2020 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_16\_supp\_10\_november\_2020\_59210)

MMJMS VOL. 16 SUPP 9 - NOVEMBER 2020 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_16\_supp\_9\_november\_2020\_59150)

MMJMS VOL. 16 SP 1 - SEPTEMBER 2020 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_16\_sp\_1\_september\_2020\_58336)

MMJMS VOL. 16 NO. 3 - SEPTEMBER 2020 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_16\_no\_3\_september\_2020\_58277)

MMJMS VOL. 16 SUPP 8 - AUGUST 2020 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_16\_supp\_8\_august\_2020\_58116)

MMJMS VOL. 16 SUPP 7 - AUGUST 2020 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_16\_supp\_7\_august\_2020\_58057)

MMJMS VOL. 16 SUPP 6 - AUGUST 2020 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_16\_supp\_6\_august\_2020\_57866)

MMJMS VOL. 16 SUPP 5 - JULY 2020 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_16\_supp\_5\_july\_2020\_57477)

MMJMS VOL. 16 SUPP 4 - JULY 2020 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_16\_supp\_4\_july\_2020\_57412)

MMJMS VOL. 16 SUPP 3 - JUNE 2020 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_16\_supp\_3\_june\_2020\_56929)

MMJMS VOL. 16 SUPP 2 - MAY 2020 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_16\_supp\_2\_may\_2020\_56736)

MMJMS VOL. 16 NO. 2 - MAY 2020 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_16\_no\_2\_may\_2020\_56552)

MMJMS VOL. 16 NO. 1 - JANUARY 2020 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_16\_no\_1\_january\_2020\_54913)

MMJMS VOL. 16 SUPPLEMENT 1 - JANUARY 2020 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_16\_supplement\_1\_january\_2020\_54587)

MMJMS VOL. 15 SUPPLEMENT 9 - DECEMBER 2019 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_15\_supplement\_9\_december\_2019\_54407)

MMJMS VOL. 15 SP4 - DECEMBER 2019 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_15\_sp4\_december\_2019\_54287)

MMJMS VOL. 15 SUPPLEMENT 8 - NOVEMBER 2019 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_15\_supplement\_8\_november\_2019\_54035)

MMJMS VOL. 15 SUPPLEMENT 7 - NOVEMBER 2019 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_15\_supplement\_7\_november\_2019\_53835)

MMJMS VOL. 15 SP3 - NOVEMBER 2019 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_15\_sp3\_november\_2019\_53655)

MMJMS VOL. 15 SUPPLEMENT 6 - OCTOBER 2019 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_15\_supplement\_6\_october\_2019\_52460)

MMJMS VOL. 15 NO. 3 - OKTOBER 2019 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_15\_no\_3\_oktober\_2019\_52215)

MMJMS VOL. 15 SUPPLEMENT 5 - SEPTEMBER 2019 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_15\_supplement\_5\_september\_2019\_51831)

MMJMS VOL. 15 SUPPLEMENT 4 - SEPTEMBER 2019 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_15\_supplement\_4\_september\_2019\_51535)

MMJMS VOL. 15 SUPPLEMENT 3 - AUGUST 2019 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_15\_supplement\_3\_august\_2019\_51211)

MMJMS VOL. 15 SUPPLEMENT 2 - JULY 2019 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_15\_supplement\_2\_july\_2019\_50643)

MMJMS VOL. 15 SP2 - JULY 2019 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_15\_sp2\_july\_2019\_50039)

MMJMS VOL. 15 NO. 2 - JUNE 2019 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_15\_no\_2\_june\_2019\_49775)

MMJMS VOL. 15 SUPPLEMENT 1 - APRIL 2019 (jurnal\_kami/malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjms\_vol\_15\_supplement\_1\_april\_2019\_49511)

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MJMHS VOL. 15 SP1 - APRIL 2019 (jurnal\_kami /malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmh /mjmh\_vol\_15\_sp1\_april\_2019-48729) **BM**

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MJMHS VOL. 14 SUPPLEMENT 1 - DECEMBER 2018 (jurnal\_kami /malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmh /mjmh\_vol\_14\_supplement\_1\_december\_2018-46265)

MJMHS VOL. 14 NO. SP3 - DECEMBER 2018 (jurnal\_kami /malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmh /mjmh\_vol\_14\_no\_sp3\_december\_2018-46237)

MJMHS VOL. 14 NO. SP2 - NOVEMBER 2018 (jurnal\_kami /malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmh /mjmh\_vol\_14\_no\_sp2\_november\_2018-46127)

MJMHS VOL. 14 NO. 3 - OCTOBER 2018 (jurnal\_kami /malaysian\_journal\_of\_medicine\_and\_health\_sciences\_mjmh /mjmh\_vol\_14\_no\_3\_october\_2018-43221)

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## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Effects of Low Birth Weight Babies on Cochlear Function In Newborns at Dr Soetomo Hospital Surabaya

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** The prevalence of hearing loss ranges from 1 to 3 per 1000 live births and 2-4 per 100 high-risk babies as in low birth weight babies. Hearing screening in all newborns has not been fully implemented at Dr. Soetomo Hospital Surabaya so this research is expected to be the basis for hearing screening in all babies born especially low birth weight babies (LBW). The objective of the study was to predict the effect of low birth weight babies on impaired cochlear function in newborns. **Methods:** Cross-sectional comparative study was conducted from September 2018 to March 2019 in Dr. Soetomo Hospital. The subjects of this study were infants aged 2-28 days old in the nursery. Distortion Product Otoacoustic Emissions (DPOAE) was used to examine selected babies who fulfilled the selection criteria. **Results:** Twenty babies ( $\geq 2500$  gram) and 20 babies ( $< 2500$  grams) were selected in this study. The proportion of cochlear dysfunction in infants with birth weights  $< 1500$  grams and 1500-2500 grams in Dr. Soetomo Hospital Surabaya was 50% and 35.7%. In multivariate analysis birth weight  $< 1500$  and birth weight 1500-2499 had a risk respectively 2.06 (95% Confidence Interval 0.08-48.26  $P = 0.653$ ) and 1.20 (95% Confidence Interval 0.07-20.34  $P = 0.899$ ) respectively. The proportion of cochlear dysfunction in babies with birth weight  $\geq 2500$  grams is the highest which is 65%. **Conclusion:** In this study Low Birth Weight Babies have a risk of 35.7% of impaired cochlear function. We would recommend DPOAE as screening method in all babies at Dr. Soetomo Hospital, Surabaya which is continued by second screening examination within one month on high risk babies and failed first test.

**Keywords:** Distortion Product Otoacoustic Emissions (DPOAE), low birth weight (LBW), cochlear function

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## INTRODUCTION

Impaired hearing function from birth can cause interference with aspects of speech, language, and cognitive development (1). Impaired hearing function in babies should be identified early so that early intervention is possible which benefits from the plasticity of the development of the sensory system (2). The prevalence of hearing loss is reported to range from 1 to 3 per 1000 live births. In high-risk babies (eg babies with low birth weight babies, perinatal asphyxia, hyperbilirubinemia) the estimated prevalence is around 2-4 per 100 babies (3,4). Many early detection programs in various countries are only based on specific risk factors. Selective screening results in 50% of children with hearing impairment not being detected so it is recommended to do universal hearing screening on all babies (5,6). So far, newborn hearing screening has not been carried out at Dr. Soetomo Hospital, Surabaya,

so this research is the basis for hearing screening in all newborns, especially in babies with risk factors such as low birth weight babies (LBW).

An otoacoustic emission (OAE) is a fast and inexpensive screening tool. OAE can be used to assess the function of outer hair cells from the cochlea. A normal response to OAE is a strong predictor of normal hearing function. OAE does not require highly trained personnel and tests can be performed without the use of sedation in babies. With the availability of OAE as a screening tool, hearing screening programs in newborns become more efficient, effective, and reliable (7).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was an observational analytic study with a cross-sectional comparative study design to analyze the effect of LBW on impaired newborn cochlear function. This research was carried out in the Neonatus Intermediate, Audiology Room in Dr. Soetomo Hospital Surabaya starting from September 2018 until March 2019. Low birth weight babies (LBW) are babies with birth weight less than 2500 grams and very low birth

weight (VLBW) are babies with birth weights of less than 1500 grams.

All newborns which met the inclusion criteria are admitted in this study. Inclusion criteria were: baby's parents agree to be included in the study (informed consent), age of baby 2-28 days, the baby is in stable condition. Exclusion Criteria were: OAE examination failed due to non-technical factors, the baby is using mechanical ventilation, weight less than 1000 grams. Subjects that met criteria were chosen randomly with consecutive sampling.

Each subject have to obtained the consent from a parent or guardian. The ethical clearance of this study was issued by the Health Research Ethics Committee, Dr. Soetomo Hospital, Surabaya No. 0601/KEPK/IX/2018. Before an OAE examination, the subjects were examined their ear canals by an otolaryngologists to make sure they were worth checking. Each subject of the study performed an OAE examination procedure in the form of an OAE device in the right or left ear. Checked using four frequencies namely 2000 Hz, 3000 Hz, 4000 Hz and 5000 Hz. OAE results in the form of a pass or refer can be read on the tool. OAE examination is conducted Neonatus Intermediate, Audiology Room Dr. Soetomo Hospital if the patient allows transport. If the patient cannot be transported the OAE examination is performed at the place where the baby is being treated. The inspection room must meet the noise standard <40 dB with measurements made using a sound level meter.

Microsoft Office Excel and IBM SPSS Statistic 21 were used to calculate the data. Descriptive analysis was conducted for presenting the characteristic demographic of subjects. Chi-Square Test, Logistic Regression, and Fisher Exact Test was used in order to obtained statistical value between variables and DPOAE.

## RESULTS

Forty samples of babies aged 2-28 days were collected that met the inclusion criteria with 20 babies weighing over 2500 grams and 20 babies with birth weight less than 2500 grams. Data was collected in cross sectional way, the recording of LPD (Data Collection Sheets) was carried out by researchers and then DPOAE checks were carried out according to the research flow.

The characteristics demographic of the subjects are presented in Table I. The number of female subjects in this study was 27 (67.5%) compared to 13 male subjects (32.5%). The gestational age of the mothers of the study subjects is almost the same as premature pregnancies of 19 subjects (47.5%). Maternal age was divided into three categories with the number and percentage of each category: age less than 20 years by 2 subjects (5%), ages between 20 years and 35 years by 25 subjects (62.5%) and maternal age more than 35 years as

many as 13 subjects (32.5%). The type of delivery was dominated by cesarean section with 36 subjects (90%). A total of 34 subjects (85%) were born to mothers with comorbidities with 6 of them (15%) taking medication during pregnancy.

Three subjects (7.5%) were obtained with low Apgar scores. Some subjects underwent treatment at the NICU more than 48 hours before as many as 17 (42.5%). In 13 subjects (32.5%) with birth weights less than 2500 gram, they had previously used oxygen. A total of 14 subjects experienced hyperbilirubinemia with the most occurrence in patients with birth weights less than 2500 gram. Only 6 subjects (15%) had previously experienced postpartum infections such as early onset sepsis. Six study subjects (15%) were exposed to previous ototoxic drugs such as the use of the antibiotic drug gentamicin. There were significant differences in the characteristics of the study subjects birth weight <2500 grams and birth weight ≥ 2500 grams on the variable gestational age (P <0.05), NICU care ≥ 48 hours (P <0.05), oxygen consumption (P <0.05), postpartum infection (P = 0.020), hyperbilirubinemia (P = 0.003) and the use of ototoxic drugs (P = 0.020).

**Table I: Characteristics demographic of subjects**

Variable	Birth Weight Category n (%)		Total n (%)	P
	<2500 gram	≥2500 gram		
Sex				1.000
Male	7 (35)	6 (30)	13 (32.5)	
Female	13 (65)	14 (70)	27 (67.5)	
Gestational age				0.000*
Premature	18 (90)	1 (5)	19 (47.5)	
Term	2 (10)	19 (95)	21 (52.5)	
Mothers age				0.591
<20 years	1 (5)	1 (5)	2 (5)	
20-35 years	11 (55)	14 (70)	25 (62.5)	
>35 years	8 (40)	5 (25)	13 (32.5)	
Type of Delivery				0.605
SVD (Spontaneous Vaginal Delivery)	3 (15)	1 (5)	4 (10)	
Sectio Caesarea	17 (85)	19 (95)	36 (90)	
Mothers disease				0.661
No	4 (20)	2 (10)	6 (15)	
Yes	16 (80)	18 (90)	34 (85)	
Drug during Pregnancy				0.182
No	19 (95)	15 (75)	34 (85)	
Yes	1 (5)	5 (25)	6 (15)	
Apgar Score				1.000
Normal	18 (90)	19 (95)	37 (92.5)	
Low	2 (10)	1 (5)	3 (7.5)	
NICU ≥ 48 hours				0.000*
No	3 (15)	20 (100)	23 (57.5)	
Yes	17 (85)	0 (0)	17 (42.5)	
Oxygen				0.000*
No	7 (35)	20 (100)	27 (67.5)	
Yes	13 (65)	0 (0)	13 (32.5)	
Post Partum Infection				0.020*
No	14 (70)	20 (58.8)	34 (85)	
Yes	6 (30)	0 (0)	6 (15)	
Hyperbilirubinemia				0.003*
No	8 (40)	18 (90)	26 (65)	
Yes	12 (60)	2 (10)	14 (35)	
Ototoxic drug				0.020*
No	14 (70)	20 (100)	34 (85)	
Yes	6 (30)	0 (0)	6 (15)	

Data are presented as number and percentage within rows and column  
\*a P value < 0.05 was considered statistically significant



Table II illustrated the DPOAE results for each frequency. In the majority of research subjects, referring to some low frequencies namely 2000 Hz and 3000 Hz. The number of cases of right and left ear DPOAE referred at a frequency of 2000 Hz from 40 research subjects were 16 (40%) and 15 (37.5%). The number of cases of right and left ear DPOAE referred at a frequency of 3000 Hz from 40 study subjects were 16 (37.5%) and 15 (45%).

**Table II: DPOAE results for each frequency**

	DPOAE Right Ears n (%)				DPOAE Left Ears n (%)			
	2000 Hz	3000 Hz	4000 Hz	5000 Hz	2000 Hz	3000 Hz	4000 Hz	5000 Hz
Refer	16 (40)	15 (37.5)	10 (25)	9 (22.5)	15 (37.5)	18 (45)	10 (25)	11 (27.5)
Pass	24 (60)	25 (62.5)	30 (75)	31 (77.5)	25 (62.5)	22 (55)	30 (75)	29 (72.5)

Data are presented as number and percentage

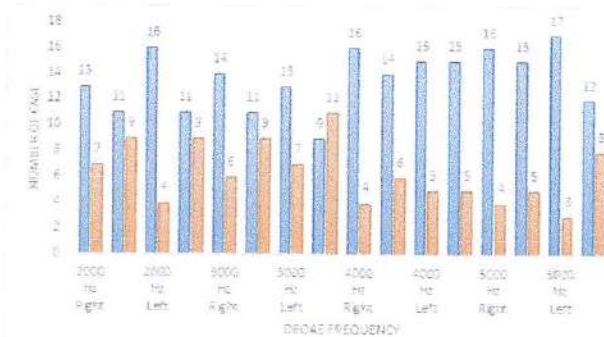
Table III showed the conclusions of DPOAE in both the right and left ears. In 13 cases (32.5%) the results of the DPOAE were referenced unilateral. And 8 cases (20%) obtained the results of DPOAE who refer bilaterally. Cumulative DPOAE in 40 study subjects found 21 cases (52.5%) who were referred.

**Table III. Cumulative DPOAE Results**

	DPOAE Right n (%)	DPOAE Left n (%)	DPOAE Unilateral n (%)	DPOAE Bilateral n (%)	DPOAE Cumulative n (%)
Refer	15 (37.5)	14 (35)	13 (32.5)	8 (20)	21 (52.5)
Pass	25 (62.5)	26 (65)	27 (67.5)	32 (80)	19 (47.5)

Data are presented as number and percentage

A description of DPOAE at frequencies of 2000 Hz, 3000 Hz, 4000 Hz and 5000 Hz for each body weight <2500 grams and ≥ 2500 grams can be seen in Figure 1. Most refer cases occur at low frequencies of 2000 Hz and 3000 Hz in both weight categories. The picture shows the frequency of DPOAE which often experiences refer especially at low frequencies of 2000 Hz and 3000 Hz. The number of passes and referrals in the right and left ears both at body weight <2500 grams and ≥ 2500 grams is almost the same.



**Figure 1: DPOAE examination results at each frequency and weight. A body weight <2500 grams B body weight ≥ 2500 grams.**

In univariate analysis birth weight <1500 and birth weight 1500-2499 gram had risks respectively 0.54 (95% Confidence Interval 0.09-3.41 P= 0.511) and 0.30 (95% Confidence Interval 0.07 respectively -1.24 P = 0.098) (Table IV). In a multivariate analysis birth weight <1500 and birth weight 1500-2499 gram had risks respectively 2.06 (95% Confidence Interval 0.08-48.26 P = 0.653) and 1.20 (95% Confidence Interval 0.07-20.34 P = 0.899) (Table V).

**Table IV: Univariate Analysis of Risk Factors for DPOAE Results**

Variable	DPOAE		P	OR (95 % CI)
	Refer n (%)	Pass n (%)		
Sex <sup>a</sup>				
Female	15 (71.4)	12 (63.2)	0.826	1.46 (0.39-5.51)
Male	6 (28.6)	7 (36.8)		Control
Gestational Age <sup>a</sup>				
Premature	7 (33.3)	12 (63.2)	0.117	0.29 (0.08-1.07)
Term	14 (66.7)	7 (33.8)		Control
Mothers Age <sup>b</sup>				
<20 years	1 (4.7)	1 (5.3)	0.870	0.79 (0.04-14.03)
>35 years	6 (28.6)	7 (36.8)	0.565	0.67 (0.17-2.59)
20-35 years	14 (66.67)	11 (57.9)		Control
Type of Delivery <sup>c</sup>				
Caesarean Section	19 (90.5)	17 (89.5)	1.000	1.12 (0.14-8.82)
SVD	2 (9.5)	2 (10.5)		Control
Mothers Disease <sup>c</sup>				
Yes	20 (95.3)	14 (73.7)	0.085	7.14 (0.75-67.98)
No	1 (4.7)	5 (26.3)		Control
Drug during Pregnancy <sup>c</sup>				
Yes	4 (19)	2 (10.5)	0.664	2.00 (0.32-12.41)
No	17 (81)	17 (89.5)		Control
Birth Weight <sup>b</sup>				
<1500	3 (14.3)	3 (15.8)	0.511	0.54 (0.09-3.41)
1500-2499	5 (23.8)	9 (47.4)	0.098	0.30 (0.07-1.24)
≥ 2500	13 (61.9)	7 (36.8)		Control
Apgar Score <sup>c</sup>				
Low	2 (9.5)	1 (5.3)	1.000	1.89 (0.16-22.75)
Normal	19 (90.5)	18 (94.7)		Control
NICU ≥ 48 hours <sup>a</sup>				
Yes	7 (33.3)	10 (52.6)	0.361	0.45 (0.13-1.62)
No	14 (66.7)	9 (47.4)		Control
Oxygen <sup>a</sup>				
Yes	6 (28.6)	7 (36.8)	0.826	0.69 (0.18-2.60)
No	15 (71.4)	12 (63.8)		Control
Post Partum Infection <sup>c</sup>				
Yes	3 (14.3)	3 (15.8)	1.000	0.89 (0.16-5.05)
No	18 (85.7)	16 (76.2)		Control
Hyperbilirubinemia <sup>a</sup>				
Yes	5 (23.8)	9 (47.4)	0.219	0.35 (0.09-1.34)
No	16 (76.2)	10 (52.6)		Control
Ototoxic drug <sup>c</sup>				
Yes	3 (14.3)	3 (15.8)	1.000	0.89 (0.16-5.05)
No	18 (85.7)	16 (76.2)		Control

<sup>a</sup> analysis using Chi-Square Test, <sup>b</sup> analysis using logistic regression, <sup>c</sup> analysis using the Fisher Exact Test

**Table V: Multivariate Analysis of Risk Factors for DPOAE Results**

Variable	DPOAE		P	OR (95 % CI)
	Refer n (%)	Pass n (%)		
<b>Birth Weight</b>				
<1500	3 (14.3)	3 (15.8)	0.653	2.06 (0.08-48.26)
1500-<2500	5 (23.8)	9 (47.4)	0.899	1.20 (0.07-20.34)
≥ 2500	13 (61.9)	7 (36.8)		Control
<b>Hiperbilirubinemia</b>				
Yes	5 (23.8)	9 (47.4)	0.444	0.51 (0.09-2.82)
No	16 (76.2)	10 (52.6)		Control
<b>Gestational Age</b>				
Premature	7 (33.3)	12 (63.8)	0.394	0.32 (0.02-2.34)
Term	14 (66.7)	7 (36.8)		Control
<b>Mothers Disease</b>				
Yes	20 (95.3)	14 (73.7)	0.137	5.74 (0.57-57.61)
No	1 (4.7)	5 (26.3)		Control

Data was presented as number and percentage

## DISCUSSION

The research lasted for 6 months to find out and analyze the relationship between low birth weight babies with hearing loss in newborns at Dr. Soetomo Regional Hospital, Surabaya. In this study there are differences in characteristics between research subjects with birth weight <2500 grams and ≥ 2500 grams. Significant differences were found in the variables of gestational age ( $P < 0.05$ ), NICU treatment ≥ 48 hours ( $P < 0.05$ ), oxygen consumption ( $P < 0.05$ ), postpartum infections ( $P = 0.020$ ), hyperbilirubinemia ( $P = 0.003$ ) and use ototoxic drugs ( $P = 0.020$ ). In a study of newborn universal hearing screening conducted by Olusanya BO in 2005-2007 in Nigeria between 45 babies with very low birth weight (VLBW) (<1500 grams) and 225 babies with normal birth weight (≥2500 grams) found different characteristic differences significant in hyperbilirubinemia, neonatal sepsis and ototoxic drug use (8).

In this study the results of the pass and refer to the right and left ears both at body weight <2500 grams and ≥ 2500 grams are almost the same. There is literature which states that at the cochlea level, there is an asymmetry between the right and left ears where the OAE response is higher in the right ear (9).

This study uses four DPOAE f2 frequencies, namely 2000 Hz, 3000 Hz, 4000 Hz and 5000 Hz. The results of DPOAE in research subjects are more refer to low frequencies such as 2000 Hz and 3000 Hz. Research conducted using five DPOAE frequencies of 1000 Hz, 1500 Hz, 2000 Hz, 3000 Hz and 4000 Hz gives reliable results at frequencies above 1000 Hz. And premature babies give little response (10).

In univariate analysis birth weight <1500 gram and birth weight 1500-2499 gram have risks respectively 0.54 (95% Confidence Interval 0.09-3.41  $P = 0.511$ ) and

0.30 (95% Confidence Interval 0.07-1.24  $P = 0.098$ ). In multivariate analysis birth weight <1500 gram and birth weight 1500-2500 gram had a risk respectively 2.06 (95% Confidence Interval 0.08-48.26  $P = 0.653$ ) and 1.20 (95% Confidence Interval 0.07-20.34  $P = 0.899$ ). A study conducted in Thailand in 2010-2012 with univariate analysis obtained data on birth weight <1500 grams RR 4.3 95% Confidence Interval (2.3-8.1)  $P < 0.001$  and on birth weight 1500-2500 grams RR 2 0.95% Confidence Interval (1.3-3.0)  $P = 0.003$ . Multivariate analysis obtained data on birth weight <1500 grams RR 1.4; 95% Confidence Interval (0.7-2.8)  $P = 0.288$  and on birth weight 1500-2500 grams RR 1.6; 95% Confidence Interval (1.1-2. =6)  $P = 0.029$  (11).

The results of research in Turkey in 2009-2012 showed that 49 babies with birth weight <1500 grams, 13 (26.5%) of them had OAE refer compared to 2235 babies with birth weight > 1500 grams, 349 (15.6%) of them experiencing OAE refer with the result of Chi Square analysis  $P = 0.038$  (12).

In a study conducted by Korres et al, of 19 babies with birth weights <1500 grams, 6 (31.6%) of them experienced a failure at first screening using Transient Evoked Otoacoustic Emission (TEOAE) (13). The prevalence of neonatal screening failure with very low birth weight is higher than the normal birth weight due to the accumulation of fluid in the middle ear so that conductive hearing loss occurs (14).

In this study ≥2500 grams babies has more cochlear dysfunction than the smaller babies. Many factors that affect the results of OAE such as gestational age, NICU treatment, oxygen consumption, postpartum infections, ototoxic drugs. The findings had shown the high % of failure rate in NICU babies especially the very low birth weight. Hence, we should think about doing a diagnostic hearing tests in this group of babies. for the other group, we may need to look at other factors that may contribute to the higher failure rate besides the weight. It is crucial to conclude the high % of failure rate needs urgent attention as need early diagnostic test. The high risk babies and failed first test should undergo second screening one month later. Babies who failed in hearing screening examinations should undergo early habilitation which may have benefits from the plasticity of the development of the sensory system.

Bias of this study was many confounding factors that affect the results of OAE such as gestational age, NICU treatment, oxygen consumption, postpartum infections, ototoxic drugs. In this study, we only analyze OAE as the first screening due to limited research funds, on subjects whose OAE results are refer, we recommend returning one month later to undergo a second screening. We hope next researchs are better with clearer and convincing report especially in a region where cost, logistic and community education are of concern.

## CONCLUSION

Proportion of cochlear dysfunction in babies with birth weight <1500 grams in RSUD Dr. Soetomo Surabaya by 50%. And the proportion of cochlear dysfunction in babies with birth weight 1500-2500 grams in Dr. Soetomo Surabaya by 35.7%. In this study Low Birth Weight Babies have a risk of 35.7 % of impaired cochlear function but not statistically significant. Suggestions for future research include examination of OAE tests for referrals or all babies at risk at 1 month of age, advanced studies using a prospective cohort method with observations for 6 months, TORCH examination on subjects suspected of having a congenital infection, further studies to determine the relationship of other risk factors with hearing loss with a larger sample size. We would recommend DPOAE as screening method in all babies at Dr. Soetomo Hospital, Surabaya which is continued by second screening examination within one month on high risk babies and failed first test.

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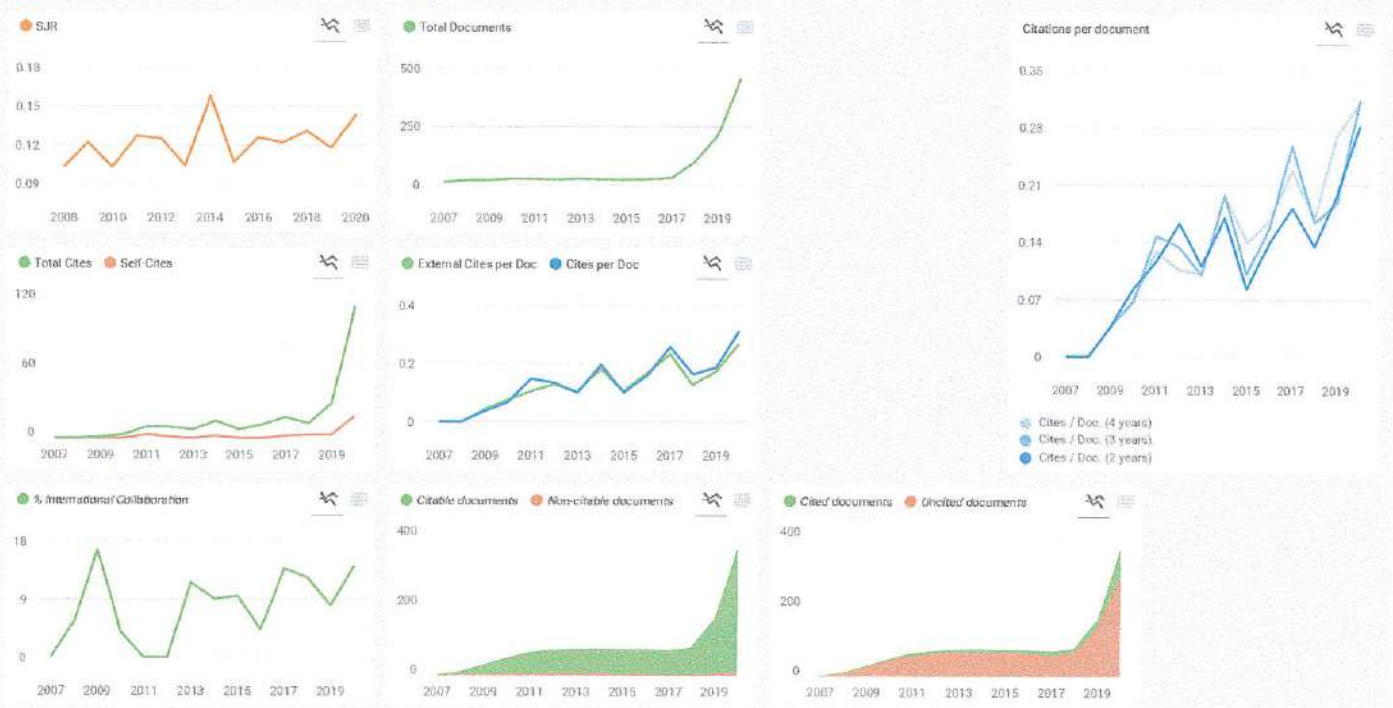
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