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PUBLICATION TYPE	ISSN	COVERAGE	INFORMATION
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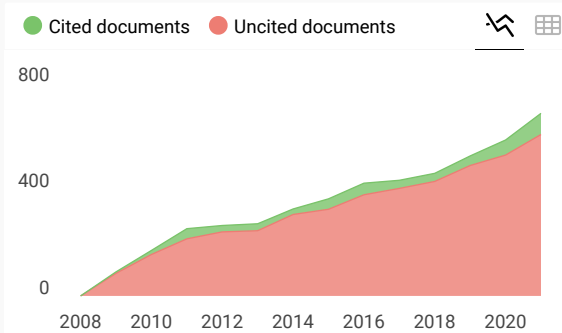
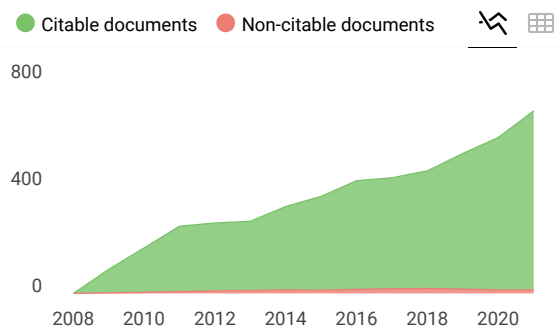
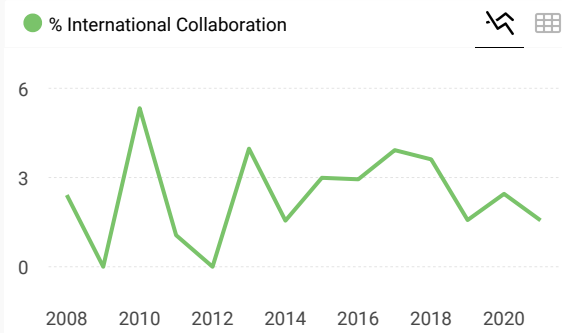
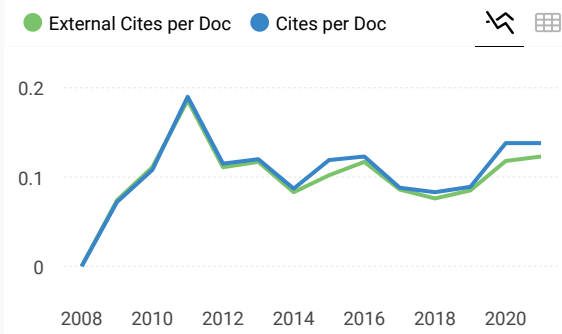
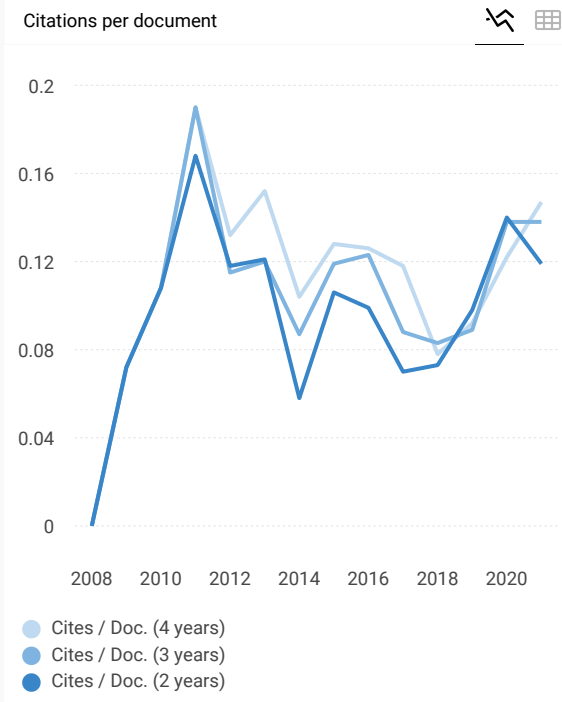
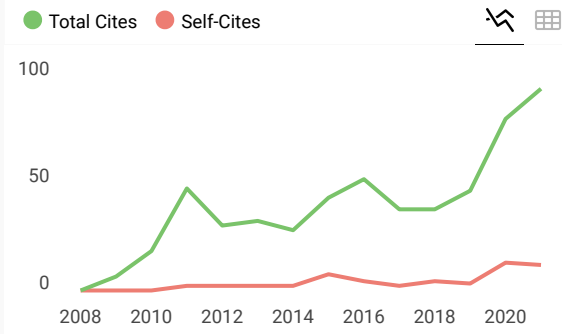
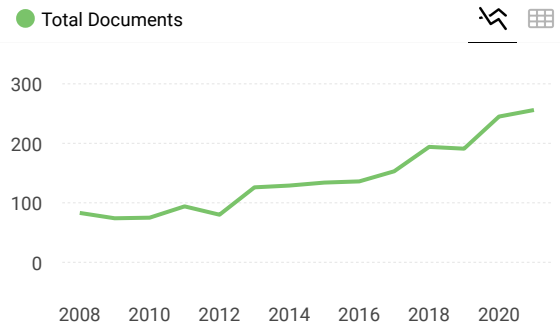
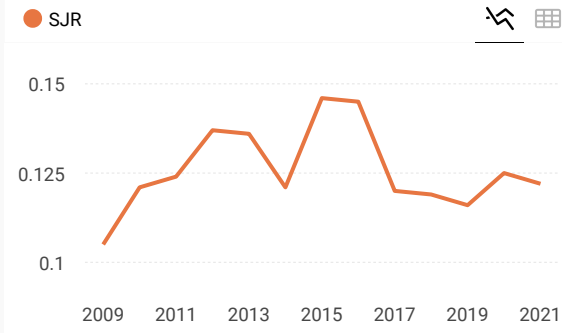
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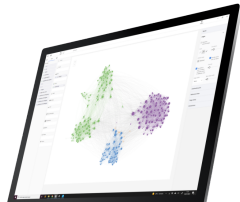
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Amir M. Hashmi

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of breast cancer: Evidence of
Genetic and epidemiological
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are higher after honeyed rooster
killing in the population of
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in the diagnosis of the disease
and the management of the
disease: A review of the
literature

U. M. Khan



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Editorial

1. Make mental health and wellbeing for all a global priority: Are we struggling to achieve this goal in our part of the world?
Usama Bin Zubair
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 1-2
» Abstract » PDF

Original Research

2. Prevalence of cancer cases among population of Kirkuk, Iraq from 2016-2020
Hussein Ali Mohammed, Jenan Akbar Shakoor, Nazar Ahmed Mahmood, Abid Salih Kumait, Araz Mohammed Kareem
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 3-6
» Abstract » PDF » doi: 10.5455/rmj2022119075443
3. Problem of antibiotic resistance in urinary tract infection in ALdiwanlyah city, Iraq
Vian Hussam Almanshi Alqani, Mudhfar Mohammed Meizel, Anmar Hameed Habeeb ALfuadi
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 7-11
» Abstract » PDF » doi: 10.5455/rmj20221125095031
4. Correlation between biographic profile and compliance to key performance indicators (KPI) for infection control among healthcare workers in Saudi Arabia: A cross-sectional study
Mohammed Jamaan Alzahrani
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 12-16
» Abstract » PDF » doi: 10.5455/rmj20221009060301
5. Assessment of the risk factors for the development of diabetic foot
Saira Jahan, Faseeha Aman, Aruba Saeed, Aqsa Zareen, Mehmoona Saleem, Syeda Aneesha Batool
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 17-19
» Abstract » PDF
6. Obstructive sleep apnea in type 2 diabetes mellitus
Huma Alzai, Nauman Ismat Butt, Fahmina Ashfaq, Osama Habib, Aniq Anser, Sabeen Aftab
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 20-22
» Abstract » PDF
7. Self management, illness perception and death anxiety among diabetic patients
Sumaya Batool, Sadia Malik, Attia Rehman, Syed Kumal Raza Abidi, Saleha Iffat
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 23-25
» Abstract » PDF
8. Frequency of esophageal varices in cirrhotic patients presenting with new onset ascites
Waqas Shabbir, Kiran Namoos, Muhammad Aslam, Muhammad Asim Hameed
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 28-29
» Abstract » PDF
9. Helicobacter pylori and eradication response in Jordanian children: A cross-sectional longitudinal observational study
Salma Burayzat, Mohammad Al-Tamimi, Mohammad Barqawi, Mustafa Massada, Manar Al-Zou'bi
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 30-35
» Abstract » PDF » doi: 10.5455/rmj2022119070312
10. Role of immunohistochemistry in detecting helicobacter pylori in gastric biopsies
Iqra Mahmood, Nadira Mamoon
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 36-39
» Abstract » PDF
11. Isolation and characterization of microbial flora from skin samples of acne patients of Haripur, Pakistan
Sidra Fareed, Sadia Gul, Sumaira Sarwar, QuratulAin zia, Sobia Nisa, Maimoona Sabir
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 40-43
» Abstract » PDF
12. Objective assessment of patients of DVT on the basis of signs, symptoms and risk factors
Haidar Zaman, Armaghan Ali, Muhammad Junaid Irshad, Muhammad Shoaib Irshad, Samra Tanveer, Faheem ullah
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 44-46
» Abstract » PDF
13. Validity of peripheral blood smear as a screening tool for Sickle Cell Anemia: Comparison with Electrophoresis
Durr-e-Sameen Kamran, Shahneela Siraj, Imran Ishaq, Sumaira Riffat, Aisha Abdul Haq, Afshan Mehboob Khan
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 47-49
» Abstract » PDF
14. Comparison of bubble CPAP versus head box oxygen in preterm neonates with respiratory distress syndrome
Annam Asif, Ammara Ayub, Sajid Ali Shah, Sugra Wahid, Saeed Zaman, Lutfullah Goheer
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 50-53
» Abstract » PDF
15. Evaluation of knowledge of medical department nurses regarding standard procedure toward electrocardiogram in Al-Anara City Hospitals, Iraq
Mustafa Salim Abdul Ahrith, Amjad Hashim Mohammed, Mohammed Lilo Saadon
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 54-57
» Abstract » PDF » doi: 10.5455/rmj2022114072124
16. Student nurses knowledge toward needle stick injuries in Jordan
Ahmad Mahmood Saleh, Shamweel Ahmad, Hiba Shamweel, Mohammad H. Abuades
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 58-62
» Abstract » PDF » doi: 10.5462/rmj.2022114072124
17. Prognostic value of the SII Systemic Immune-Inflammation Index a novel biomarker in coronavirus disease 2019 patient's disease progression to fatality
Sajjad Ali, Ashraf, Ishtiq Ahmad, Nabi Rahman, Shah Zeb, Muhammad Abbas
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 63-69
» Abstract » PDF
18. Seroprevalence of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) antibodies in tertiary care hospital of Karachi, Pakistan
Amreen Fatima, Fatima Fasih, Samina Baig, Fouzia Zeeshan Khan, Saima Nseem, Muhammad Asif Qureshi
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 70-73
» Abstract » PDF
19. Determinants of COVID-19 safety behaviors: Implications for preventive policy
Sadiq Hussain, Sabih Ahmad
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 74-77
» Abstract » PDF
20. Risk perception and coping strategies along with future outlook of Covid-19 among citizens of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Pakistan
Summyia Siddique, Samra Pervaiz, Qurat-ul-ain Saeed
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 78-81
» Abstract » PDF
21. Knowledge and attitude towards COVID 19 vaccine among health care workers: A cross sectional study from Karachi, Pakistan
Muhammad Kashif Syed, Darshan Kumar, Gul Anum, Zunaira Nawaz, Rashid Qadeer, Bliques Saba
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 82-87
» Abstract » PDF
22. Assessment of nurses' knowledge toward electronic nursing documentation
Harith F. Khudhayer Al-Aubaidy, MUSAAB MAJED ABDUL-WAHAB
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 88-91
» Abstract » PDF » doi: 10.5455/rmj2022113092538
23. Assessment of nutritional habits among Mosul University Students regarding breakfast
Fatema Hasan Mohammad, Lara Kefah Noori, Nasir Muwfaq Younis
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 96-99
» Abstract » PDF » doi: 10.5455/rmj20221202084820
24. Knowledge, attitude and practice of pharmacovigilance among post graduate resident in a tertiary care hospital
Saima Saiman, Afshar Siddiqui, Sadia Iqbal, Aisha Ahmed, Firasat Waqar, Tooba Sheikh
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 100-103
» Abstract » PDF
25. Pharmacovigilance: a neglected area of healthcare industry in Pakistan
Sheikh Kashif Rahim, Nasim Ilyas, Usman Nawaz, Zafar Iqbal, Muhammad Sajjad Abbasi, Asma Abdul Qadeer
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 104-106
» Abstract » PDF
26. Role of FOUR and GCS in predicting outcome in emergency setting in patients presenting with trauma
Saima Mushtaq, Erum Hussain, Saddam Kannar, Asif Ali, Sheikha Hina, Sara Abid
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 107-110
» Abstract » PDF
27. Comparative analysis of scalpel versus diathermy incisions in midline laparotomy
Shahab ul Huddah, Shahzad Hussain Waqar, Isbah Rashid
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 111-114
» Abstract » PDF
28. Quality of life among Grade 1 knee osteoarthritis patients
Bushra Faisal, Ameesha Amjad, Anum Tariq
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 115-118
» Abstract » PDF
29. Prevalence of Baker cyst in patients presenting with knee pain
Salman Habib Abbasi, Muhammad Farooq, Abdul Basit, Fazal Hussain Shah
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 119-122
» Abstract » PDF
30. Growth percentile curves and cut-points of mid-upper arm circumference for assessment of under and over-nutrition in children and adolescents
Muhammad Asif, Iqra Mazhar, Maqsooda Parveen, Muhammad Siddique Akbar, Sumbal Nayab, Saadia Khan
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 123-128
» Abstract » PDF
31. Effects of strength training or loaded sit to stand on Gross motor functions of lower limbs in children with mild spastic diplegia
Binash Afzal, Tehreem Mukhtar, Misbah Waris, Qurat-ul-ain, Ali ur Rasheed, Arshad Nawaz Malik
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 129-132
» Abstract » PDF
32. Re-feeding syndrome in children treated for severe acute malnutrition
Anila Farhat, Hameem Anwar, Rabia Zeb, Muhammad Iqbal Qasim
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 133-136
» Abstract » PDF » doi: 10.5455/rmj13443127-1672162726
33. Epidemiology of leukemia among children in Nineveh Province, Iraq
Rian Mahmood Ibrahim, Nada Hani Idrees, Nasir Muwfaq Younis
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 137-139
» Abstract » PDF » doi: 10.5455/rmj2022110116317
34. Nurses' knowledge of prevention of sepsis at neonatal care unit in Mosul city, Iraq
Rayyan Ibrahim Khaleel, Hana A. Alsaadeed, Ghada Mohammad Abu Shosha
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 140-143
» Abstract » PDF » doi: 10.5455/rmj20221108071428
35. Coagulability state in histopathologically and radiologically approved ovarian endometriosis
Zahraa Najah Alzuhairi, Thura Abbas Fadhel, Intisar Ahmed Hasan
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 144-147
» Abstract » PDF » doi: 10.5455/rmj20221126063638
36. Attitudes and barriers of pregnant women toward prenatal oral health care at antenatal centers of Mosul City, Iraq
Abdulrahman Mazin Hashim, Alaa Yousef Ayed, Najwa S. Shams Aldien, Shahad H. Ali
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 148-151

- » Abstract » PDF » doi: 10.5455/rmj20221027092359
37. Feto-maternal outcomes in patients undergoing trial of labor following prior caesarean delivery at a secondary care obstetric facility in Pakistan
Uzma Saleem, Nidda Yaseen, Shahzad Bashir Moina, Aamna Khokhar, Aiman Farogh Anjum
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 156-155
» Abstract » PDF
38. Maternal and hematological changes associated with delayed cord clamping during the third stage of labor
Sahar Hassan Mushatef Alfartouy, Sahar Hisham Abdul-Razzaq, Hala Abd Al Qader Al Moayad
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 156-159
» Abstract » PDF » doi: 10.5455/rmj20221210075703
39. Relationship between vitamin D level and ovarian reserve markers in infertile women in Diyala province, Iraq
Enas Jaleel Alobaidy, Raaked Kamel Saadi, Shaymaa Kanaan Mansoor
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 156-163
» Abstract » PDF » doi: 10.5455/rmj20221009063126
40. Histopathological analysis of endometrial lesions and its correlation with age in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region of Pakistan
Shagufa Nasir Pervez, Sehar Khalique, Haider Ali, Syed Asad Ali Shah
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 164-167
» Abstract » PDF
41. Selection of Prioritized Healthy Family Indicators, Using the Difficulty-Usefulness Pyramid (DUP)
Koekeoh Hardjito, Indah Rahmanningtyas, Heru Santoso Wahito Nugroho
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 168-172
» Abstract » PDF » doi: 10.5455/rmj20221121013304
42. Spectrum of microbial agents responsible for bloodstream infection and their sensitivity pattern in pediatric patients having chemotherapy induced neutropenia
Ghulam Jelani, Nuzhat Yasmeen, Nighat Haider, Bilal Ali Anjum, Jai Kristin, Maqbool Hussain
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 173-178
» Abstract » PDF
43. Total Neuropathy Scale Pediatric Vincristine to detect vincristine induced peripheral neuropathy in children with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia
Prasthya Indra Gunawan, Kartika Hardiyani, Dewa Gede Ugrasena
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 178-184
» Abstract » PDF » doi: 10.5455/rmj20220613092311
44. Comparison of intraocular pressure variations among emmetropes and myopes
Sharmeen Shahid, Syeda Muqadus Fatima, Pakeeza Murtaza, Areej Javed, Samra Bashir
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 185-187
» Abstract » PDF
45. Evaluation of clinical factors and radiological findings responsible for revision endoscopic sinus surgery
Eithal Arshad, Beenshih Nadeem, Naushaba Malik
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 188-191
» Abstract » PDF
46. Estimation of age from fusion of manubrium and xiphoid process with sternal body: a radiological study in living individuals aged 25-70 years
Rafay Ahmed Siddiqui, Mehreen Fatima, Ramlah Naz
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 192-195
» Abstract » PDF
47. Frequency of partial edentulism by Kennedy classification in association with age, gender and arches
Qudsia Iqbal, Muhammad Waseem Ullah Khan, Momina Akram, Mehwish Khan, Muhammad Farooq Kamran, Haneena Khan
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 195-199
» Abstract » PDF
48. Post-insertion complaints associated with complete denture prosthesis in a tertiary care hospital
Hammad Hassan, Amir Rafique, Samiah Andleeb, Momina Javaid, Hira Ahmad, Safra Khalid
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 200-203
» Abstract » PDF
49. Psychological distress among family caregivers of people with mental illness at Hyderabad, Pakistan
Muhammad Raza Memon, Manzoor Ali, Qasim Jamal Chachar, Bhaktawar Shaikh, Zuhaid Ahmed Qazi, Moin Ahmed Ansari
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 204-208
» Abstract » PDF
50. Optimism, perceived control, and resilient coping in women with lobular and ductal carcinoma: Do stages of carcinoma make a difference?
Hina Sultan, Muhammad Naeem Javed, Ghulam Ishaq
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 209-212
» Abstract » PDF
51. Mental health trainees: Experience of online classes during COVID-19 pandemic
Ayesha Jabeen, Asma Ijaz, Sana Fatima
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 213-215
» Abstract » PDF
52. Association of physical activity with depression and body dysmorphia in young overweight females
Saira Jahan, Maria Malik, Syeda Amen Zara Bibi, Sameen Zahid, Maryam Iqbal, Misbah Ghous
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 216-219
» Abstract » PDF
53. Relationship between superstitious beliefs and Big Five Personality Traits with gender
Hiza Sehar, Muhammad Tanveer Ashraf, Noshaba Razaq, Muhammad Tehezzeb, Shamsa Kanwal, Arbaz Khan Jogezi
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 220-223
» Abstract » PDF
54. Jordanian nurses' knowledge of Evidence-Based Practice
Ahmad Mahmoud Saleh
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 224-227
» Abstract » PDF » doi: 10.5455/rmj.202212201044706
55. Effect of a trans theoretical model in improving behaviors of health care workers related to electronic hookah in Mosul, Iraq
Ahmed K. Mohamed Taher, Nasir Muwafaq Younis
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 228-230
» Abstract » PDF » doi: 10.5455/rmj20221209113951
56. From Theory to Practice: Effectiveness assessment of health belief model applications in patient interventions
Maqbool Ahmad Khan, Romesa Qaiser Khan, Zarnish Hussain, Iram Mansoor
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 231-234
» Abstract » PDF
57. Knowledge assessment of insulin self-administration in diabetic patients at Diabetes Health Centers, Baghdad, Iraq
Shakir Mahdi Salih, Raheem Atiyah Badr, Saad Abdul-Ridh Jisir
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 235-238
» Abstract » PDF » doi: 10.5455/rmj20221113103500
58. Economic engagement and disease prevalence among elderly people in Rawalpindi, Pakistan
Sarfray Khan, Aftab Ahmed, Syed Imran Haider, Sundas Ayyub
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 239-243
» Abstract » PDF
59. A need assessment for faculty development by microteaching: Faculty Knowledge and Attitude towards this strategy
Talea Hoor, Khadija Farrukh
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 244-247
» Abstract » PDF
60. Pre-recorded versus online Zoom lectures during COVID-19 pandemic: A cross-sectional study from a Private Medical and Dental College Lahore, Pakistan
Hooria Razaq Sheikh, Mahnoor Abad, Mahnoor Tariq, Iram Mansoor
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 248-252
» Abstract » PDF
61. Relationship of marital satisfaction and gender of baby with postpartum depressive women
Noshaba Razaq, Mashhood Ali Syed, Nazir Haider Shah, Fizza Anwar, Owais Khalid, Jazib Moeze
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 253-256
» Abstract » PDF
62. The Public's trends toward Kidney Donation
Ahmed Ahmed AbdElbagy, Ahmed Alkarani
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 257-261
» Abstract » PDF » doi: 10.5455/rmj20220531071501
63. Association between consanguineous marriage and still birth: an evidence from district Nankana Sahib, Pakistan
Shoukat Ali Awan, Farhan Hameed Hameed, Arfan Latif Latif, Rana Mahmood Khurshid
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 262-264
» Abstract » PDF
64. Protective effects of Curcuma Longa (Turmeric) on methotrexate induced congestion in portal vein in the liver of albino mice
Farah Deeba, Shehla Khatoon, Ronaq Zaman, Fatima Daud, Sadia Shaikat, Tahira Mehreen
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 265-268
» Abstract » PDF

Review Article

65. Inflammatory bowel disease in pediatrics
Darmadi Darmadi, Riska Habriel Ruslie
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 269-275
» Abstract » PDF » doi: 10.5455/rmj20220813013434

Technical Note

66. Information for authors
Rawal Medical Journal
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 276-276
» Abstract » PDF

Other

67. Contents
Rawal Medical Journal
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 000-000
» Abstract » PDF
68. Front Page
Rawal Medical Journal
RMJ. 2023; 48(1): 0-0
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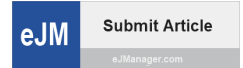
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Total Neuropathy Scale Pediatric Vincristine to detect vincristine induced peripheral neuropathy in children with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia

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Objective: To analyze the Total Neuropathy Scale Pediatric Vincristine (TNS-PV) score as a vincristine induced peripheral neuropathy (VIPN) diagnostic tool.

Methodology: This observational analytic study was conducted in Outpatient Pediatric Hematology Oncology Dr. Soetomo Hospital. The inclusion criteria were Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL) children aged 4 – 18 years that had undergone chemotherapy treatment, received a cumulative dose of vincristine > 12 mg/m², had no muscle weakness and signed informed consent. The TNS-PV instrument were used to assess VIPN and nerve conduction studies (NCS) was used as the gold standard.

Results: A total of 54 children were enrolled, two

refused to sign the informed consent. About 60% were male children, 76.9% aged < 10 years old, and 94% were ALL-L1. The TNS-PV had an area under the curve (AUC) of 0.638 (95% CI 0.531-0.834) with cut off value of 3.5. It had a sensitivity 87.9%; specificity 42.1%, positive predictive value 72.5%; negative predictive value (NPV) 66.6% and OR (Odds ratio) 5,273.

Conclusion: TNS-PV score cannot replace NCS as the gold standard, but TNS-PV can be an alternative tool for diagnosing VIPN.

Keywords: Acute lymphoblastic leukemia, total neuropathy scale pediatric vincristine, vincristine induced peripheral neuropathy.

INTRODUCTION

Acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) is one of the most common cancers in children. It is the most common type in children, which is about 75%.^{1,2} Chemotherapy often results in nerve damage, which is usually caused by drugs, length of therapy, cumulative doses, and substances containing neurotoxics.^{3,4} Vincristine induced peripheral neuropathy (VIPN) is a form of peripheral neuropathy that manifest as motor, sensory, and autonomic nerve disorders that occur after vincristine therapy.²

The incidence of VIPN is 100% in ALL children undergoing chemotherapy, of which 28% are experience severe symptoms, and cases of VIPN that are not properly treated have negative and disruptive effects and reduce quality of life.^{5,6} Severe types of peripheral neuropathy caused by chemotherapy usually improve after chemotherapy protocol is completed, but about 8% persisted mainly due to vincristine.^{7,8}

There are several methods of diagnosing peripheral neuropathy in children, some use subjective facial expression scales with Wong Baker FACES, six are objective, such as neurological physical examination, Nerve conduction study (NCS), Electromyography (EMG), Vibration perception threshold (VPT), Tactile perception threshold (TPT) and Current perception threshold (CPT). There are three methods that use subjective and objective judgments, such as the

pediatric- modified Total Neuropathy Scale (ped-m TNS), Common Terminology Criteria for Adverse Events (CTCAEv3.0/v4.0) and Total Neuropathy Scale Pediatric Vincristine (TNS-PV).⁹

TNS-PV was a tool used for assessing the peripheral neuropathy identified based on the evidence.⁹ TNS-PV review is used as a simple, inexpensive, and non-invasive diagnostic tool for diagnosing VIPN. This study aims to determine the diagnostic value of the TNS-PV in diagnosing VIPN in children with ALL receiving vincristine chemotherapy.

METHODOLOGY

This observational analytical study was conducted at the outpatient Pediatric Hematology-Oncology and Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Dr. Soetomo General Academic Hospital, from August-October 2019. The study was approved by the Clinical Research Unit of Dr. Soetomo General Hospital, Surabaya, Indonesia (Ref No. 1363/KEPK/VIII/2019). The informed consent was signed by parents or legal guardian of the children.

The subjects were ALL children of age 4 – 18 years old, which had undergone chemotherapy treatment and received a cumulative dose of vincristine > 12 mg/m². Patients were excluded when they failed to cooperate during the NCS procedure, had intracranial disorders with manifestations of decreased consciousness, motor, sensory, and autonomic nerve disorders, diabetes

mellitus, thrombocytopenia, or incomplete medical record.

The subjects were interviewed and assessed using TNS-PV questionnaires by a competent pediatric neurologist and the gold standard used for this study was NCS examination (Cadwell Sierra Summit EMG 4 channel, No CDSM05, USA). The NCS examination was carried out by a certified doctor from the department of physical medicine and rehabilitation, and the identification of VIPN was also confirmed by a Pediatric Neurology Consultant.

Items assessed in TNS-PV were subjective symptoms, temperature, vibration, strength, tendon reflexes, autonomic neuropathy (constipation) and laryngeal neuropathy (hoarseness). Those seven items scored 0 – 4 on Likert-type scale. Total scores of TNS-PV considered in range from 0 to 28, the higher scores indicate more severe peripheral neuropathy.

Statistical Analysis: The coded data were analyzed using SPSS version 21. The sensitivity and specificity were calculated using Receiver operating characteristic (ROC curve) analysis to find the cutoff value of the TNS-PV total score for screening the outcome.

RESULTS

Fifty-four children participated in this study. However, two refused to take part in further examination, therefore a total of 52 subjects participated (Fig. 1). The clinical characteristics of ALL children are presented in Table 1. VIPN that diagnosed with combination test detected in 29 (55.8%) subjects. The TNS-PV has an area under the curve (AUC) of 0.638 (95% CI 0.531 – 0.834) with cutoff value of 3.5 (Fig. 2). Sensitivity of TNS-PV was found to be 78.8% (Table 2).

DISCUSSION

The study showed that male ALL children were more than female. Various studies on ALL children showed that approximately 52.3 – 66.3% ALL patients were

male.¹⁰⁻¹² Most children that survive ALL had a mean age of 11. Mean age at diagnosis of ALL was 6 years.¹¹ Good nutritional status is the largest percentage of ALL children in this study. ALL children were reported to have the healthiest weight status and that 30.6% were underweight, the risk of being overweight was 16.6% and being overweight by 26.7%.¹³ Peripheral neurotoxicity, including sensory and motor skills, accompanied by pain, is almost common when using vincristine for children. Neuropathic symptoms were seen in 82.5% of 40 ALL patients during chemotherapy.¹⁴ Systemic and intrathecal chemotherapy are predisposing factors, and it was reported that 24% children had neuropathy after receiving vincristine.¹⁴ It was stated that sensory peripheral neuropathy occurs at

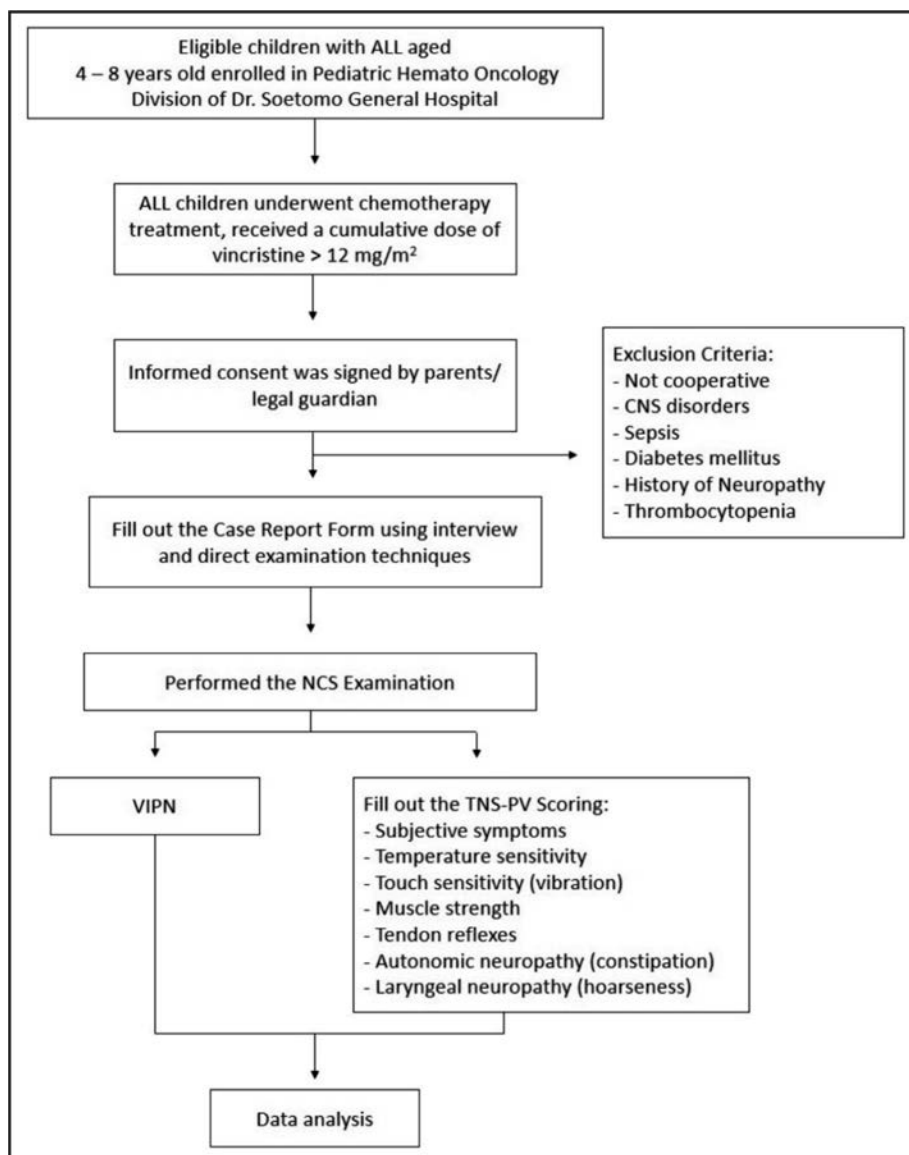


Fig. 1: Research flow chart.

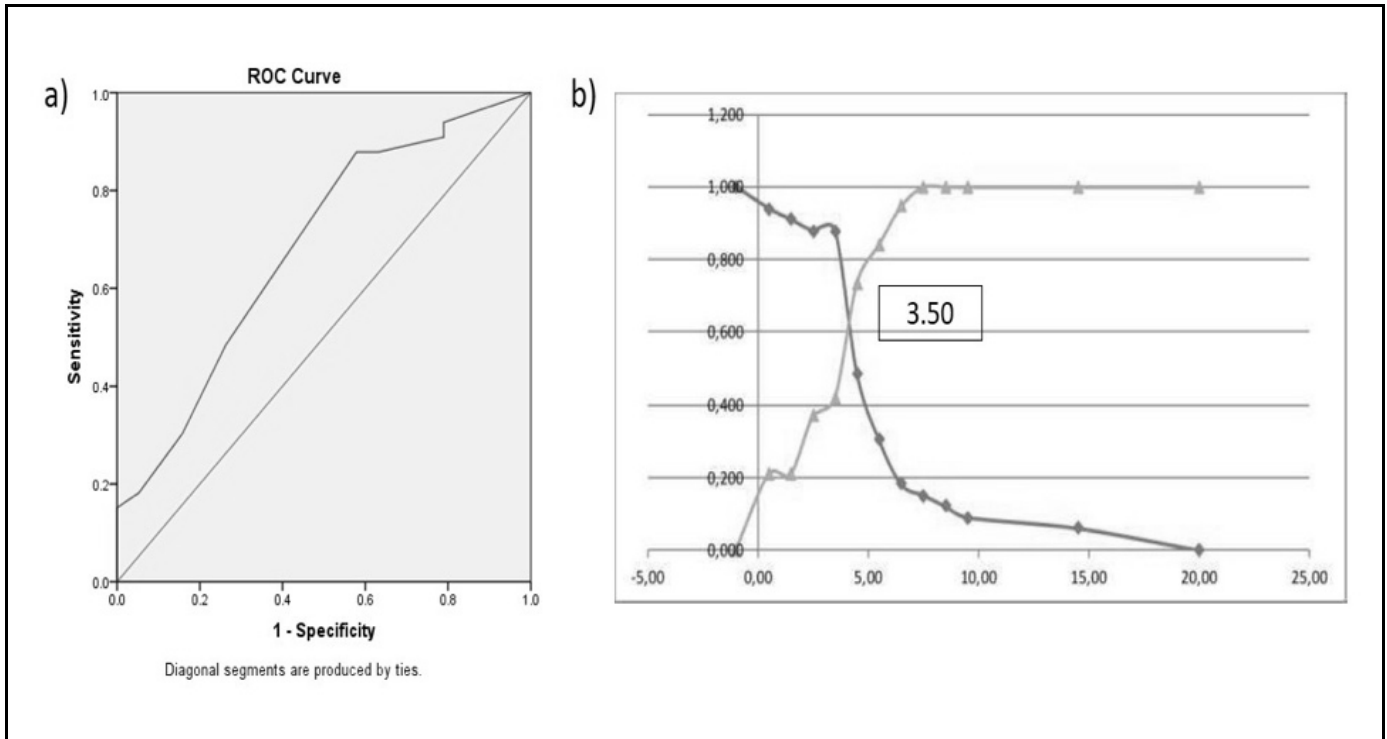


Fig. 2: ROC curve analysis to determine the cutoff value of TNS-PV scoring based on combination NCS with patient’s symptoms. Fig. 2a blue line: diagonal line presenting AUC; Fig. 2a green line: reference line; Fig. 2b blue line: specificity; Fig. 2b green line: sensitivity.

Table 1: Clinical characteristic of ALL children.

Characteristic	Value
Sex n(%)	
• Male	31 (59.6)
• Female	21 (40.4)
Age group n(%)	
▪ < 10 years old	40 (76.9)
▪ ≥ 10 years old	12 (23.1)
Age, Mean ± SD (year old)	7.6±3.6
Age at diagnosis, Mean ± SD (year old)	6.7±3.7
Bone Marrow Aspiration Results n(%)	
▪ ALL-L1	49 (94.2)
▪ ALL-L2	3 (5.8)
Classification of ALL n(%)	
▪ Standard Risk	31 (59.6)
▪ High Risk	21 (40.4)
Nutritional status n(%)	
▪ Obesity and Overweight	4 (7.7)

▪ Well nourished	22 (42.3)
▪ Mild-moderate malnutrition	15 (28.8)
▪ Severe malnutrition	11 (21.2)
Complaints of peripheral neuropathy n(%)	
▪ Yes (Pain, weakness, paresthesia)	14 (26.9)
▪ No	38 (73.1)
Cumulative dose of Vincristine (mg/m ²), Median (minimum – maximum)	36 (13.5 – 52.0)
Duration of chemotherapy, Mean ± SD (month)	15.0 ± 6.1
Type of peripheral nerve lesion distribution based on NCS n(%)	
▪ Normal	4 (8.8)
▪ Demyelinating	15 (29.2)
▪ Axonal	6 (10.4)
▪ Axonal demyelinating	27 (51.6)
Motoric peripheral nerve distribution based on NCS n(%)	
▪ Median nerve	49 (94.2)
▪ Ulnaris nerve	50 (96.1)
▪ Tibialis nerve	52 (100)
▪ Peroneus nerve	52 (100)
Sensory peripheral nerve distribution based on NCS n(%)	
▪ Median nerve	48 (92.3)
▪ Ulnaris nerve	37 (71.2)
▪ Suralis nerve	42 (80.8)

an accumulative dose of vincristine greater than 5 mg, whereas motor peripheral neuropathy occurs at a dose of 30-50 mg.¹⁵

In this study, the mean cumulative dose of vincristine was 36 mg/m², with the highest dose being 52 mg/m². Vincristine is dose-dependent, therefore it is believed to cause dose-dependent motor-sensory axonal neuropathy. Almost all children showed normal clinical examination but electro-physiologically, there was peripheral neuropathy with a mean duration of chemotherapy for 15 months. A study found that 8% of ALL children experienced subclinical neuropathy after 5 weeks of vincristine.¹⁶ This was probably due to incomplete myelination at a young age, because some nerves are more sensitive to neurotoxic chemotherapy agents.^{17,18}

The prevalence of VIPN based only electrophysiological during chemotherapy was 100%, which is in line with several previous studies, in which the incidence range of

Table 3: TNS-PV Total Scoring based on NCS.

TNS-PV Scoring Total	NCS		Sensitivity	Specificity
	Positive (%)	Negative (%)		
≥ 3.50	41 (78.8)	0 (0)	78.8%	Undefined
< 3.50	11 (21.2)	0 (0)		

*Data was presented as number (percentage)

VIPN during chemotherapy is 23.5 – 96%.^{2,16,19,20} The electrophysiology of neuropathy in children suggests that motor neuropathy is predominant over sensory neuropathy. Incomplete myelination of motor nerves at a young age resulting in greater sensitivity of some nerves due to neurotoxic agents.²¹ Our study showed that peripheral neuropathy in motor nerves was more prevalent than sensory nerves. Other research stated that vincristine causes motor nerve disorders than sensory nerves.²² Although the electrophysiological picture is abnormal until 6 months after chemotherapy, clinical improvement are observed within 2-3 weeks after the end of vincristine chemotherapy.²³

One of the objective parameters used to determine peripheral neuropathy is NCS examination, which was carried out on 5 nerves, according to the order of occurrence of peripheral neuropathy, such as Tibialis, Peroneus, Medianus, Ulnaris, and Suralis. Peripheral motor neuropathy was more frequent than sensory, namely 99.9% motor and 76.0% sensory. The peripheral neuropathic disorders are characterized by a feeling of fatness, paresthesia, balance disorders, weakness of the tendon reflexes, and movement disorders.²³

Electromyographic examination revealed that neuropathy was reported to be significant in children examined at 18 months of chemotherapy treatment (44.4%) compared with children that received chemotherapy for 19 – 36 months (20%). There was also an increase in the prevalence of neuropathy between the intervals of vincristine administration.²⁴ EMG is more invasive and painful because it is more difficult in children, therefore EMG is not recommended as the primary examination for diagnosing VIPN in children.²²

The cutoff value of TNS-PV was 3.50, therefore the ALL children were divided into 2 categories. TNS-PV score < 3.5 are categorized as negative and ≥ 3.5 as positive. From this result, the positive VIPN was 78.8% of ALL children. All subjects had 100% positive results of NCS, therefore the cut off calculation obtained from the ROC analysis results are based on combination of NCS as the gold standard diagnosis with patients' symptoms. Therefore, the diagnostic value of TNS-PV is related to the presence or absence of discomfort. This study is in line with research, where patients were significantly identified by having VIPN as much as 86% by using TNS-PV total score ≤ 4 when compared with the control group.²⁰ However, it is slightly different from other study, where the results reported that 128 ALL children that received vincristine therapy, and carried out longitudinal observations, obtained 78% of positive VIPN using TNS-PV score with patients aged 1 – 18 years.²

The limitation of this study is that there was low variation of the NCS value in the research subjects, even at TNS-PV value zero also showed positive NCS. This TNS-PV examination used interviews and examinations conducted by investigators under supervision, and ALL patients themselves were already suffering from their illness, which affects the outcome of the exam.

CONCLUSION

The TNS-PV cut off value of 3.5 has a sensitivity of 87.9% and a specificity of 42.1% which are used as the threshold score for screening before NCS examinations were carried out. Although TNS-PV cannot replace or

match the NCS gold standard, TNS-PV might be used for diagnostic tool for the occurrence of VIPN in ALL children undergoing chemotherapy.

Author Contributions:

Conception and design: Prastiya Indra Gunawan, Kartika Hardiyani, I Dewa Gede Ugrasena.
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Critical revision of article for important intellectual content: Prastiya Indra Gunawan.
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