

## The Age of Citations in Nursing Journals

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The age of citations in journals is of interest for it indicates what length of back runs of journals are needed and what length of back runs may be placed in a stack or store. Students may be told by tutors to use only papers five years or less old and this study investigates whether this is justified.

The citations in the *Nursing Citation Index* which was published at the back of the *International Nursing Index* part 3 for 1990 were examined. The date of each citation was recorded on cards for each separate title. Only journals taken by the Royal College of Nursing library were included together with the following additional titles which a preliminary investigation had indicated would be useful to include.

They are :     *Seminars in Oncology Nursing*  
                  *Journal of Professional Nursing*  
                  *Critical Care Nurse*  
                  *Journal of Nursing Quality Assurance*  
                  *Dimensions in Critical Care Nursing*  
                  *British Medical Journal*  
                  *Lancet*  
                  *Journal of the Royal Society of Health*  
                  *New England Journal of Medicine*

Thus foreign language publications were excluded. Only citations to and in the journals under consideration were counted.

The ages of the citations in the *Journal of Advanced Nursing* for the whole of 1990 were counted and the results form the top 40 titles presented. As this publication is a research journal the citations reflect what is useful to current research. In mental health, the *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing* is American and examination of the citations showed many of them were to medical-psychiatry publications rather than nursing publications so ages of citations in the only alternative -- the *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing* -- were counted for 1990 and the top 20 titles included.

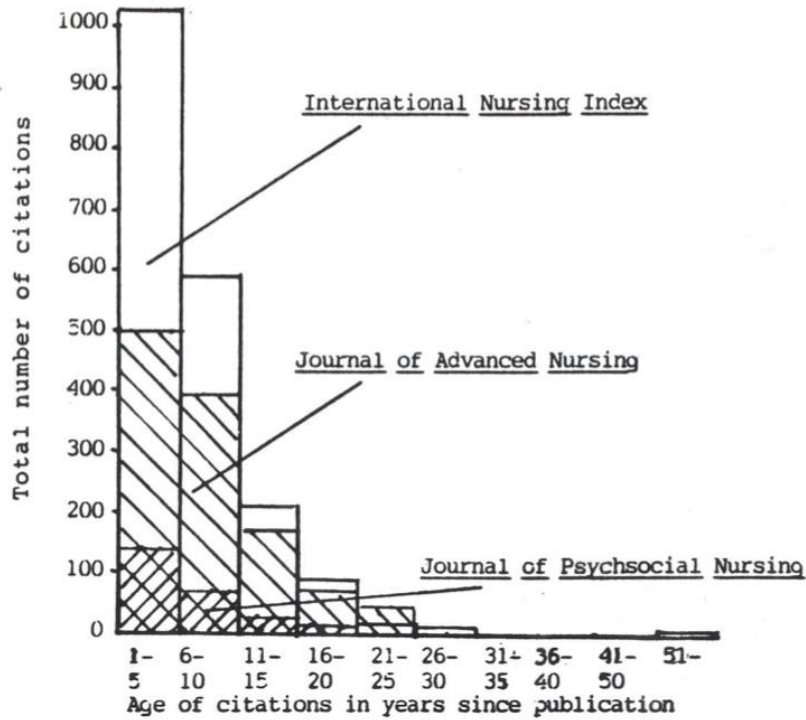
The results are presented graphically showing firstly the total number of citations and then the cumulated percentages.

Half of the citations in the *Citation Index* and half of the two journals were five years or less old. The figures indicated that there was little citation of items over 15 years old. However, the *Citation Index* and the *Journal of Advanced Nursing* are research based and the needs of students are different. They need classic papers and reviews but not, of course, out of date material.

However, in the nursing literature, there is a tendency to re-cycle important topics so there is probably little or no need for students to use papers over 15 years old. It is possible that some of the articles that were over 15 years old in the citations were being used for historical reasons and historical reviews rather than for discussion of modern clinical practice.

It had been supposed that in psychiatric nursing there might be a demand for classic papers, but the study of citations in the *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing* did not bear this out. The age of citations in the two journals was similar to the overall age pattern, namely half the citations were five years or less old and 90% were 15 years or less old. The implication is that according to the citation and hence research usage, 15 year old material is little used and could be relegated to a store or stack.

# ACTUAL NUMBER OF CITATIONS BY AGE



## CUMULATED PERCENT OF CITATIONS

