

What Journals do UK Psychiatrists Consider Important to Their Clinical Practice: a Sub-specialty Analysis of the Relationship with Impact Factors and Country of Publication.

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Background

The importance of journals for the dissemination of research to clinicians is a subject of debate. Schein et al (2000) found that American surgeons considered journals their most important information source whereas Coomarasamy et al (2001) found that although journals were too passive in the dissemination of findings from research they occupied a unique position for the advancement of their implementation in clinical practice. This study forms part of a larger body of work looking at the dissemination of research findings to clinical practice and in particular the information sources that are of importance.

Aims

To determine the perceived importance of individual journals to UK psychiatrists' clinical practice and compare their impact factors and nationality.

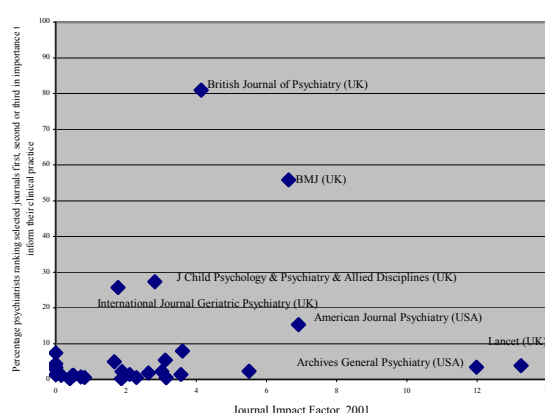
Method

Random samples of Fellows of the Royal College of Psychiatrists providing services to patients within the three main sub-specialties: child and adolescent; adults of working age and old-age psychiatry were asked in a questionnaire survey about the journals they read and those most important to their clinical practice. Further details of the structure of the survey have been reported previously (Jones, Hanney, Buxton et al, 2004).

Results

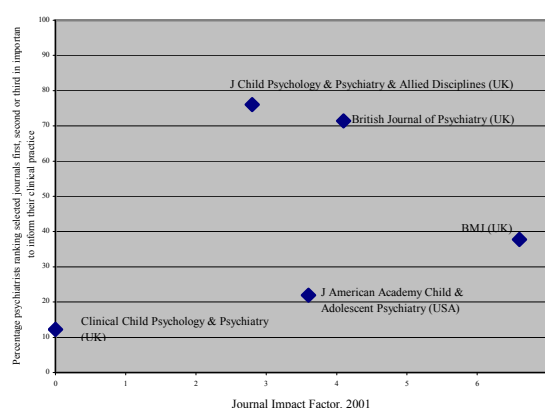
560 completed questionnaires were received (47%). Within each sub-specialty a few journals were considered important to psychiatrists with two common to all three sub-specialties: *The British Journal of Psychiatry* and the *BMJ*. In addition to these two journals, sub-specialty journals were very important in the Child & Adolescent and Old-age categories. Those journals ranked top were UK based, with some American journals also important. The relationship between the journals important to UK psychiatrists and impact factors was variable and complex (See Figures 1A-D). Some important journals had relatively high impact factors, but those with the highest were generally not so important to UK clinicians at sub-specialty level. Interestingly

some of the important journals did not have an impact factor as they were not found in either the SCI or SSCI databases (Thomson ISI).

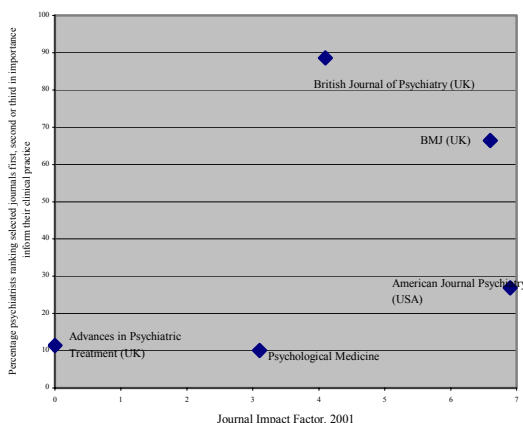


Figures 1a-d: Journals ranked 1st, 2nd, and 3rd in importance to their clinical practice by respondent psychiatrists vs. Journal Impact Factor, 2001.

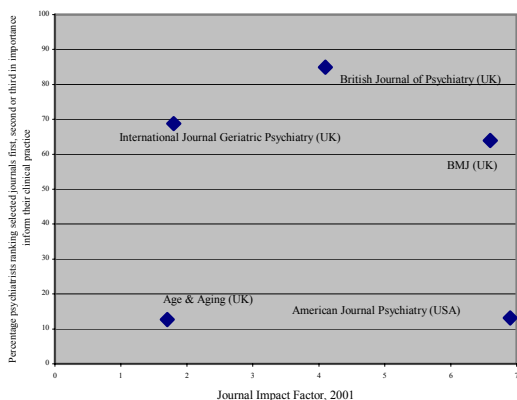
1a. Journals ranked by all respondent psychiatrists



1b. Journals ranked by 10% or more psychiatrists providing services within the child & adolescent sub-specialty



1c. Journals ranked by 10% or more psychiatrists providing services within the adults of working age sub-specialty



1d. Journals ranked by 10% or more psychiatrists providing services within the old age sub-specialty

Discussion

Schein et al found little evidence that American surgeons considered either impact factor or journals based in other countries in their choices of journals.

This survey found a similar case for the journals that UK psychiatrists consider important to inform their clinical practice. Impact factor does not appear to play a major part in determining the importance of a journal to UK psychiatrists though those based in the UK are considered the most important overall. However these relationships are not independent of each other as non-USA based journals generally have lower impact factors than those based in the USA.

Conclusions

Journal impact factors' many limitations mean additional methods of journal assessment may be appropriate for UK psychiatrists. The perceived importance of research findings to clinical work could provide an alternative method of assessment. More appropriate methods of assessment could lead to improved dissemination of research findings and, subsequently, improved implementation.

Acknowledgments

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