

## Original Article

# Five-year bibliometric analysis of the Journal of the Foot & Ankle (2020-2025)

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## Abstract

**Objective:** To characterize productivity, document-type composition, authorship, geography, and citation impact of the Journal of the Foot & Ankle (JFA) over its first five years (2020-2025) following its 2020 refoundation.

**Methods:** All peer-reviewed articles published in JFA between January 2020 and December 2025 were retrieved from OpenAlex and cross-checked against Crossref. The 22 articles of the founding issue (V14 N1) were registered under the predecessor journal's ISSN and recovered separately. Meeting abstracts, articles outside the study period, editorials, and one tribute were excluded. Document type was classified by manual review of each issue's Table of Contents. Author productivity was measured by leadership appearances (first or last author), country and institution by whole counting at the article level, and citation impact by cumulative counts and the journal h-index. Analysis was performed in R.

**Results:** A total of 334 articles were included, with a mean of 56 per year. Original articles accounted for 68.9%. Unique authors totaled 1,037, with a mean of 5.2 per article. Brazil was the predominant country in 185 articles (55.4%), followed by the United States (10.2%) and Argentina (6.0%). The most productive institution was the Universidade Federal de São Paulo (23 articles). The total accumulated 272 citations with a journal h-index of 6. César de César Netto led the leadership ranking with 15 appearances (14 as senior author). International collaboration had a mean of 10.5%.

**Conclusion:** JFA has consolidated as the principal Ibero-American outlet for foot and ankle research, with a Brazilian-anchored yet regionally inclusive authorship, sustained Diamond Open Access, and an early but rising citation footprint.

**Level of Evidence IV; Bibliometric, Descriptive Observational Study.**

**Keywords:** Bibliometrics; Foot and ankle; Orthopedics; Latin America; Open access publishing.

## Introduction

Bibliometric analysis quantifies the scholarly output of a journal, a research field or an academic community. Beyond simple production counts, bibliometric studies characterize authorship structure, collaboration patterns, geographic distribution, citation impact, and thematic specialization, providing an evidence base from which editors, authors, and readers can interpret a journal's trajectory<sup>(1-3)</sup>.

In Latin American orthopedic publishing, regional journals play a distinctive role. They lower the language and cost barriers of major Anglophone outlets, foster collaboration across countries that share clinical realities, and provide a venue in which clinicians without prior international visibility can publish peer-reviewed work. At the same time, regional journals face systemic challenges in achieving indexing in commercial databases, accumulating citations, and competing for high-quality submissions<sup>(4-7)</sup>.

Study performed at the Duke University School of Medicine, Department of Orthopedic Surgery, Foot and Ankle Division, Durham, NC, USA 27710.

**Correspondence:** Julieta Brué, Duke University School of Medicine, Department of Orthopedic Surgery, Foot and Ankle Division, Durham, NC, USA **Email:** [brue@duke.edu](mailto:brue@duke.edu). **Conflicts of interest:** Cesar de Cesar Netto, MD, PhD, reports the following disclosures: nonfinancial roles as president of the International WBCT Society, editor-in-chief of Foot and Ankle Clinics, and committee member of AOFAS. **Source of funding:** None. **Date received:** July 01, 2026. **Date accepted:** July 28, 2026.

**How to cite this article:** Brué J, Micicoi L, Rodrigues V, Umrethiya V, Rachayont K, Pozzessere E, et al. Five-year bibliometric analysis of the Journal of the Foot & Ankle (2020-2025). *J Foot Ankle*. 2026;20(2):e2132.



The Journal of the Foot & Ankle (JFA, eISSN 2675-2980) was formally established in 2019 and launched its first issue in April 2020 through the unification of two predecessor regional journals: the Brazilian *Revista da ABTPé*, later renamed *Scientific Journal of the Foot & Ankle* (eISSN 2595-1459) in 2016 when the journal transitioned to English-language publication, and the Argentine *Tobillo y Pie*<sup>(8,9)</sup>. The refounded journal is published by the *Associação Brasileira de Medicina e Cirurgia do Tornozelo e Pé (ABTPé)* and serves the foot and ankle community of the *Federación Latinoamericana de Medicina y Cirugía de la Pierna y Pie (FLAMeCIPP)*. Volume numbering was preserved from predecessor journals, so the first issue of the unified JFA appeared as volume 14, number 1. Volume 19 (2025) marked the transition from quarterly to continuous publication and coincided with the 20th anniversary of the journal lineage.

Despite the visibility of the journal within the regional foot-and-ankle community, no published bibliometric analysis of its output, authorship or impact exists. The objective of this study is to characterize the publication output of JFA over its first five years (2020-2025), describing productivity, document-type composition, authorship structure (including a leadership-position analysis), geographic and institutional distribution, citation patterns and international collaboration.

## Methods

### Study design and analysis definition

This is a retrospective bibliometric analysis of peer-reviewed research articles published in the JFA between 1 January 2020 (Volume 14, Number 1) and 31 December 2025 (Volume 19, Number 3). The study used only publicly available bibliographic metadata. Institutional Review Board approval was not required.

### Data sources and the founding-issue artifact

The JFA is currently indexed in Google Scholar<sup>(10)</sup> and the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)<sup>(11)</sup>, but not yet in Scopus, Web of Science, or PubMed/MEDLINE<sup>(12-14)</sup>. OpenAlex<sup>(15)</sup> was therefore adopted as the primary data source, given its comprehensive coverage of studies with registered Digital Object Identifier (DOI) independently of commercial database selection criteria, with advantages for regional, non-Anglophone, and recently established journals<sup>(16)</sup>. Crossref was used in parallel as a cross-check and to resolve the founding-issue registration described below<sup>(17,18)</sup>.

All articles published by the JFA were obtained from OpenAlex using the journal's current ISSN (2675-2980). This search returned 416 records, each containing the article's title, authors, institutional affiliations, country of authorship, year, volume and issue, citation count, and open access status.

Throughout this paper, journal issues are abbreviated as volume-issue pairs (for example, V14 N2 = volume 14, issue 2, published August 2020).

The 22 articles published in the first issue of the unified JFA (Volume 14, Issue 1, April 2020—hereinafter V14 N1) did not appear in the initial search. Direct inspection of their DOIs revealed that these articles had been registered in Crossref under the predecessor journal's ISSN (2595-1459, *Scientific Journal of the Foot & Ankle*) rather than the current JFA ISSN. This transitional registration coincided with the formal unification of the journal in April 2020. All later issues, starting from volume 14, issue 2 (V14 N2, August 2020), use the current ISSN.

To recover these 22 missing articles, a separate Crossref search was performed using the predecessor ISSN. The bibliographic and citation data of each were then retrieved from OpenAlex by direct lookup of their individual DOIs. This dual-ISSN issue is itself a methodological observation about how regional journals appear in international databases during editorial transitions, and is discussed further below.

### Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The final analysis comprised 334 peer-reviewed research articles, after excluding 89 out-of-scope records published in 2026 (79 conference abstracts from a meeting supplement and 10 articles from the first 2026 issue, all outside the 2020-2025 study period), reassigning 16 articles affected by the continuous-publication transition (with no change in total count), and removing 15 non-research items (14 editorials and 1 tribute). The complete identification, screening, cleaning, and inclusion process is summarized in Figure 1.

### Document-type classification

Article category (Original Article, Case Report, Special Article, Technical Tip, Systematic Review, and Review) was determined by manual review of the journal's Table of Contents for each issue, since the OpenAlex 'work\_type' field does not reliably distinguish among the journal's categories.

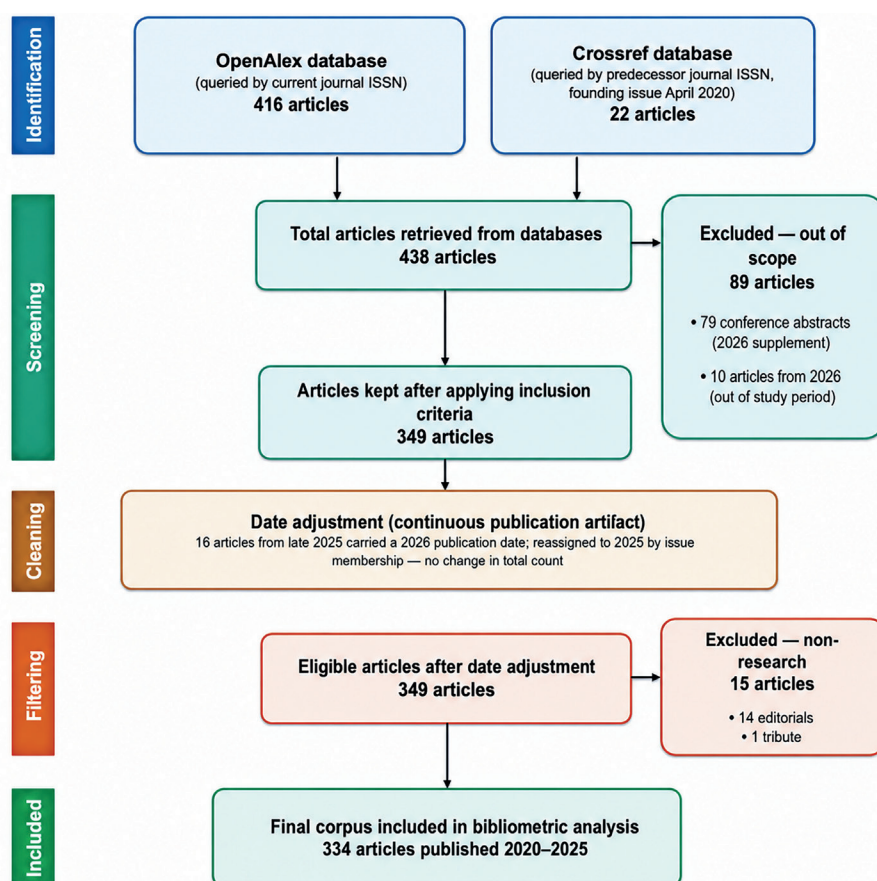
### Author normalization

Author names in the source records showed minor variations in accents, capitalization, and spacing across articles. To avoid counting the same author as multiple entries, all author names were normalized: diacritical marks were removed, all letters were converted to lowercase, and extra whitespace was collapsed. This produced a comparison key used to group different display forms of the same author. Within each group, the most frequent display form in the original data was retained as the canonical name shown in the results.

### Outcome measures

Annual production was computed by year and by volume/issue<sup>(1,19)</sup>.

Authorship metrics included the total number of unique authors after de-duplication, the mean and median number of authors per article, the proportion of single-authored articles,



**Figure 1.** Identification, screening, cleaning, filtering and inclusion of the bibliographic articles.

Records were identified from two complementary database queries (OpenAlex under the current JFA ISSN; Crossref under the predecessor ISSN for the founding-issue artifact). After out-of-scope exclusion (meeting abstracts and 2026 articles), date reassignment for the continuous-publication transition, and non-research filtering (editorials and tributes), 334 peer-reviewed research articles remained for bibliometric analysis.

and a ranking of the most active authors based on their leadership role in each article. For this ranking, one credit was assigned to the first author and one to the last author of each article; if the same person occupied both positions, the article contributed a single credit. This approach reflects the convention in clinical research where first authorship indicates the lead investigator responsible for the study and last authorship indicates the senior or supervising role, whereas middle-author positions carry a weaker signal of intellectual leadership<sup>(20-22)</sup>.

Geographic distribution was computed at two levels: (i) per article, defined as the country most frequently represented among the article's authors, and (ii) per author, summing all author appearances by country across the total. Institutional ranking was computed using the whole-counting method (also called full counting), in which an institution received one credit per article in which it appeared as an affiliation of any author, regardless of authorship position; multiple authors

from the same institution within a single article did not inflate the institution's count. This is the standard method in journal-level bibliometric studies and the default of Web of Science and Scopus<sup>(23-25)</sup>.

Citation impact was characterized by the cumulative citation count, the mean and median citations per article, the citation distribution, the most-cited articles, and the journal h-index (defined as the largest number  $h$  such that  $h$  articles received at least  $h$  citations each)<sup>(26-29)</sup>. International collaboration was defined as an article with co-authors from two or more countries<sup>(30-32)</sup>.

### Software and reproducibility

Data retrieval and analysis were performed in R (version 4.5.2; R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, Austria), using jsonlite for parsing bibliographic records from the OpenAlex and Crossref databases; dplyr and tidyr

for data manipulation; and stringi for text normalization and author name de-duplication. No inferential statistical testing was performed, as the study is descriptive of an enumerable population.

## Results

### Production and document-type composition

A total of 334 peer-reviewed research articles were included, with a mean of 56 articles per year (range 31-73) (Table 1). Original articles accounted for 68.9% of the total, followed by case reports (12.6%), special articles (8.4%), technical tips (4.2%), systematic reviews (3.3%), and narrative reviews (2.7%).

### Authorship structure

The articles were authored by 1,037 unique authors after de-duplication. The mean number of authors per article was 5.2 (median 5; range 1-14), and 17 articles (5.1%) were single-authored.

Author productivity was assessed by ranking authors according to their number of first-author or last-author appearances (Table 2). César de César Netto led the ranking with 15 leadership appearances (1 as first author, 14 as last), followed by Alexandre Leme Godoy-Santos with 14 (3 first, 12 last) and Eli Ávila Souza Júnior with 10 (5 first, 8 last). The

top 10 included authors from Brazil, the United States, South Africa and Argentina.

### Geographic and institutional distribution

Authorship by country is presented in Table 3. Brazil was the predominant country in most articles, followed by the United States and by other Latin American, European, Asian and African countries.

Institutional ranking by whole counting is presented in Table 4. Nine of the top 10 institutions were based in Brazil; the remaining one was the University of Iowa.

### Citation impact

The 334 articles accumulated 272 citations, with a journal h-index of 6. The distribution was skewed, with 214 articles (64.1%) having received zero citations at the data extraction date. The 10 most cited articles are listed in Table 5.

### International collaboration

Articles with co-authors from two or more countries represented 10.5% of the total over the study period, ranging from 8.2% to 14.3% across individual years. The most frequent country pairings were Brazil-United States, Brazil-Argentina, Brazil-Spain, and Argentina-Chile.

**Table 1.** Annual production by year and document type (n = 334, 2020-2025)

| Year         | Articles   | Original   | Case Rep. | Special   | Tech. Tip | Syst. Rev. | Review   |
|--------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|----------|
| 2020         | 56         | 39         | 9         | 5         | 1         | 0          | 1        |
| 2021         | 55         | 44         | 5         | 3         | 2         | 1          | 1        |
| 2022         | 60         | 44         | 8         | 4         | 1         | 3          | 1        |
| 2023         | 31         | 20         | 7         | 1         | 1         | 2          | 1        |
| 2024         | 59         | 37         | 10        | 5         | 5         | 2          | 1        |
| 2025         | 73         | 46         | 3         | 10        | 4         | 3          | 4        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>334</b> | <b>230</b> | <b>42</b> | <b>28</b> | <b>14</b> | <b>11</b>  | <b>9</b> |

**Table 2.** Top 10 authors ranked by leadership appearances (first or last author), 2020-2025

| #  | Author                          | Country | First + Last | As first | As last |
|----|---------------------------------|---------|--------------|----------|---------|
| 1  | César de César Netto            | US      | 15           | 1        | 14      |
| 2  | Alexandre Leme Godoy-Santos     | BR      | 14           | 3        | 12      |
| 3  | Eli Ávila Souza Júnior          | BR      | 10           | 5        | 8       |
| 4  | Nacime Salomão Barbachan Mansur | US      | 7            | 2        | 5       |
| 5  | Daniel Baumfeld                 | BR      | 7            | 4        | 3       |
| 6  | Paulo N. F. Ferrao              | ZA      | 6            | 1        | 5       |
| 7  | Gustavo Araújo Nunes            | BR      | 6            | 3        | 3       |
| 8  | Tiago Baumfeld                  | BR      | 6            | 3        | 3       |
| 9  | Juan Drago                      | AR      | 5            | 0        | 5       |
| 10 | Marcelo Pires Prado             | BR      | 5            | 0        | 5       |

Note. "First + Last" counts the number of articles in which the author appeared as first or last author; if the same author occupied both positions in an article, that article contributed a single credit.

## Discussion

The findings of this analysis position JFA as the principal Ibero-American outlet for foot and ankle research, consistent with a well-documented pattern in Latin American orthopedic publishing in which regional journals serve as the

primary vehicle for local researchers. Latin American countries account for approximately 1% of global orthopedic publications, with Brazil and Argentina historically dominating the most cited regional contributions<sup>(33)</sup>. In parallel, 38.4% of Latin American orthopedic articles are published in regional

**Table 3.** Top 10 contributing countries, 2020-2025

| #  | Country       | Articles (predominant) | % of corpus | Author appearances |
|----|---------------|------------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| 1  | Brazil        | 185                    | 55.4%       | 930                |
| 2  | United States | 34                     | 10.2%       | 223                |
| 3  | Argentina     | 20                     | 6.0%        | 101                |
| 4  | Spain         | 13                     | 3.9%        | 39                 |
| 5  | Chile         | 10                     | 3.0%        | 50                 |
| 6  | India         | 8                      | 2.4%        | 33                 |
| 7  | South Africa  | 8                      | 2.4%        | 24                 |
| 8  | Mexico        | 7                      | 2.1%        | 30                 |
| 9  | Portugal      | 6                      | 1.8%        | 22                 |
| 10 | Colombia      | 4                      | 1.2%        | 12                 |

Note. Predominant country of authorship could not be resolved for 14 articles (4.2%).

**Table 4.** Top 10 contributing institutions, 2020-2025

| #  | Institution                                 | Country | Articles |
|----|---------------------------------------------|---------|----------|
| 1  | Universidade Federal de São Paulo           | BR      | 23       |
| 2  | Hospital Israelita Albert Einstein          | BR      | 21       |
| 3  | Hospital das Clínicas FMUSP                 | BR      | 18       |
| 4  | University of Iowa                          | US      | 16       |
| 5  | Hospital Felício Rocho                      | BR      | 15       |
| 6  | Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais        | BR      | 13       |
| 7  | Hospital do Servidor Público Municipal (SP) | BR      | 10       |
| 8  | Mater Dei Hospital                          | BR      | 9        |
| 9  | Universidade de São Paulo                   | BR      | 9        |
| 10 | Universidade Federal de Alfenas             | BR      | 9        |

Note. Whole counting; any author affiliation, deduplicated per article

**Table 5.** Top 10 most cited articles, 2020-2025

| #  | Title                                                         | First author/last author          | Volume/Issue | Citations |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| 1  | Lapicotton technique in progressive collapsing foot deformity | de César Netto/Mansur             | V14 N3 2020  | 10        |
| 2  | What do we know about hallux valgus pathogenesis?             | Ferreira/Monteagudo               | V14 N3 2020  | 9         |
| 3  | Lateral ankle stabilization with a polyester fiber construct  | Hermida Galindo/Torres Gómez      | V14 N1 2020  | 9         |
| 4  | Glomus tumors in the foot                                     | Workman/Ferrao                    | V14 N2 2020  | 7         |
| 5  | Automated 3D distance and coverage mapping of hallux valgus   | Mendes de Carvalho/de César Netto | V16 N1 2022  | 7         |
| 6  | Reliability of coronal plane rotation in the medial column    | Dibbern/de César Netto            | V15 N3 2021  | 7         |
| 7  | Hallux valgus measurements using weight-bearing CT            | Braza/Nery                        | V15 N3 2021  | 6         |
| 8  | Minimally invasive bunionette treatment                       | de Vete Lima/Nunes                | V14 N2 2020  | 6         |
| 9  | Posterolateral approach: early complications                  | Tavares/Zambelli                  | V14 N2 2020  | 5         |
| 10 | Acute retrograde TTC nailing in osteoporotic fractures        | Herrera-Pérez/País-Brito          | V14 N2 2020  | 5         |

journals, and 46.6% appear in journals with an impact factor below 1<sup>(34)</sup>, a pattern JFA replicates by combining a strong Brazilian anchor with meaningful contributions from Argentina, Spain, Chile, Mexico, Portugal, and Colombia. Structural underrepresentation reinforces this dynamic, since only 2.62% of editorial board members across major foot and ankle journals originate from Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>(35)</sup>, which underscores the strategic value of a journal whose editorial governance is fully regional.

The leadership analysis based on first and last authorship positions shows that JFA is driven by a small group of highly active senior researchers. Studies of orthopedic journals in low- and middle-income countries have consistently shown that over 92% of articles retain first or last authorship by local researchers, although international collaboration significantly reduces local leadership rates<sup>(36)</sup>. The presence of senior authors in JFA from Argentina, South Africa, Brazil, Chile and Spain suggests that the journal successfully preserves regional research leadership while participating in international collaborations. The observed mean number of authors per article and the increase in systematic reviews mirror trends recently documented in other subspecialty orthopedic journals<sup>(37)</sup>, pointing to a broader shift toward multi-author collaborative research and higher-evidence document types.

The modest citation footprint of JFA, with a mean of 0.81 citations per article and a journal h-index of 6, is consistent with the profile of a young journal not yet indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, or PubMed/MEDLINE. Journal prestige and indexation status are the strongest predictors of citation rate, exceeding the influence of study quality<sup>(38)</sup>. The median citation lag in medical journals is approximately 7.5 years<sup>(39)</sup>, and citation peaks in surgical literature occur around 6.25 years after publication<sup>(40)</sup>, well beyond the five-year observation window of this analysis. Since over half of the JFA articles were published in 2024 or later, citation accrual remains in an early phase. The observed increase in systematic reviews across the study period is relevant in this context because meta-analyses and systematic reviews are cited more frequently than other study designs<sup>(41)</sup>, which suggests that continued editorial emphasis on higher-evidence formats should progressively improve citation impact. Achieving indexation in Scopus and PubMed Central would be expected to substantially accelerate this trajectory.

The Diamond Open Access model of JFA, in which articles are published without author-side charges, is a defining

feature of its editorial identity. Article processing charges in medical journals typically range from USD 3,500 to 4,850<sup>(42)</sup> and can exceed USD 10,000 in high-impact venues<sup>(43)</sup>, creating a substantial barrier for researchers from low- and middle-income regions where Article Processing Charges (APCs) exacerbate global inequities in scientific publishing<sup>(44)</sup>. By removing this barrier, JFA operates as an explicit equity mechanism for regional authors and contributes to the bibliodiversity of independent, non-commercial scientific publishing<sup>(45)</sup>.

The founding issue of the unified JFA was registered in Crossref under the predecessor journal's ISSN, reflecting variable metadata completeness across editorial platforms<sup>(46)</sup> and highlighting the need for dual-ISSN retrieval to avoid articles undercount in journals with editorial transitions. OpenAlex was chosen as the primary source because it indexes 34,217 open access journals compared with 7,351 in Scopus and 6,157 in Web of Science<sup>(47)</sup>, providing broader coverage of regional and non-English literature<sup>(48)</sup>.

This study has several limitations. Approximately 4% of articles had insufficient affiliation data to assign a predominant country reliably. The journal h-index, while widely used, systematically disadvantages young journals with fewer indexed publications and short observation windows<sup>(49)</sup>. The leadership analysis treats first and last authorship as equally weighted indicators, whereas last authorship typically carries a stronger signal of senior responsibility in clinical research; the disaggregated columns of Table 2 allow readers to apply their preferred weighting. Finally, this study is descriptive and does not include comparative benchmarking against peer journals or assessment of editorial workflow metrics such as time-to-publication or rejection rates, which would require access to internal data not available in public bibliographic databases.

## Conclusion

The Journal of the Foot & Ankle has consolidated over its first five years as the principal Ibero-American outlet for foot and ankle research, with a Brazilian-anchored yet regionally inclusive authorship, a sustained Diamond Open Access model, and an early citation footprint consistent with its pre-indexation stage. Continued progression toward indexation in Scopus and PubMed/MEDLINE, together with the observed editorial shift toward higher-evidence document types, is expected to further strengthen the international visibility and impact of the journal.

**Authors' contributions:** Each author contributed individually and significantly to the development of this article: JB \*(<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8378-0863>) Study conception and design, data collection, statistical analysis, interpretation of results, and drafting of the manuscript; LM \*(<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6049-6632>) Data collection, interpretation of results, and participated in the review process; VR \*(<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-1334-0255>) Data collection, bibliographic review, and formatting of the article; VU \*(<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-5367-491X>) data collection, bibliographic review, participated in the review process; KR \*(<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-9749-362X>) Data collection and formatting of the article; EP \*(<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-2190-4200>) Data collection, interpretation of results, and participated in the review process; CCN \*(<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6037-0685>) Study conception and design, supervision, interpretation of results, and participated in the review process. All authors read and approved the final manuscript. \*ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor ID) .

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