

# GASTROESOPHAGEAL REFLUX DISEASE IN SURGICAL VERSUS CLINICAL LITERATURE: CLINICIANS DO NOT READ SURGICAL JOURNALS

*Doença do refluxo gastroesofágico na literatura cirúrgica versus na clínica: clínicos não leem revistas cirúrgicas*

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**ABSTRACT – Background** - Several diseases may be treated either medically or surgically; however, clinical and surgical therapies are often not treated as different options for the same patient but rather as different medical philosophies. **Aim** - To assess whether the main surgical and medical journals make references to their counterparts, with gastroesophageal reflux as a model of clinical/surgical disease. **Method** - It was reviewed the leading medical journals in order to verify if surgeons and clinicians make references to their counterparts on their work using gastroesophageal reflux disease as a model of a clinical/surgical disease. It was reviewed the five top-ranked journals in the field of gastroenterology, general surgery and general medicine and a neutral journal. The issues of the year 2008 of the selected journals were searched for papers dealing with gastroesophageal reflux disease. **Results** - The search in the selected journals retrieved 49 papers, 36 (74%) in clinical journals, 5 (10%) in surgical journals, 2 (4%) in general medicine journals, and 6 (12%) in the neutral journal. Thirty one (63%) had a clinical origin, 13 (26%) a surgical origin, and 5 (10%) a neutral origin. Surgical journals published only surgical papers and general medicine journals published only clinical papers. Clinical journals and general medicine journals showed a higher proportion of clinical/surgical references compared to surgical journals ( $p < 0.001$ ) and the neutral journal ( $p < 0.001$ ). There was no differences in the proportion of clinical/surgical references when surgical and the neutral journal were compared ( $p = 0.06$ ). Clinical journals and general medicine journals showed a similar proportion of clinical/surgical references ( $p = 0.06$ ). **Conclusion** - Clinicians make significantly less references to surgical journals than surgeons do to clinical journals.

**HEADINGS** - Surgery. Gastroenterology. Gastroesophageal reflux.

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**RESUMO - Racional** - Várias doenças podem ser tratadas médica ou cirurgicamente; no entanto, a terapêutica clínica ou cirúrgica não é muitas vezes usada como diferente opção para o mesmo paciente, mas sim como diferente filosofia médica na abordagem. **Objetivo** - Verificar se os principais periódicos cirúrgicos e clínicos fazem referências aos seus congêneres, tendo a doença do refluxo gastroesofágico como um modelo de doença clínico/cirúrgica. **Método** - Foram revistos os cinco primeiros periódicos classificados na área de gastroenterologia, cirurgia geral e medicina geral e um jornal neutro. Os números do ano 2008 dos periódicos selecionados foram pesquisados no como lidar com a doença do refluxo gastroesofágico. **Resultados** - Foram selecionados 49 trabalhos, 36 (74%) em revistas clínicas, 5 (10%) em revistas de cirurgia, 2 (4%) em revistas de medicina geral e 6 (12%) no jornal neutro. Trinta e um (63%) tiveram origem clínica, 13 (26%) cirúrgica, e 5 (10%) a origem foi neutra. Revistas cirúrgicas publicaram apenas artigos cirúrgicos e revistas de medicina geral, publicaram apenas trabalhos clínicos. Revistas e jornais de medicina clínica geral mostraram maior proporção de referências clínico/cirúrgicas em relação às revistas de cirurgia ( $p < 0,001$ ) e do jornal neutro ( $p < 0,001$ ). Não houve diferenças na proporção de referências clínico/cirúrgicas quando revistas cirúrgicas e a neutra foram comparadas ( $p = 0,06$ ). Revistas clínicas e de medicina geral mostraram semelhante proporção de referências clínico/cirúrgicas ( $p = 0,06$ ). **Conclusão** - Os clínicos fazem referências significativamente menores para revistas cirúrgicas do que os cirurgiões fazem para as revistas clínicas.

**DESCRIPTORIOS** - Cirurgia. Gastroenterologia. Refluxo gastroesofágico.

## INTRODUCTION

The dissimilarities between surgeons and clinicians go well beyond their beauty<sup>8</sup>. Several diseases may have either a clinical or surgical therapy as an acceptable treatment. In many cases; however, medical and surgical therapy are not treated as different options for the same patient but rather as two different medical philosophies. Furthermore, it seems that often surgeons and clinicians do not discuss the same papers and they are not aware of each others research.

The aim of this article is to review the leading medical journals in order to verify if surgeons and clinicians make references to their counterparts on their work using gastroesophageal reflux disease as a model of a clinical/surgical disease.

## METHODS

It was reviewed the five top-ranked journals in the field of gastroenterology, general surgery and general medicine. Journals were selected based on the number of citations according to the ISI Web of Knowledge impact factor for 2007. Highly specialized journals, such as those devoted solely to hepatology, endoscopy, vascular surgery, etc., were excluded from the analysis. In addition, a specialized journal that is edited by surgeons and clinicians was included as a neutral journal. The selected journals are listed in Table 1.

TABELA 1 – Lista dos periódicos analisados

Periódicos clínicos	Gastroenterology
	Gut
	American Journal of Gastroenterology
	Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology
Periódicos cirúrgicos	Nature Clinical Practice Gastroenterology & Hepatology
	Annals of Surgery
	British Journal of Surgery
	Archives of Surgery
Medicina geral	Journal of the American College of Surgeons
	Surgery
	New England Journal of Medicine
	Lancet
Neutro	JAMA
	Annals of Internal Medicine
	Annual Review of Medicine
	Diseases of the Esophagus

The issues of the year 2008 of the selected journals were searched for papers dealing with gastroesophageal reflux disease. Letters to the editor, editorials, case reports, and meeting abstracts were excluded from analysis. The origin of the paper was classified as "clinical" or "surgical" based on the department that originated the research. Neutral origin denoted a paper originated from diverse departments, such as pathology or a conjoined work by surgeons and clinicians. The references of these papers

were classified as "clinical", "surgical", or "neutral" according to the journal where it was published. Clinical journals were defined as those classified as gastroenterology & hepatology at the Journals Citation Report by ISI Web of Knowledge. Similarly, surgical journals were defined as those classified as surgery. Other journals or those figuring in both classifications were defined as neutral.

Ethics approval was not required for this study.

Fisher's test was used for statistic comparison among groups.

## RESULTS

The search in the selected journals retrieved 49 papers, 36 (74%) in clinical journals, 5 (10%) in surgical journals, 2 (4%) in general medicine journals, and 6 (12%) in the neutral journal. According to the origin, 31 (63%) had a clinical origin, 13 (26%) a surgical origin, and 5 (10%) a neutral origin. Surgical journals published only surgical papers and general medicine journals published only clinical papers (Table 2).

TABELA 2 – Origem dos artigos

	Clínicos n (%)	Cirúrgicos n (%)	Neutro n (%)
Periódicos clínicos	28 (78%)	3 (8%)	5 (14%)
Periódicos cirúrgicos	0	5 (100%)	0
Medicina geral	2 (100%)	0	0
Neutro	1 (17%)	5 (83%)	0

Selected papers' references are depicted in Table 3. Clinical journals and general medicine journals showed a higher proportion of clinical/surgical references compared to surgical journals ( $p < 0.001$ ) and the neutral journal ( $p < 0.001$ ). There was no differences in the proportion of clinical/surgical references when surgical and the neutral journal were compared ( $p = 0.06$ ). Similarly, clinical journals and general medicine journals showed a similar proportion of clinical/surgical references ( $p = 0.06$ ).

TABELA 3 – Referências dos artigos

	Referências clínicas n (%)	Referências cirúrgicas n (%)	Referências neutras n (%)
Periódicos clínicos	587 (54%)	107 (10%)	400 (36%)
Periódicos cirúrgicos	24 (21%)	73 (64%)	17 (15%)
Medicina geral	75 (71%)	6 (6%)	43 (39%)
Neutro	27 (24%)	41 (37%)	34 (32%)

## DISCUSSION

Journals are considered one of the most important sources in the transmission of research findings and as a

guide to clinical practice for clinicians<sup>3</sup> and surgeons<sup>1,7</sup>. It is intuitive to believe that clinicians are more inclined to read clinical journals and surgeons to read surgical journals. This can be explained by personal interests and the accessibility to the journals given that they are usually available to members of professional organizations and societies. However, readership level is not synonym to ranking of importance<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, scientific reports must be free of bias and prejudices. Previous surveys showed that surgeons read medical journals<sup>1,4,7</sup> but the interest of clinicians in surgical journals has not been investigated.

Here, it was investigated the references of clinical and surgical papers to determine if surgeons and clinicians make references to their counterparts.

Gastroesophageal reflux disease was used as a model in this research due to the fact that clinical and surgical treatments of the disease are widely available, acceptable and efficient<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore, surgeons are familiar with basic research and pathophysiologic studies, and actually perform diagnostic testing, medical management, and endoscopic therapeutic interventions in addition to surgery<sup>2</sup>.

Our review showed that clinicians make significantly less references to surgical journals than surgeons do to clinical journals. Interestingly, general medicine journals showed a similar behaviour compared to clinical journals. The neutral journal is more open-minded to clinical and surgical papers and references.

## CONCLUSION

Surgeons should be encouraged to publish in clinical journals in order to disseminate surgical research<sup>6</sup>. Neutral journals may be an unbiased manner of publication.

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