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# Building a Literature Review: A Citation Analysis of Medical Educator's Research Patterns in Balint Group Studies

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# Building a Literature Review: A Citation Analysis of Medical Educator's Patterns in Balint Group Studies

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**Hypothesis:** As librarians highly involved in the research process, an exhaustive, comprehensive literature search is the cornerstone of any project we would undertake. *Based on findings in the literature, it has been demonstrated that many medical educators do not use a systematic approach in their pre-intervention reviews.* Instead, it is believed that researchers use literature conveniently found and readily available. To test this hypothesis, we conducted a comprehensive review of the literature in relation to Balint theory and then analyzed the citations in papers from the last ten years (2003-2013). The below flow chart demonstrates the methodology used to conduct the review.

## Why study Balint for this analysis?

Balint theory holds interest for both authors. Lee has worked on an extensive systematic review process with an author studying Balint Group utilization. Levin is library liaison to Family Medicine and Psychiatry and works closely with groups where Balint theory is most commonly practiced. Both Lee and Levin work closely with medical educators in their respective institutions where Balint is used in studying health care practitioner communication skills in undergraduate and graduate medical education.



**Enid and Michael Balint**

Photo: American Balint Society

<http://balintcongress2011.org/learn/balinthistory/balinthistory.html>

Enid and Michael Balint were British psychoanalysts who practiced in London in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. They created seminars where physicians could discuss the humanistic aspects of patient care as well as the physician-patient relationship in general. These seminars became known as "Balint Groups" and this technique has been used widely in medicine and medical education, specifically in psychiatric, family medicine and oncological disciplines.

## Methods

Identify potentially relevant citations in indexed databases  
(n=324 following removal of duplicates)

PubMed: 124  
Embase: 127  
Web of Science: 22  
CINAHL: 10  
PsycINFO: 61  
ERIC: 21

Papers excluded  
(n=223)

Older than 10 years  
Bibliographies  
Opinion-based letters  
Meeting Abstracts  
Dissertations

Papers included  
(n=111)

Additional papers excluded  
(n=35)

Full text not found (e.g., "esoteric" international journals)  
Paper contained no citations

Papers included. Citations from bibliographies examined  
(n=76)

Total number of Balint-related citations: 314  
Number of unique citations: 123

Analysis

## Analysis

Of the 123 unique citations, 31 were books

- U.S. and international (primarily U.K., Australia and South Africa) resources represented.
  - Of these 31 books, 6 were written by Michael or Enid Balint
  - These 6 books represent 74 of the total Balint-related citations (24% of 314)
- The top 10 journal articles cited were cited 94 times (see composite collage with link below)
- This equals 30% of the 314 citations
  - The top journal article was cited 23 times
  - Of this top 10, 5 were published during the 00's, 3 during the 90's and 2 during the 80's
- Only 16 sources (6 books, top 10 articles) comprise 54% of cited references in our sample



## Discussion:

324 items were discovered in the initial review after searching five databases and removing duplicates. The search strings used (not identical due to differences in database structure) were very basic due to the relative uniqueness of the term "Balint" in the medical literature. Specific and interesting findings include:

- Only a small sample of the available literature from the early 1950's (when the Balints first began publishing on this theory) to the present were cited in recent publications. However, this is a small sample size with limited power and it is uncertain if this citation pattern was indeed "citation by convenience" or choice of the most appropriate resources.
- Primary resources authored by Michael and Enid Balint were widely represented in the citations.
- Only one of the titles cited by Lee et. al. (2013) as the top 20 medical education-oriented journals appeared in our findings. This was the journal "Family Medicine," in which seven of the top ten cited articles in our findings were published.
- Medical educators appear to publish research/case reports on Balint work with medical students and residents in discipline-specific journals as opposed to medical education journals.
- To further test this hypothesis, additional citation analyses on other medical education-related topics need to be conducted with which these findings can be compared.
- Librarians involved in medical education are committed to working with researchers in this field to support education research.

## References

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