



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

## Impact of Otolaryngology Theses in Their Authors' Scientific Production<sup>☆</sup>



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### Abstract

*Introduction and objectives:* The writing of a thesis has 2 main objectives: the appropriate training to be a good researcher and the publication of the first original research work. This study attempted to check this statement applied to theses in Otolaryngology by analysing the variation in the authors' publications.

*Material and methods:* We used the database TESEO to obtain the data relative to Otolaryngology theses in Spain published between 1993 and 2003. We found the publications of each author by using the program "Publish or Perish" and we analysed the variations in their work in 3 periods (prior to, around, and after thesis publication).

*Results:* The publications, the citations, and the parameters analysed all increased in the second and third periods (around and after) with regard to the first period. However, there were no significant differences in some of them in the first 2 periods.

*Conclusions:* The elaboration of a thesis in Otolaryngology increased the scientific production of its author. Almost a third of the authors did not publish any work. There was a significant increase in all the parameters studied and the bibliometric indices between the period before thesis publication and the around and after thesis periods.

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**PALABRAS CLAVE**

Tesis doctoral;  
Publicaciones;  
Índices bibliométricos

## Repercusión de la tesis doctoral en Otorrinolaringología sobre la producción científica de sus autores

### Resumen

**Introducción y objetivos:** La elaboración de una tesis doctoral tiene dos fines principales: la formación adecuada para ser un buen investigador y la publicación de los primeros trabajos originales de investigación. Este trabajo va a intentar comprobar dicha afirmación aplicada a las tesis en Otorrinolaringología analizando las variaciones en las publicaciones de sus autores.

**Material y métodos:** Se obtuvieron mediante la base de datos TESEO los datos relativos a las tesis publicadas en Otorrinolaringología en España de 1993-2003. Mediante el programa Publish or Perish se averiguaron las publicaciones de cada autor y se analizaron sus variaciones en tres periodos (previo, en torno y posterior a la tesis).

**Resultados:** Tanto las publicaciones como las citaciones como los parámetros analizados aumentan en los periodos posterior y en torno con respecto al previo, no habiendo en algunos de ellos diferencias significativas entre los dos primeros periodos.

**Conclusiones:** La realización de la tesis doctoral en Otorrinolaringología hace que la producción científica de su autor aumente. Alrededor de un tercio de los autores no elabora ninguna publicación. Existe un aumento significativo en todos los parámetros estudiados y en los índices bibliométricos entre el periodo previo y el periodo en torno y posterior.

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## Introduction

When a university graduate wants to continue with their studies, there are several alternatives available for post-graduate study. In Spanish universities, the classic option is a doctorate programme. However, the fact that this is the most common route does not mean that the final goal (obtaining the degree of Doctor) has been adequately understood generally.

From this starting point, we have to ask questions such as "What do we understand by Doctor?" and "What does obtaining a doctorate degree mean?" As for the first question, according to the Spanish Dictionary of the Royal Academy (*Diccionario de la Real Academia de la Lengua [RAE]*<sup>1</sup>) in its 22nd edition, *doctor* is used to designate those individuals who «*have completed studies for a doctorate in an establishment authorised to grant this degree*». To achieve the degree of Doctor it is necessary to follow a doctorate programme that concludes with the viva defence of the doctoral thesis.

The reply to the second question (about the meaning of the thesis) is as ambiguous as it is obvious: you obtain the title of Doctor.<sup>2</sup> However, this goal is qualified by the field of knowledge being considered. In areas such as experimental science and social and legal sciences, very few graduates end up defending their thesis.<sup>2</sup> Obtaining the degree implies that the individual is planning to become a professor («the ones who are going to stay in the faculty are the only ones who defend their theses»). That is the traditional concept in which one of the university faculties where the individual has studied recognises a candidate as an equal, and it allows the graduate to join the teaching profession (the 2nd meaning of the definition according to the RAE)<sup>1</sup>.

Contrary to this, in the health sciences (especially in medicine), the thesis «...*constitutes an obligation rather than a conscious decision for many more*».<sup>2</sup> It is undertaken so as to «fit in» within the general dynamics of the department where the individual works.

In Spain, an analysis of health sciences theses has been published for various fields of knowledge such as Rehabilitation la Rheumatology,<sup>4</sup> Otolaryngology,<sup>5</sup> and Anaesthesiology.<sup>6</sup> These articles state that preparing a thesis in these disciplines has two main goals: appropriate training to be a researcher and the publication of the first original research papers.<sup>3-6</sup>

There are very few publications on the influence of a thesis in the professional or research life of doctors. A possible way of testing for this influence could be to evaluate the variation of the research-scientific activity of the doctorate by qualitative and quantitative analysis of the publications before and after obtaining this thesis degree.

The objectives of this study were to evaluate objectively the repercussion of the doctoral thesis in Otolaryngology on the scientific production of their authors, as well as the effect on the bibliometric indexes of the studies generated by them.

## Methods

The TESEO database was accessed during the months of July to December 2009 (<http://www.micinn.es/teseo>). The following six descriptors were used as search terms: «*otorrinolaringología*» (otorhinolaryngology/otolaryngology), «*cirugía de garganta, nariz y oídos*» (ear, nose, and throat surgery), «*fisiología de la audición*» (physiology of hearing), «*fisiología del equilibrio*» (physiology of balance), «*física de la audición*» (physics of hearing),

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