

Original article

## Representation of Topics Regarding Clinical Supervision in Nursing in National and International Journals

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### Abstract

**Aim:** The aim of this paper was to examine the representation of topics of clinical supervision in nursing in national and international journals.

**Methods:** A Databases Medline, EBSCO and Hrčak were retrospectively researched. The research encompassed nursing journals published from 2011 to 2015. MeSH keywords were used as well. The availability of articles in full text was examined by PubMed Central and by using PERO, a search engine for electronic resources online, which is an online source of journals with articles available in full text to the Croatian scientific and academic community. A total of 168 articles and 54 journals were included in this research.

**Results:** The topic of clinical supervision in nursing has not been found in any of the papers published in Croatian journals. There were 168 scientific papers about clinical supervision in nursing in 54 international journals. In the "Journal of Nursing Management" there was a trend of a decreasing number of published scientific papers (Cochran–Armitage test  $p < 0.0001$ ). In the Medline database there were 43 journals. Most journals were published in the USA, 23 of them. A total of 29 articles are available in full form. OvidSP enables access to the highest number of articles, 18 (62.1%), while PERO search engine found no articles in full form.

**Conclusion:** In national journals in Croatia there are no topics regarding clinical supervision in nursing, but there are some in international journals.

(Budrovac A, Prlić N. Representation of Topics Regarding Clinical Supervision in Nursing in National and International Journals. SEEMEDJ 2019; 3(2); 45-55)

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Received: May 29, 2019; revised version accepted: Dec 4, 2019; published: Dec 16, 2019

KEYWORDS: clinical supervision, database, nursing, supervisory

## Introduction

Definition of the word "supervise" is to watch somebody or something to make sure that work, etc is being done properly and that people are behaving correctly (1). That is why nurses very often have a negative attitude towards clinical supervision (CS). Smith highlighted that it is not about controlling somebody; instead, it is about empowering staff. Sabrage said it has been described in literature as "time for me" (2). In addition to that, Fowler stated that nurses should sometimes put themselves before others (3), which gives CS a completely different meaning.

There have been many attempts to define CS. According to the Care Quality Commission, "the purpose of CS is to provide a safe and confidential environment for staff to reflect on and discuss their work, personal and professional response to their work. The focus is on supporting staff in their personal and professional development and in reflecting on their practice" (4).

Furthermore, the Royal College of Nursing states that the term "clinical supervision" is used to describe a formal process of professional support and learning which enables practitioners to develop knowledge and competence, assume responsibility for their own practice and enhance consumer protection and the safety of care in complex clinical situations. It is central to the process of learning and to the expansion of the scope of practice and should be seen as a means of encouraging self-assessment and analytic and reflective skills (5).

Bishop and Sweeney described it as "designated interaction between two or more practitioners within a safe and supportive environment, that enables a continuum of reflective critical analysis of care, to ensure quality patient services and the wellbeing of the practitioner" (6).

Despite these and numerous other definitions, many authors state that definition of clinical supervision is still unclear (7,8).

Butterworth et al justify this by explaining that there are many different definitions, especially among states because of socio-cultural impact (9). Fowler explains that "the practice of clinical supervision will and should vary because the practice of nursing varies across different environments and patient groups" (10). Except those, he describes some more factors, such as ward culture and organisation, ratio of the number of employees, employees' needs and management (11).

Clinical supervision can be implemented in different ways. It can be implemented as a one-to-one relationship or group supervision. The other consideration is whether supervision is among peers, in a team or multidisciplinary. One-to-one is a fairly common model, where a more experienced nurse supervises a less experienced one. Experienced specialist nurses can be involved in "peer supervision", whereby staff of similar experience and profession "co-supervise" each other. However, a specialist nurse can also receive supervision from someone with greater experience, but who is not a nurse. There are three types of CS groups: peer, team and multidisciplinary groups. In peer CS groups, all staff members are of similar qualifications and experience (e.g. nurses, clinical managers, healthcare assistants, clinical nurse specialists). Team supervision occurs within the established hierarchical clinical team. Multidisciplinary supervision tends to occur where multidisciplinary staff work closely together (12).

One of the three most frequently cited models was reported by Winstanley and White – Proctor's interactive model, highlighting the normative (managerial), formative (educative) and restorative (supportive) functions of supervision (13). The aim of the normative component is to support reflection on practise with an awareness of local policy and codes of conduct. Formative component focuses on the development of skills, knowledge, attitudes and understanding. Restorative component fosters resilience through nurturing supportive relationships that offer motivation and encouragement and that can also be drawn

upon in times of stress (14). That model has become the most used model (15).

Although the principles of clinical supervision are simple, its implementation is more difficult. It requires time, commitment, openness to self-reflection, admission of areas of weakness and a willingness to develop and grow (3). Many authors describe lack of time as the main barrier to clinical supervision implementation (16-20). Fowler states that we must make time for clinical supervision, it needs to be viewed in the same way as mandatory training, days off or annual leave (21).

There are many benefits of CS, some of them are: improved employee retention, better motivation and commitment to the organisation, maintenance of clinical skills and quality practice, improved communication among workers, increased job satisfaction, self-critique of clinical and cultural practice in a safe environment, development of strategies to address issues raised as part of critiquing and reflecting on practice, identification of strengths in practice, identification of learning opportunities to enhance further development of nursing practice, prevention of burnout, nursing leadership development (22).

The aim of this paper was to examine the representation of clinical supervision topics in nursing in national and international journals.

## Material and methods

Databases Medline, EBSCO and Hrčak were retrospectively researched. The research encompassed nursing journals published from 2011 to 2015. MeSH keywords "Organization and Administration" and "Nursing, supervisory" were used for searching the Medline database. Subheading "Standards" was used to restrict the heading "Organization and Administration" and searching was restricted to nursing journals. Subheadings "Standards", "Organization and Administration" and "Statistic & Numerical Data" were used to restrict the heading "Nursing, supervisory" (Figure 1).

For searching the EBSCO database, the title "clinical supervision" and subject term "nursing" were combined with Boolean operator AND (Figure 1).

Keyword "supervizija"/ "supervision" was used for searching the database Hrčak. Results were restricted to the area of "Biomedicine and Healthcare" (Figure 1).

Results in all databases were restricted to nursing journals (Figure 1).

Nursing journals which did not have access to all or some parts of journal volumes were excluded from research.

In all included journals, the main focus was on looking for all published articles and all articles about clinical supervision in the period from 2011 to 2015.

The availability of articles in full text was examined by PubMed Central and by using PERO. A total of 168 articles and 54 journals were used in this research (Figure 1).

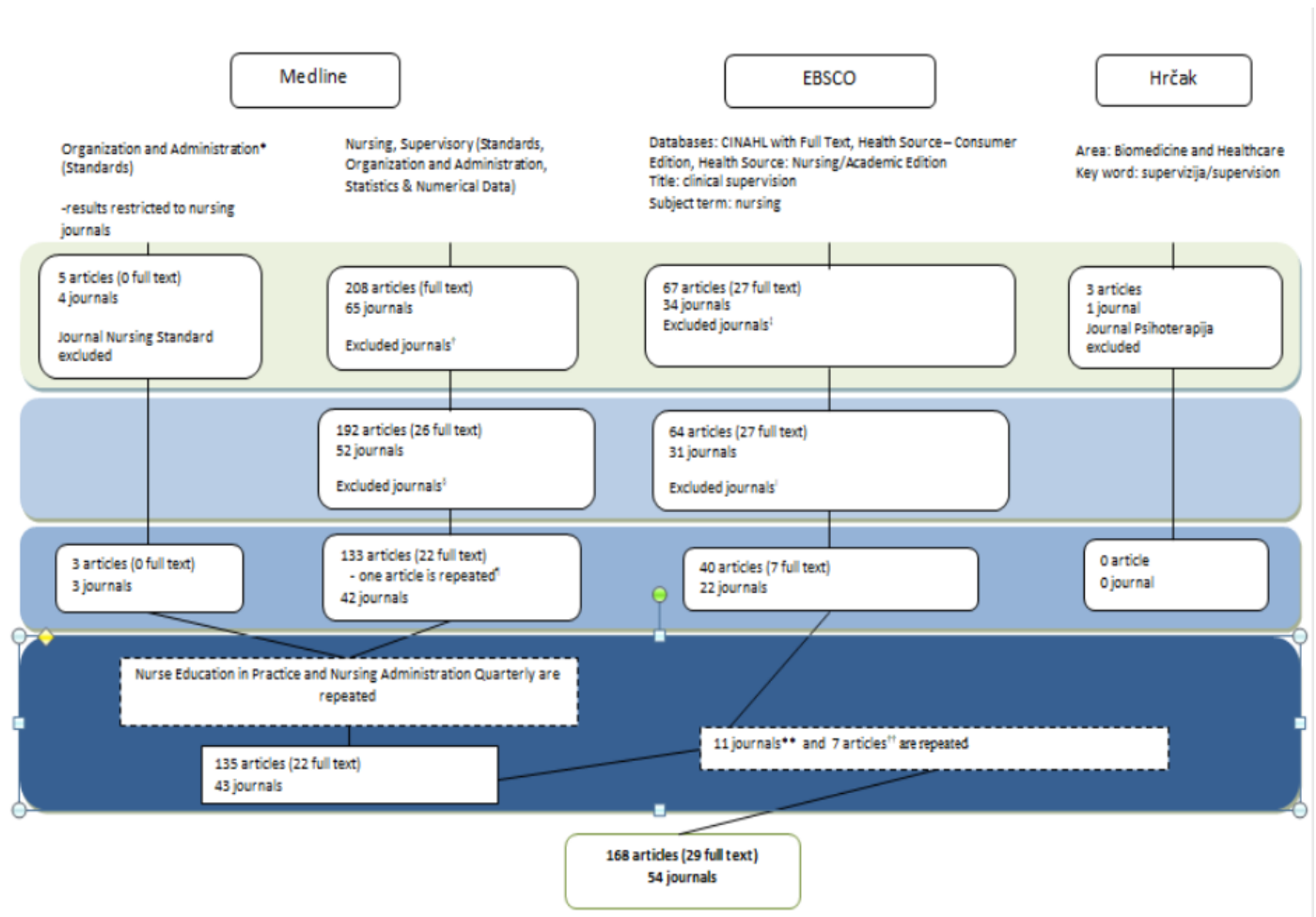


Figure 1. Flow chart

\* Use the keyword 'supervision' then continue to search Heading Organization & Administration

† Global Health Action; Global Journal of Health Science; Palliative Medicine; Studies in Health Technology and Informatics; Health Service Journal; Advances in Health Care Management; Advances in Neonatal Care; Giornale Italiano di Medicina del Lavoro ed Ergonomia; Journal of the Medical Association of Thailand; Critical and Resuscitation; Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability; International Journal of Evidence-Based Health Care; Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation

‡ Journal of Intellectual Disabilities and Offending Behaviour; Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences; Research on Social Work Practice

§ Nursing Standard; Australian Nursing & Midwifery Journal; Mental Health Nursing; British Journal of Nursing; American Journal of Nursing; Insight; Nursing Times; Nursing New Zealand (Wellington); Tar Heel Nurse; RCM Midwives

|| JARNA; Nursing Standard; Mental Health Nursing; Community Practitioner; Nosileftiki; British Journal of Nursing; Communicating Nursing Research; Practice Nurse; Australian Nursing & Midwifery Journal

¶ Miller A, Buerhaus PI. The changing nature of ICU charge nurses' decision making: from supervision of care delivery to unit resource management. Joint Commission Journal on Quality & Patient Safety. 2013;39:38-47.

\*\* Perspectives in Psychiatric Care; Nursing & Health Sciences; Journal of Advanced Nursing; Nurse Education Today; Nurse Education in Practice; Journal of Psychiatric & Mental Health Nursing; Journal of Clinical Nursing; Journal of Nursing Management; Issues in Mental Health Nursing; Australian Critical Care; International Journal of Mental Health Nursing

†† Gonge H, Buus N. Model for investigating the benefits of clinical supervision in psychiatric nursing: A survey study. International Journal of Mental Health Nursing. 2011;20:102-11.

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## Results

The topic of clinical supervision in nursing has not been found in any of the papers published in Croatian journals. There were 168 scientific papers about clinical supervision in nursing in international journals. The biggest number of

journals about CS were published in 2011, a total of 46. The fewest were published in 2014, only 25. The "Journal of Nursing Management" contained the most scientific papers about CS in 2011, specifically 19 of them. In that journal there was also a trend of reduced number of published articles in the period from 2011 to 2015 (Cochran – Armitage test  $p < 0,0001$ ) (Table 1)..

**Table 1. Representation of topics regarding clinical supervision in nursing in international journals**

Journal	Total number of published articles (proportion of articles dealing with clinical supervision)					P*
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
<b>BMC Nursing</b>	24 (0)	28 (0)	29 (0)	50 (0)	85 (1)	0.34
<b>Nordic Journal of Nursing Research &amp; Clinical Studies /Vard i Norden</b>	36 (0)	41 (0)	40 (2)	43 (0)	38 (0)	0.97
<b>Perspectives in Psychiatric Care</b>	32 (0)	30 (0)	35 (1)	35 (0)	35 (0)	0.96
<b>Nursing &amp; Health Sciences</b>	76 (1)	71 (1)	75 (1)	73 (0)	71 (1)	0.74
<b>International Journal of Nursing Studies</b>	166 (1)	163 (0)	168 (0)	170 (0)	198 (1)	0.93
<b>Journal of Advanced Nursing</b>	253 (0)	256 (2)	266 (0)	267 (2)	253 (1)	0.53
<b>Nurse Education Today</b>	182 (0)	191 (1)	282 (3)	268 (0)	270 (2)	0.6
<b>Nurse Education in Practice</b>	105 (1)	114 (1)	170 (3)	120 (3)	93 (1)	0.56
<b>Journal of Psychiatric &amp; Mental Health Nursing</b>	136 (0)	111 (1)	122 (1)	113 (2)	96 (0)	0.58
<b>Journal of Clinical Nursing</b>	395 (1)	385 (2)	358 (0)	368 (1)	368 (0)	0.32
<b>CONNECT: The World of Critical Care Nursing</b>	25 (0)	26 (0)	17 (0)	20 (1)	19 (0)	0.41
<b>British Journal of Midwifery</b>	149 (0)	169 (0)	150 (0)	168 (1)	162 (0)	0.49
<b>Journal of Nursing Education Scholarship</b>	28 (0)	26 (1)	36 (0)	18 (0)	20 (0)	0.54
<b>Contemporary Nurse: A Journal for the Australian Nursing Profession</b>	88 (0)	84 (0)	84 (1)	73 (0)	49 (0)	0.86

**Table 1a. Representation of topics regarding clinical supervision in nursing in international journals**

Journal	Total number of published articles (proportion of articles dealing with clinical supervision)					P*
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
<b>Journal of Nursing Management</b>	109 (19)	205 (3)	106 (0)	100 (0)	112 (4)	<b>&lt;0.0001</b>
<b>Australian Critical Care</b>	102 (0)	80 (1)	79 (0)	97 (0)	90 (0)	0.49
<b>International Journal of Mental Health Nursing</b>	52 (2)	68 (0)	63 (3)	65 (0)	64 (0)	0.16
<b>Journal of Nursing Measurement</b>	14 (0)	17 (0)	34 (0)	43 (1)	46 (0)	0.74
<b>Obzornik Zdravstvene Nege</b>	37 (1)	28 (0)	30 (0)	26 (0)	26 (0)	0.98
<b>Klinisk Sygepleje</b>	29 (0)	31 (1)	34 (0)	28 (0)	29 (0)	0.48
<b>Assistenza Infermieristica e Ricerca:Air</b>	25 (0)	34 (2)	28 (0)	30 (0)	27 (1)	1.00
<b>Practising Midwife</b>	99 (1)	118 (3)	113 (3)	110 (7)	114 (6)	0.05
<b>Nursing Economics</b>	42 (0)	48 (0)	39 (0)	34 (0)	46 (1)	0.16
<b>Health Care Manager</b>	43 (0)	37 (0)	41 (1)	38 (0)	47 (1)	0.35
<b>JOGNN – Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, &amp; Neonatal Nursing</b>	100 (0)	100 (0)	92 (2)	89 (0)	98 (1)	0.39
<b>Nursing Management (Harrow)</b>	171 (1)	148 (3)	74 (2)	176 (1)	111 (1)	0.82
<b>Professioni Infermieristiche</b>	23 (0)	27 (0)	26 (0)	27 (0)	28 (1)	0.17
<b>Soins; La Revue de Reference Infirmiere</b>	255 (0)	185 (0)	172 (0)	156 (1)	140 (0)	0.37
<b>CIN: Computers, Informatics, Nursing</b>	132 (0)	106 (0)	104 (0)	97 (1)	99 (0)	0.43
<b>Women &amp; Birth: Journal of the Australian College of Midwives</b>	26 (0)	35 (0)	72 (0)	60 (1)	72 (0)	0.66
<b>The Gerontologist</b>	73 (0)	91 (0)	107 (0)	115 (1)	121 (0)	0.58
<b>Worldviews on Evidence-Based Nursing</b>	26 (2)	25 (0)	19 (1)	48 (1)	46 (0)	0.11
<b>Queensland Nurse</b>	53 (0)	53 (0)	59 (1)	63 (0)	45 (0)	0.99
<b>Nursing Administration Quarterly</b>	43 (3)	46 (0)	57 (2)	55 (0)	60 (1)	0.14



**Table 1b. Representation of topics regarding clinical supervision in nursing in international journals**

Journal	Total number of published articles (proportion of articles dealing with clinical supervision)					P*
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
<b>Journal of Nursing Administration</b>	106 (1)	112 (3)	122 (3)	116 (0)	121 (1)	0.38
<b>Nursing Forum</b>	32 (1)	33 (0)	34 (3)	32 (0)	35 (0)	0.45
<b>Canadian Nurse</b>	209 (0)	206 (1)	205 (2)	203 (0)	167 (0)	0.76
<b>Joint Commission Journal on Quality &amp; Patient Safety</b>	69 (0)	65 (0)	70 (1)	71 (0)	72 (0)	0.98
<b>Journal of Nursing Care Quality</b>	45 (0)	51 (0)	45 (2)	48 (0)	53 (0)	0.96
<b>Midwifery</b>	154 (0)	117 (0)	177 (1)	156 (0)	146 (0)	0.98
<b>MCN, American Journal of Maternal Child Nursing</b>	85 (0)	81 (1)	87 (0)	82 (0)	92 (0)	0.47
<b>Krankenpflege – Soins Infirmiers</b>	158 (0)	163 (1)	147 (0)	171 (0)	202 (0)	0.44
<b>Online Journal of Issues in Nursing</b>	28 (1)	26 (1)	24 (0)	22 (0)	24 (0)	0.16
<b>Research in Nursing &amp; Health</b>	40 (0)	52 (1)	47 (0)	45 (0)	43 (0)	0.47
<b>Nursing leadership (Toronto, Ont)</b>	33 (2)	45 (0)	44 (0)	30 (0)	18 (0)	0.05
<b>Issues in Mental Health Nursing</b>	127 (1)	133 (0)	142 (1)	128 (0)	138 (0)	0.30
<b>Public Health Nursing</b>	64 (1)	63 (0)	62 (0)	62 (0)	75 (0)	0.15
<b>Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing</b>	74 (1)	60 (0)	72 (0)	82 (0)	84 (0)	0.14
<b>Journal of Emergency Nursing</b>	137 (1)	159 (0)	154 (0)	150 (0)	140 (0)	0.15
<b>Journal of the American Medical Directors Association</b>	107 (1)	183 (0)	200 (0)	150 (0)	213 (0)	0.10
<b>AAOHN Journal</b>	73 (1)	95 (0)	93 (0)	91 (0)	88 (0)	0.13
<b>International Nursing Review</b>	92 (1)	103 (0)	81 (0)	74 (0)	74 (0)	0.19
<b>Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners</b>	82 (0)	86 (0)	89 (0)	83 (0)	112 (1)	0.19
<b>Mental Health Practice</b>	220 (1)	206 (0)	185 (1)	177 (1)	186 (0)	0.78
<b>Total</b>	5084 (46)	5216 (30)	5261 (41)	5216 (25)	5261 (26)	0.01

\* Cochran – Armitage test

Most of the journals in which scientific papers about CS were published were found in the Medline database, specifically 43 of them. In the Hrčak database there were no journals containing articles about CS in nursing (Table 2).

**Table 2. Representation in databases Medline, EBSCO and Hrčak of journals in which articles about clinical supervision in nursing were published**

Database	Number (%)	
	Total number of journals	Journals in which articles about CS were published
Medline	1235 (100)	43 (3.5)
EBSCO	15337 (100)	22 (0.1)
Hrčak	437 (100)	0

In total, there were 54 journals in which articles about CS in nursing were published. Most of the journals were published in USA, 23 (42,5 %) of

them. Slovenia, France, Switzerland and Denmark each had only one journal with articles about CS in nursing published (Table 3).

**Table 3. List of countries publishing journals in which articles about CS in nursing were published**

Country publishing journal	Number (%) of journals in which articles about CS in nursing were published
USA	23 (42.5)
Great Britain	19 (35.1)
Australia	4 (7.4)
Canada	2 (3.7)
Italia	2 (3.7)
Slovenia	1 (1.9)
France	1 (1.9)
Switzerland	1 (1.9)
Denmark	1 (1.9)
Total	54 (100)

Most of the articles were published in UK, specifically 105 (62,5 %) of them.

In 2015, there were 19 articles (73,1 %) (Table 4).



**Table 4. List of countries where articles about CS in nursing were published between 2011 and 2015**

Country publishing journal	Number (%) of articles					Total N (%)	P*
	2011.	2012.	2013.	2014.	2015.		
USA	12 (26.1)	7 (23.4)	17 (41.4)	5 (20)	5 (19.2)	46 (27.4)	0.18
UK	31 (67.4)	17 (56.7)	20 (48.8)	18 (72)	19 (73.1)	105 (62.5)	0.19
Australia	0	1 (3.3)	2 (4.9)	1 (4)	0	4 (2.4)	0.51
Canada	2 (4.3)	1 (3.3)	2 (4.9)	0	0	5 (2.9)	0.67
Italy	0	2 (6.7)	0	0	2 (7.7)	4 (2.4)	0.09
Slovenia	1 (2.2)	0	0	0	0	1 (0.6)	0.62
France	0	0	0	1 (4)	0	1 (0.6)	0.19
Switzerland	0	1 (3.3)	0	0	0	1 (0.6)	0.33
Denmark	0	1 (3.3)	0	0	0	1 (0.6)	0.33
<b>Total</b>	46 (100)	30 (100)	41 (100)	25 (100)	26 (100)	168 (100)	

\*2 test

In total, 29 articles about CS in nursing are available in full text to the Croatian Academic Community through the Academic and Biomedical Consortium. OvidSP provides access

to the largest number of articles, 18 (62.1 %) of them, while PERO alone does not provide access to any article in full form (Table 5).

**Table 5. Available articles about CS in nursing in full text**

Browser (interface)	Number (%) of articles in full text
Only PERO	0
Only PubMed Central	1 (3.5)
Only OvidSP	18 (62.1)
EBSCOhost, PERO	7 (24.1)
OvidSP, PERO	3 (10.3)
<b>Total</b>	29 (100)

## Discussion

After searching for articles about CS, it can be concluded that many articles give a review of that topic, especially of a specific topic within CS, for example CS evaluation (9), the effectiveness of group CS in reducing stress (23), organization of CS in nursing (24), empirical research on CS in psychiatric care (7), concept and definition of CS (25), administrative CS (26).

In order to find papers about CS, most of the authors searched databases such as Medline (PubMed) and CINAHL (7, 27, 15, 23, 26). Some of them searched PsycINFO (7, 15), MEDIC, LINDA (26), Pre-CINAHL, and Academic Elite (27) as well.

It can be seen that authors who searched the EBSCO database also searched databases CINAHL and PsycINFO. For the purposes of this research, apart from the CINAHL database, databases Health Source-Consumer Edition and Health Source: Nursing/Academic Edition were searched. Database PsycINFO was not searched.

The most commonly used keyword was "clinical supervision" (27, 15, 23). In one case, "clinical supervision" was combined with the keyword "nurse" (27). Keywords "supervision" and "nursing supervisory" were used as well (15).

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It is interesting that only one author used the MeSH term "Nursing Supervisory" (15). None of them used the MeSH term "Organization and Administration", which is synonymous with the term "Supervision" (28).

This research showed that articles about CS were published in a lot of journals (if we consider the number of articles). But if we look closer, it is obvious that more than half of the journals, 29 to be precise, published only one article in a period of five years. The rest of the journals did not publish more than ten articles. The journal "Practising Midwife" published 20 articles and the "Journal of Nursing Management" published 26 articles.

## Acknowledgement.

I would like to thank Professor Ljiljana Pavičić for helping me write this paper. The paper was presented as a master's thesis at the Faculty of Medicine of J. J. Strossmayer University in Osijek on September 11, 2017.

## Disclosure

**Funding.** No specific funding was received for this study.

**Competing interests.** None to declare.

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