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Lithium Intoxication Research from 2020 to 2026: A Scopus-Based Bibliometric Analysis

Original Article

Muhammet Ali Erinmez[1]

1. Public Hospitals Administration, Mersin Provincial Directorate of Health, Mersin, Türkiye

ABSTRACT

Background: Lithium remains an important pharmacological treatment in psychiatry; however, its narrow therapeutic index makes intoxication a clinically important problem. Despite continued research on lithium toxicity, the recent structure and distribution of the scientific literature have not been fully characterized. This study aimed to evaluate publication trends and the bibliometric characteristics of research on lithium intoxication between 2020 and 2026.

Methods: A descriptive bibliometric analysis was conducted using the Scopus database. Publications were retrieved using the search strategy TITLE-ABS-KEY (lithium AND intoxication) AND PUBYEAR > 2019 AND PUBYEAR < 2027, yielding 350 documents. Scopus - Analyze search results Publication year, authors, affiliations, countries/territories, document types, subject areas, and funding sponsors were evaluated using bibliographic data available through Scopus.

Results: A total of 350 publications were identified. Annual publication output was 41 in 2020, 39 in 2021, 54 in 2022, 56 in 2023, 55 in 2024, 65 in 2025, and 40 in 2026, with the highest output recorded in 2025. Scopus - Analyze search results Articles constituted the largest document category (69.1%), followed by reviews (15.4%) and letters (8.0%). Scopus - Analyze search results Medicine was the predominant subject area (51.5%), followed by pharmacology/toxicology-related disciplines (15.2%) and neuroscience (8.3%). Scopus - Analyze search results The United States showed the greatest publication activity among the countries displayed in the Scopus analysis, while Turkey, Germany, Japan, Australia, France, Italy, China, Spain, and the United Kingdom were also represented among the leading contributors. Scopus - Analyze search results

Conclusion: Research on lithium intoxication demonstrated sustained and internationally distributed scientific activity during 2020–2026, with a predominance of original articles and medicine-related publications. The findings highlight the multidisciplinary nature of lithium intoxication research and provide a quantitative overview of its recent scientific landscape. Further analyses incorporating citation, keyword co-occurrence, and collaboration networks may provide additional insight into influential themes and emerging research directions.

Keywords: Lithium; lithium intoxication; lithium toxicity; poisoning; bibliometric analysis; Scopus.

Corresponding: Muhammet Ali Erinmez, 1.Public Hospitals Administration, Mersin Provincial Directorate of Health, Mersin, Türkiye, drmalierinmez@gmail.com
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Introduction

Lithium intoxication is a significant clinical concern due to lithium's narrow therapeutic index, which makes toxicity a frequent occurrence in patients undergoing treatment for bipolar disorder and other psychiatric conditions. There are three primary patterns of lithium intoxication: acute, acute-on-chronic, and chronic, each with distinct clinical presentations and management strategies[1,2]. Acute intoxication often results from accidental overdose or suicide attempts and is characterized by gastrointestinal symptoms, cardiotoxic effects, and delayed neurological signs[3]. Chronic intoxication, on the other hand, is typically due to the progressive accumulation of lithium, often exacerbated by factors such as dehydration, renal impairment, or drug interactions, leading to neurological, renal, and endocrine complications[4,5]. The risk factors for lithium intoxication include advanced age, impaired renal function, concurrent use of medications that interact with lithium, and inadequate therapeutic monitoring[6].

The clinical management of lithium intoxication can be complex because serum lithium concentrations do not always correlate closely with the severity of clinical manifestations, particularly in chronic toxicity [7]. Factors such as age, renal function, volume status, concomitant medications, duration and pattern of exposure, and tissue lithium distribution may influence both toxicity and prognosis. Treatment generally includes discontinuation of lithium, supportive care, correction of fluid and electrolyte abnormalities, and enhancement of lithium elimination when indicated [8,9]. In patients with severe poisoning, extracorporeal treatments—particularly intermittent hemodialysis—have an important role because lithium is a small, water-soluble ion with negligible protein binding. Nevertheless, questions concerning optimal indications for extracorporeal treatment, prediction of severe outcomes, rebound lithium concentrations, neurological sequelae, and individualized risk assessment continue to stimulate clinical research [10].

Bibliometric analysis provides quantitative methods for examining large bodies of scientific literature and can reveal publication trends, influential authors and institutions, geographical contributions, collaboration structures, and the conceptual development of a research field [11]. In contrast to conventional narrative reviews, bibliometric approaches can characterize both the intellectual structure and temporal evolution of a literature through analyses such as citation patterns, co-authorship networks, keyword co-occurrence, and thematic mapping. Such analyses may therefore help identify established areas of research as well as emerging topics and relatively underexplored domains in lithium intoxication [12].

The aim of this study was to conduct a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of Scopus-indexed literature on lithium intoxication published between 2020 and 2026. Specifically, we aimed to evaluate temporal publication trends, leading authors, institutions and countries, document and subject-area distributions, and—where supported by the exported bibliographic dataset—collaboration and keyword structures. By mapping the recent scientific landscape of lithium intoxication, this study seeks to provide an overview of current research activity and identify areas that may warrant further investigation.

Materials and Methods

Study Design

This study was designed as a descriptive bibliometric analysis to evaluate recent scientific publications concerning lithium intoxication. Bibliographic data were

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obtained from the Scopus database (Elsevier). The study period was restricted to publications from 2020 through 2026. Because the study used publicly available bibliographic data and did not involve human participants, patient-level information, or experimental animals, ethics committee approval and informed consent were not required.

Data Source and Search Strategy

A systematic literature search was conducted using the Scopus database. The search was performed within the title, abstract, and keyword fields using the following query: Title-abs-key (lithium and intoxication) and pubyear > 2019 and pubyear < 2027 Thus, publications indexed between January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2026 were considered eligible for analysis. The Scopus search retrieved a total of 350 documents. Scopus - Analyze search results. No additional restrictions regarding document type or subject area are evident in the supplied Scopus search output. Therefore, all document types retrieved by the predefined search strategy were considered in the descriptive analysis.

Eligibility Criteria

Publications were included if they (1) were indexed in Scopus, (2) were published between 2020 and 2026, and (3) were retrieved using the predefined title–abstract–keyword search strategy for the terms “lithium” and “intoxication.” Records outside the specified publication period or not retrieved by this search strategy were not included.

The resulting dataset contained several publication types, predominantly original articles (69.1%) and reviews (15.4%), followed by letters (8.0%), book chapters (2.6%), notes (2.6%), editorials (1.7%), and short surveys (0.6%). Scopus - Analyze search results

Data Extraction and Bibliometric Indicators

Bibliometric information available through the Scopus “Analyze search results” function was evaluated. The extracted parameters included publication year, author, institutional affiliation, country/territory, document type, subject area, and funding sponsor. Annual publication output was examined to characterize temporal changes in research activity during the study period. The geographical distribution of publications was assessed according to author affiliations reported in Scopus. The dataset included contributions from the United States, Turkey, Germany, Japan, Australia, France, Italy, China, Spain, and the United Kingdom, among other countries. Scopus - Analyze search results The disciplinary distribution of the literature was also evaluated. Medicine represented the largest subject area (51.5%), followed by pharmacology/toxicology-related disciplines (15.2%), neuroscience (8.3%), and biochemistry/genetics-related disciplines (5.5%). Scopus - Analyze search results

Bibliometric and Network Analysis

Descriptive bibliometric indicators were summarized using data generated by Scopus. Annual publication trends, leading authors, institutions, countries, publication types, subject areas, and funding organizations were examined to characterize the structure and development of lithium intoxication research. If VOSviewer was used, bibliographic records exported from Scopus can additionally be analyzed using VOSviewer for network visualization. Depending on the analyses actually performed, these may include keyword co-occurrence, co-authorship among authors, institutional or country collaboration, and citation/co-citation networks. Nodes in the resulting network maps represent bibliometric entities, node size reflects their relative frequency or weight, and links represent relationships

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between entities. Clusters indicate groups of closely related items.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize bibliometric characteristics. Categorical bibliometric variables were presented as frequencies and percentages, whereas annual publication output was reported as the number of documents per year. No inferential statistical testing was required for the descriptive Scopus-based analyses.

Results

The Scopus search identified 350 publications on lithium intoxication published between 2020 and 2026. The annual distribution demonstrated fluctuations across the study period, with 41 publications in 2020, 39 in 2021, 54 in 2022, 56 in 2023, 55 in 2024, 65 in 2025, and 40 in 2026. The lowest publication output was recorded in 2021 (n=39), whereas the highest number of publications was observed in 2025 (n=65) [Figure 1]. Scopus - Analyze search results Overall, publication activity increased after 2021, remaining above 50 publications annually between 2022 and 2025. The lower number recorded for 2026 should be interpreted in the context of the database coverage at the time the search was performed, because 2026 Original research articles constituted the majority of the retrieved literature, accounting for 69.1% of all documents. Reviews represented 15.4%, followed by letters (8.0%), book chapters (2.6%), notes (2.6%), editorials (1.7%), and short surveys (0.6%). Scopus - Analyze search results Thus, articles and reviews together accounted for 84.5% of the retrieved publications [Figure 2].

The publications were distributed across several scientific disciplines. Medicine was the predominant subject area, accounting for 51.5% of the dataset. Pharmacology/toxicology-related disciplines represented 15.2%, followed by neuroscience (8.3%) and biochemistry/genetics-related disciplines (5.5%). Environmental science accounted for 5.1%, psychology for 3.4%, chemistry for 2.4%, chemical engineering for 1.3%, and immunology-related disciplines for 1.3% [Figure 3]. Other subject areas collectively represented 4.9%. Scopus - Analyze search results The United States was the leading country/territory in terms of publication output and was clearly ahead of the other countries displayed in the Scopus analysis. Other prominent contributors included Germany, Japan, Australia, France, Italy, China, Spain, the United Kingdom, and Turkey. Scopus - Analyze search results The institutional analysis revealed contributions from a geographically diverse group of organizations. Inserm appeared as the most productive affiliation among those displayed, followed by institutions including The University of Sydney, Mayo Clinic, Université Paris Cité, AP-HP Assistance Publique–Hôpitaux de Paris, Charité–Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Universidad del País Vasco, and Johns Hopkins University, among others [Figure 4]. Scopus - Analyze search results Collectively, the findings demonstrate sustained scientific activity in lithium intoxication research during 2020–2026, with 350 Scopus-indexed publications identified by the predefined search strategy. Scopus - Analyze search results The literature was predominantly composed of original articles, primarily classified within medicine, and involved contributions from multiple countries and institutions.

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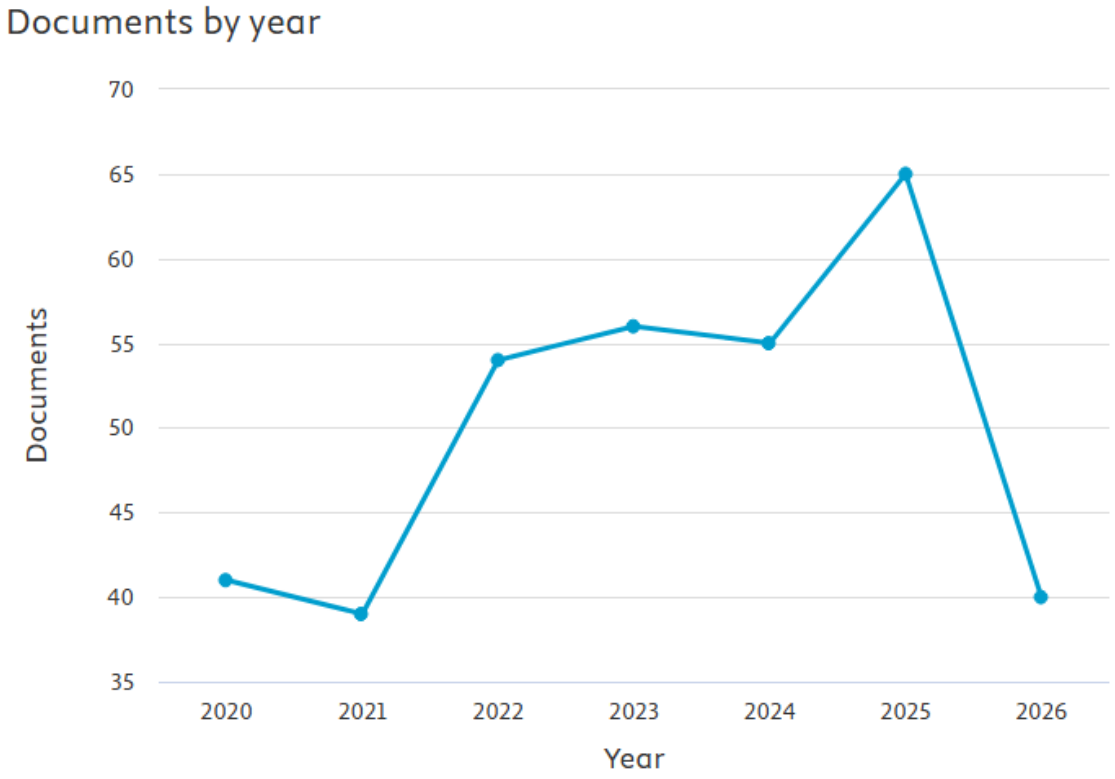

Figure 1. Documents by the year of studies

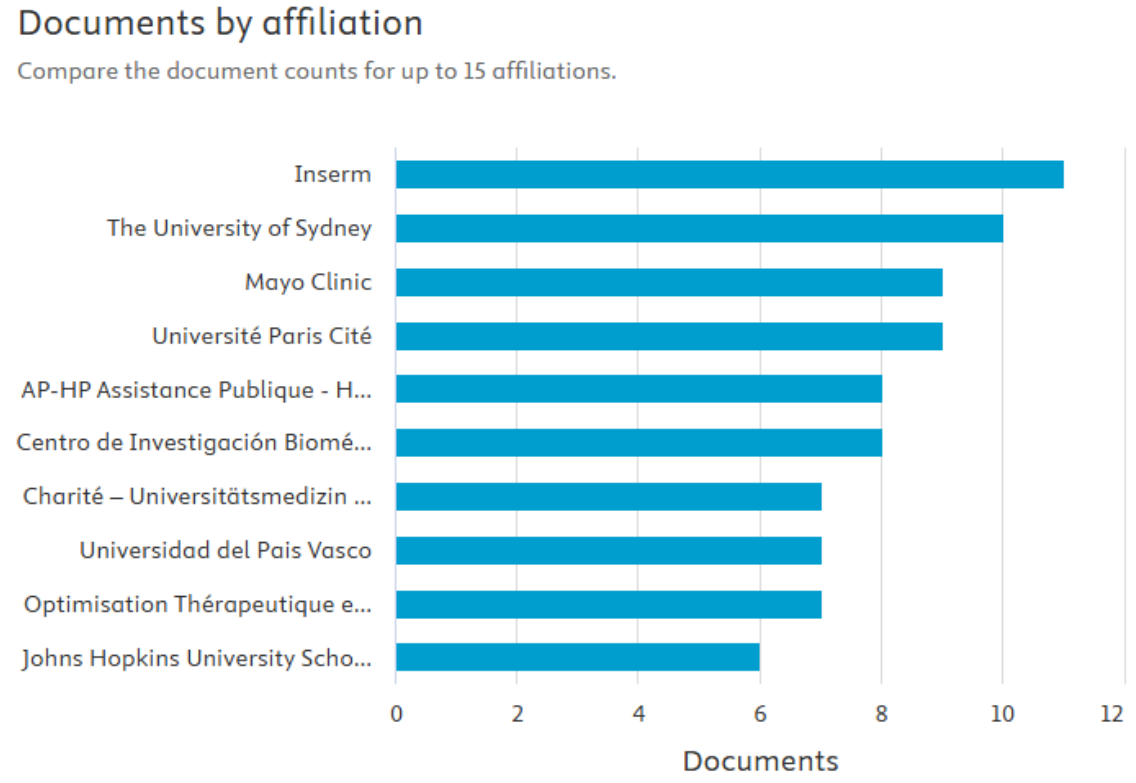

Figure 2. Documents by affiliation in studies

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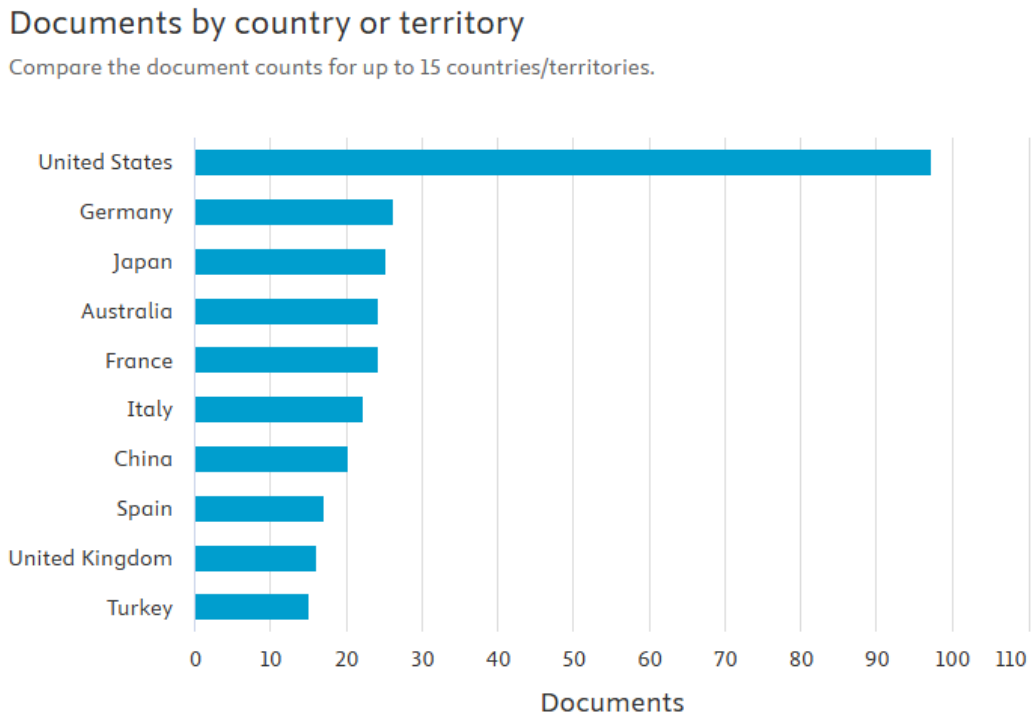

Figure 3. Documents by country or territory of studies

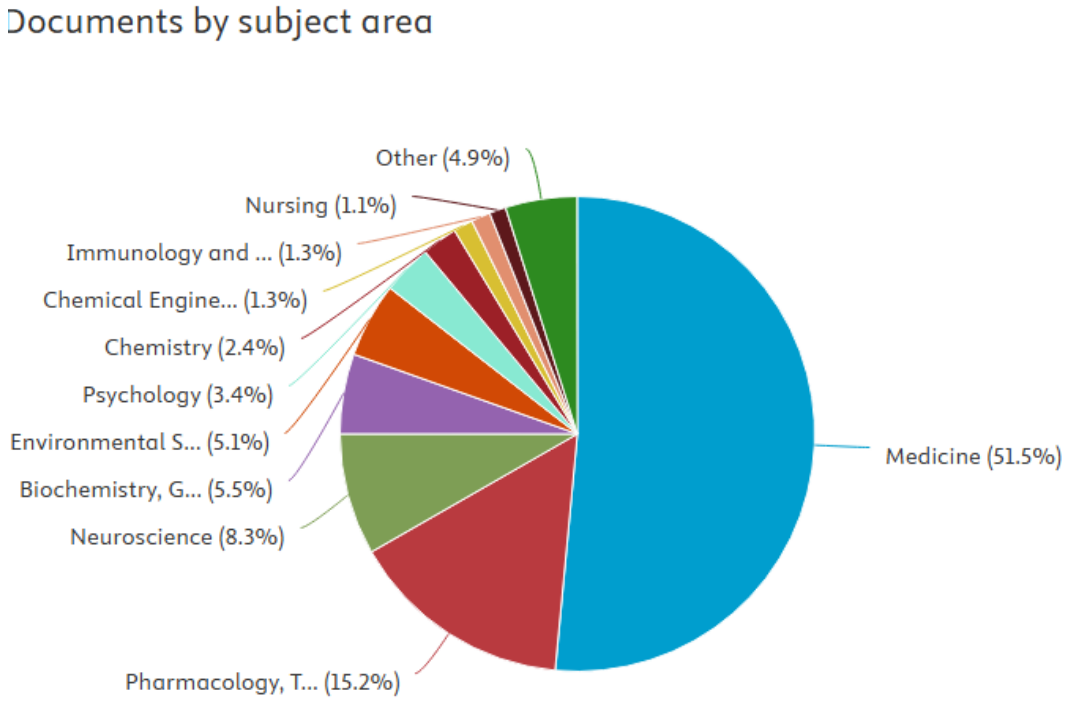

Figure 4. Documents by subject area

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Discussions

This bibliometric analysis provides an overview of the recent scientific literature on lithium intoxication indexed in Scopus between 2020 and 2026. A total of 350 publications were identified using the predefined title–abstract–keyword search strategy, indicating sustained research activity in this field during the study period. Scopus - Analyze search results The main findings were the increase in publication activity after 2021, the predominance of original research articles, the strong representation of medicine among subject areas, and the geographically diverse contribution to lithium intoxication research. Together, these findings suggest that lithium intoxication continues to attract multidisciplinary scientific attention.

Lithium intoxication is a significant concern in the treatment of psychiatric disorders, particularly bipolar disorder, due to lithium's narrow therapeutic index and potential for toxicity [12]. A bibliometric analysis of global research trends from 1913 to 2015 highlights the increasing scholarly attention to lithium toxicity, with the USA leading in publications, followed by the UK and France[13]. Clinically, lithium intoxication presents with a range of symptoms from gastrointestinal disturbances to severe neurological effects such as tremors, ataxia, and even coma[14,15]. Acute intoxication often results from overdose, while chronic toxicity can develop from gradual accumulation due to renal dysfunction or drug interactions[16]. The management of lithium intoxication involves immediate cessation of lithium, intravenous hydration, and monitoring of serum lithium levels and renal function[17,18]. Hemodialysis is particularly effective in severe cases to enhance lithium clearance[19]. Despite its risks, lithium remains a cornerstone in bipolar disorder treatment, necessitating careful monitoring and patient education to prevent intoxication[20]. Studies indicate that intoxication is often preventable with regular monitoring of lithium levels and patient education on drug interactions[11,12]. The involvement of psychiatrists in managing high lithium levels is associated with better outcomes, as they are more likely to adjust or discontinue lithium therapy appropriately[12]. Neurological sequelae from lithium intoxication can be severe, with a particular affinity for the cerebellum, and are exacerbated by factors such as concurrent neuroleptic use and rapid correction of lithium levels[14,15]. Overall, while lithium's efficacy in mood stabilization is well-established, its potential for toxicity underscores the need for vigilant therapeutic monitoring and management strategies to mitigate risks[21].

The risk factors for lithium intoxication include advanced age, impaired renal function, concurrent use of medications that interact with lithium, and inadequate therapeutic monitoring[22]. Clinical management of lithium intoxication involves strategies to reduce absorption and enhance elimination, with hemodialysis being the most effective method for rapidly reducing lithium levels in severe cases[23]. Preventive measures, such as regular monitoring of lithium levels and patient education on the signs of toxicity, are crucial in mitigating the risk of intoxication[24]. Despite the potential for severe outcomes, including neurological damage and death, most patients recover fully with appropriate intervention[25]. The involvement of psychiatrists in the management of lithium therapy is associated with better outcomes, as they are more likely to adjust or discontinue lithium in response to high serum levels[26]. Overall, a multifaceted approach that includes careful monitoring, patient education, and timely medical intervention

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is essential to minimize the risks associated with lithium therapy[27].

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the bibliometric analysis was based exclusively on the Scopus database; therefore, publications indexed only in other databases were not included. Second, the search strategy used the terms “lithium” AND “intoxication” within the title, abstract, and keyword fields. Scopus - Analyze search results Consequently, relevant publications using alternative terminology, such as “lithium toxicity” or “lithium poisoning,” may not have been captured. Third, bibliometric analyses primarily quantify publication characteristics and scientific productivity and do not directly assess the methodological quality or clinical relevance of individual studies. In addition, variations in author names and institutional affiliations may influence productivity estimates. The 2026 publication count should also be interpreted cautiously because the year was incomplete at the time of data collection and therefore cannot be directly compared with completed years. Finally, the available Scopus summary did not include detailed citation, keyword co-occurrence, co-authorship, or international collaboration network data. Accordingly, the present findings primarily describe publication output and distribution rather than the complete intellectual and collaborative structure of the field.

Conclusion

This bibliometric analysis provides an overview of Scopus-indexed research on lithium intoxication published between 2020 and 2026. A total of 350 publications were identified, demonstrating sustained scientific activity throughout the study period. Scopus - Analyze search results Publication output increased after 2021 and reached its highest level in 2025. Scopus - Analyze search results Original articles constituted the majority of publications (69.1%), while medicine was the predominant subject area (51.5%).

Limitations

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