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Forensic odontology

TEN YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC LEGACY – A TRIBUTE TO RBOL.

Dez anos de legado científico – um tributo à RBOL.

Ademir FRANCO[1,2], Roberta Araújo PINTO[1], Gabrielly Rodrigues ANDRADE[3], Danilo Cassiano FERRAZ[4], Maria Eduarda Patêz da COSTA[1], Rhonan Ferreira SILVA[5,6], Luiz Renato PARANHOS[7].

1. Division of Anatomy and Forensic Dentistry, Centre of Studies São Leopoldo Mandic, SP, Brazil.
2. Department of Therapeutic Stomatology, Institute of Dentistry, Sechenov University, Moscow, Russian Federation.
3. School of Dentistry, Federal University of Uberlândia, MG, Brazil.
4. Department of Endodontics, School of Dental Medicine, University of Pittsburgh, PA, USA.
5. Department of Forensic Dentistry, Federal University of Goias, State of Goias, Brazil.
6. Department of Forensic Anthropology and Legal Dentistry, Scientific Police of Goiás, State of Goias, Brazil.
7. Department of Orthodontics, Federal University of Uberlândia, MG, Brazil.

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Contact author:
Prof. Ademir Franco, PhD
Division of Forensic Dentistry, Faculdade São Leopoldo Mandic. Rua Dr. José Rocha Junqueira 13, Swift, Campinas, SP, Brazil
E-mail: ademir.junior@slmandic.edu.br.

ABSTRACT

The Brazilian Journal of Forensic Odontology (*Revista Brasileira de Odontologia Legal*, RBOL) is the first journal in Latin America exclusively dedicated to forensic odontology, and one of the few worldwide publishing in the field. In celebration of its 10th anniversary, this bibliometric review revisited RBOL's trajectory from 2014 to 2024 to characterize its editorial development. Bibliometric indicators were leveraged, such as co-authorship, institutional and international collaborations, thematic evolution trends, and methodological approaches. All RBOL's publications were included, except editorials and annals. Data were extracted and analyzed with Microsoft Power BI and R (Bibliometrix package), producing temporal, geographical, and thematic maps. The total of eligible studies was 306. The analysis revealed a peak in productivity in 2017 with a mean of 29 articles per year. Contributions originated from 16 countries, with Brazil accounting for the majority, followed by the United Kingdom, Argentina, and Belgium. Federal University of Goias stood out as the most productive institution, while Belgium, Russia, and the United Kingdom were the main international partners. Observational descriptive studies, literature reviews, and case reports were more prevalent, with thematic mapping highlighting clusters in human identification, ethics, and interdisciplinary applications. RBOL has consolidated itself as a consistent and credible scientific outlet, advancing national research capacity while progressively integrating into global forensic science networks. Its trajectory reflects not only the consolidation of forensic odontology in Brazil but also its growing dialogue with the international forensic audience.

KEYWORDS

Bibliometric; Forensic dentistry; Literature review.

INTRODUCTION

The Brazilian Journal of Forensic Odontology (*Revista Brasileira de Odontologia Legal*, RBOL) is the official scientific publication of the Brazilian Association of Ethics and Forensic Odontology (*Associação Brasileira de Ética e Odontologia Legal*, ABOL).[1] This channel for communicating original studies, case reports, literature reviews, and several

other research models, originated from the collaboration of academic professionals (researchers and professors) and official forensic odontologists[1].

The first volume of RBOL was launched featuring invited contributors by the selected editorial board. Released in 2014, this first volume comprises 10 articles, including four original studies, three case reports and three narrative literature reviews. Even in its debut volume, the journal received and published an article from international community, an original study from Argentina[2]. During its first two years, the journal was published biannually. However, due to its growing popularity and dissemination both in Brazil and abroad, RBOL adopted a quarterly publication schedule.

Recognition, particularly in Latin America, came from the inclusion of RBOL in databases and journal indexing platforms, such as *Bibliografia Brasileira de Odontologia* (BBO), *Literatura Latino-Americana e do Caribe em Ciências da Saúde* (LILACS), Latindex, and *Periódico Capes.* In addition, while the Brazilian quality grading QUALIS was active, RBOL was ranked B3. Currently, RBOL figures as the leading scientific journal exclusively dedicated to forensic odontology in the Americas, and globally, one of the few on the topic consistently publishing about 30 articles per year.

In 2024, RBOL celebrated its 10th anniversary, and this present bibliometric review serves as a tribute to the journal's growth. Hence, this study aims to revisit RBOL's publications from 2014 to 2024 in order to retrieve the evolution of research trends communication in Forensic Odontology within the journal.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Sources of information and search strategy

A bibliometric literature review with direct applications to the forensic context was designed in line with the recommendations by Franco et al., (2025)[3]. This study was based on publications of the RBOL. (https://www.portalabol.com.br/rbol/index.php/RBOL).

Inclusion and selection criteria

All RBOL publications from 2014 to 2024 were included, except editorials and annals of scientific proceedings. Language restrictions were not applied, and the selection of the study design was kept broad to enable the integral coverage of research published in the journal. The decision to include most of the entire set of publications from this period was made to capture the journal's research profile and temporal evolution in full, avoiding the application of additional exclusion filters that could introduce selection bias.

Data extraction

All the detected eligible studies full texts were downloaded in .pdf format by two reviewers. Data extraction was independently performed by two trained reviewers, with disagreements resolved by consensus and, when necessary, by the involvement of a third evaluator. Inter-reviewer reliability was verified using the Kappa coefficient, with values ≥ 0.81

considered indicative of strong agreement. The extracted variables included year of publication, document/study type, main topic, keywords (in Portuguese), authors' names, corresponding author, institutional and country affiliations, as well as national and international collaborations. The data were initially organized in a spreadsheet (Microsoft Excel®, Redmond, WA, USA), with standardized spellings of authors' names and institutions to prevent duplications and inconsistencies.

Bibliometric analysis

Data were imported to Microsoft Power BI (Microsoft Corp., Redmond, WA, USA) individually for each variable analyzed. Data were transformed using the PowerQuery editor to merge, group by, and pivot. After being transformed, Power BI was used to create interactive visualizations, including Sankey diagrams, treemaps, chord diagrams, maps, and time series.

RESULTS

The total number of included studies were 306 with an average of 29 studies a year (regardless of editorials and annals of scientific proceedings). The year with the highest number of publications was 2017 (n = 39 articles) (Figure 1).

Articles were identified from 16 countries. Brazil accounted for the highest number of publications (n = 276), followed by the United Kingdom (n = 9), Argentina (n = 4), and Belgium (n = 3) (Figure 2).

Across the 306 included studies, 1,235 authors were identified. Rhonan Ferreira Silva and Ademir Franco (n = 39 each), Ricardo Henrique da Silva (n = 37), Mário Marques Fernandes (n = 21), and Bianca Marques Santiago (n = 15) were the authors with highest contributions (Figure 3).

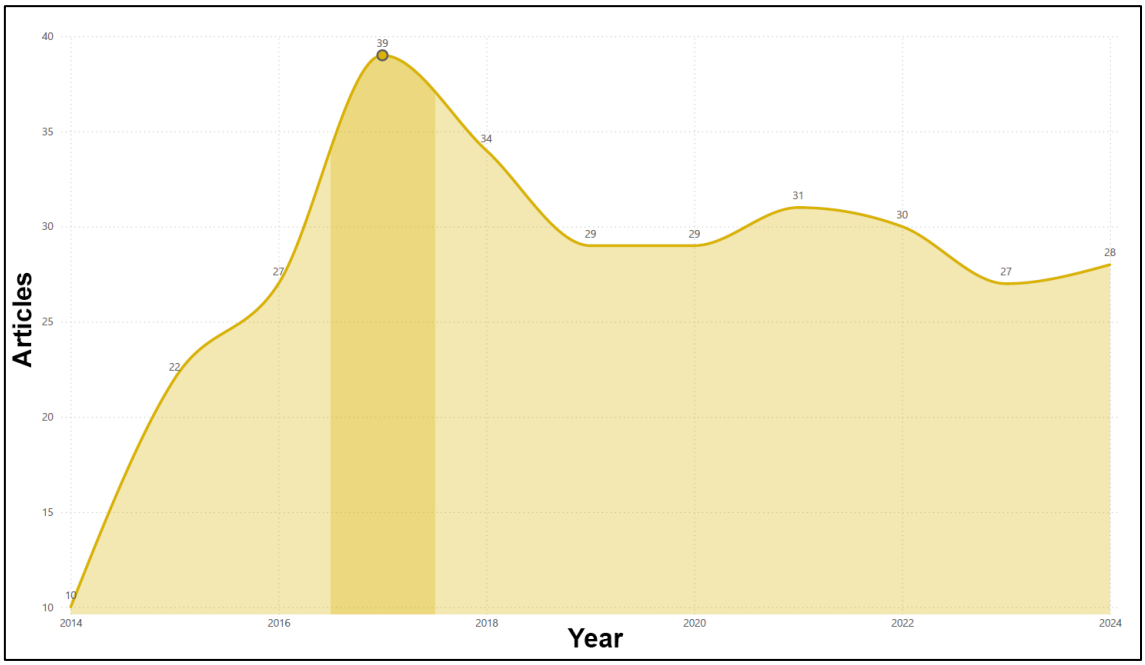

Figure 1 – Distribution of eligible studies according to time.

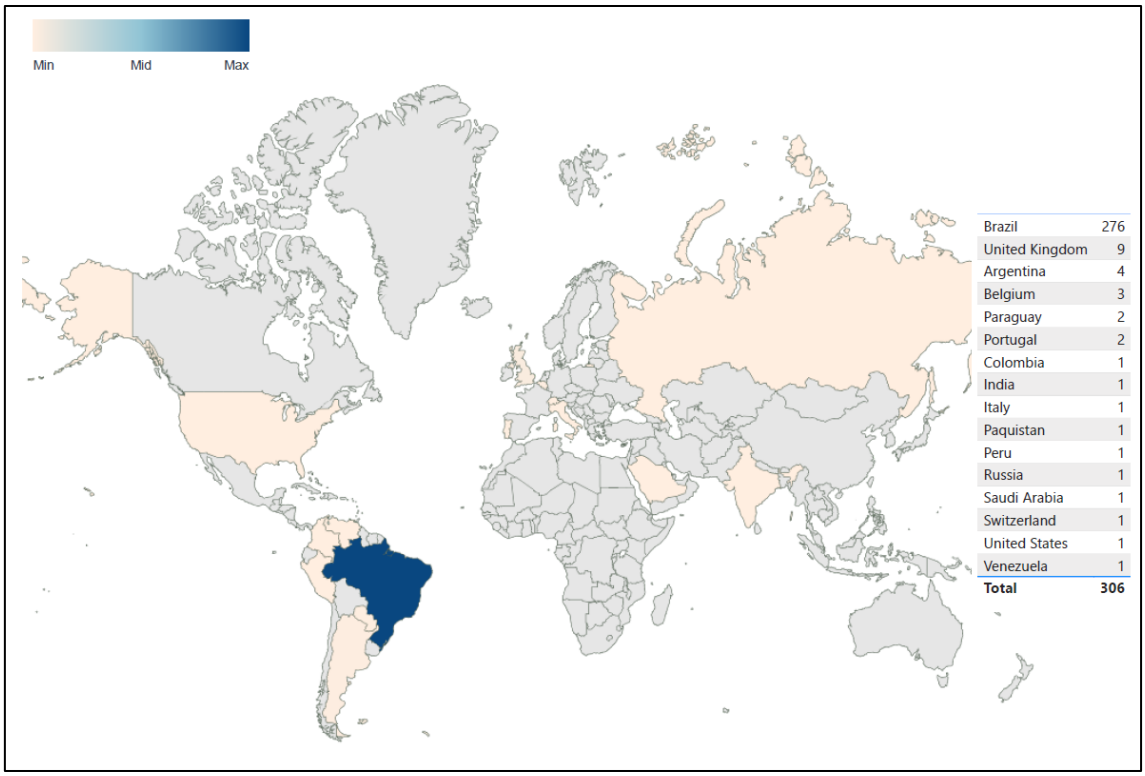

Figure 2 – Continental distribution of the eligible articles. Countries shaded in blue indicate higher prevalence, whereas those in beige represent a lower number of publications, according to the scale.

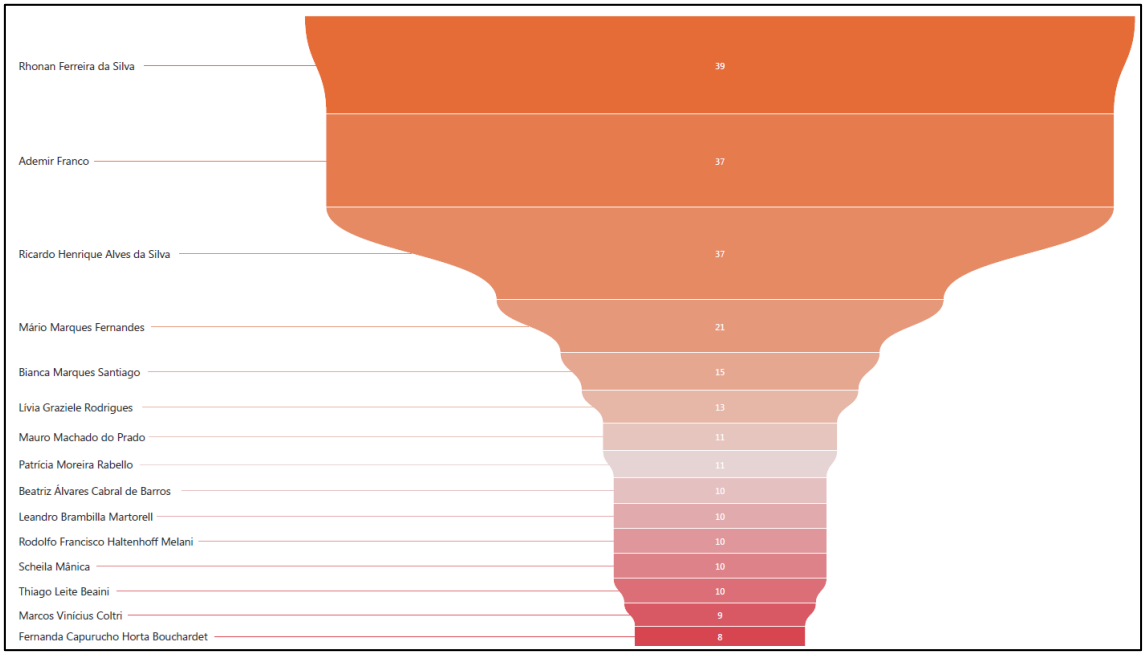

Figure 3 – Funnel chart of the 15 most frequent authors and their respective occurrences in the included studies. A filter was applied to include only authors with more than four occurrences.

A total of 639 affiliations were identified among the eligible articles. Institutions with at least two occurrences are summarized in Table 1. The Federal University of Goias (UFG–GO) had the highest number of publications (n = 50) and

the highest rate of inter-institutional collaboration (24%) (Figure 4). The institutions most frequently collaborating with UFG–GO were I.M. Sechenov First Moscow State Medical University (IMSMU) (n = 4), Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KU) (n = 4), and the University of São Paulo – FORP/USP – Ribeirão Preto (n = 4). The second institution with the highest number of collaborations was FORP/USP – Ribeirão Preto (16%), which most frequently collaborated with the University of São Paulo – FMRP/USP – Ribeirão Preto (n = 7).

Among the 306 included articles, 38 involved international collaborations. Brazil, the country with the highest number of publications, most frequently collaborated with Belgium (n = 9), followed by Russia (n = 6) and the United Kingdom (n = 5) (Figure 5). Excluding Brazil, the United Kingdom and Switzerland were the countries with the highest number of collaborative studies originated locally (n = 4 each), involving partnerships with Brazil, India, Australia, Indonesia, and Russia. Temporally, 2024 recorded the highest frequency of collaborations (21% of the total), with Switzerland (n = 4) and Brazil (n = 3) being the most prominent (Figure 5).

The most frequent topics were “Other” (n = 99), “Human identification” (n = 60), and “Ethics” (n = 31) (Figure 6). Temporal distribution shows that “Other” peaked in 2017 (n = 32), whereas “Human identification” registered eight publications from 2018 to 2021 (Figure 6). The relationship between topics of research and authors with four or more occurrences are displayed in Figure 7.

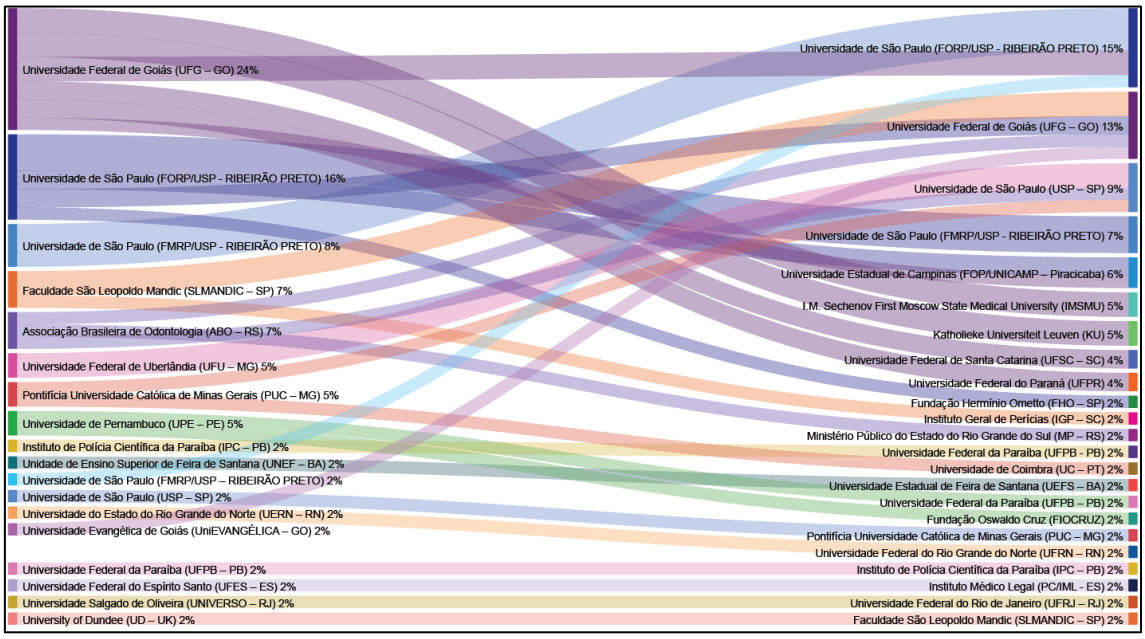

Figure 4 – Sankey diagram representing collaborations between affiliations, considering the first author’s institution as the origin and the co-authors’ institutions as the destination. Only collaborations with more than two occurrences were included.

Table 1 – Institutions with the higher number of occurrences

Affiliations	n
Universidade Federal de Goias (UFG – GO)	50
Universidade de São Paulo (FORP/USP - RIBEIRÃO PRETO)	41
Universidade de São Paulo (USP – SP)	33
Universidade Estadual de Campinas (FOP/UNICAMP – Piracicaba)	30
Faculdade São Leopoldo Mandic (SLMANDIC – SP)	21
Universidade Federal da Paraíba (UFPB – PB)	20
Associação Brasileira de Odontologia (ABO – RS)	19
Universidade de São Paulo (FMRP/USP - RIBEIRÃO PRETO)	14
Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC – SC)	11
Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KU)	10
Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais (PUC – MG)	10
Universidade de Pernambuco (UPE – PE)	9
Universidade Estadual de Feira de Santana (UEFS – BA)	9
Universidade Federal do Paraná (UFPR)	9
I.M. Sechenov First Moscow State Medical University (IMSMU)	8
Universidade do Estado do Rio Grande do Norte (UERN – RN)	8
Universidade Federal de Pernambuco (UFPE – PE)	8
Universidade Federal de Uberlândia (UFU – MG)	8
Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ – RJ)	7
University of Dundee (UD – UK)	7
Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo (UFES – ES)	6
Universidade de São Paulo (FMRP/USP – RIBEIRÃO PRETO)	5
Universidade Estadual Paulista (FOA/UNESP – Araçatuba)	5
Universidade Federal do Pará (UFPA – PA)	5
Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN – RN)	5
Centro Odontológico de Estudos e Pesquisas (COESP – PB)	4
Instituto de Polícia Científica da Paraíba (IPC – PB)	4
Unidade de Ensino Superior de Feira de Santana (UNEF – BA)	4
Universidade de Coimbra (UC – PT)	4
Universidade Federal de Pelotas (UFPel – RS)	4
Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS – RS)	4
Centro Universitário Cesumar (UNICESUMAR – PR)	3
Escola Bahiana de Medicina e Saúde Pública (EBMSP – BA)	3
Faesa Centro Universitário (FAESA – ES)	3
Instituto Médico Legal de São Luís (IML – SLMA)	3
Ministério Público do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul (MP – RS)	3
Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Paraná (PUC - PR)	3
Universidade de Brasília (UnB – DF)	3
Universidade de São Paulo (FORP/USP – RIBEIRÃO PRETO)	3
Universidade Estadual do Piauí (UESPI – PI)	3
Universidade Evangélica de Goiás (UniEVANGÉLICA – GO)	3
Universidade Federal da Bahia (UFBA – BA)	3
Universidade Federal da Paraíba (UFPB - PB)	3
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG – MG)	3
Universidade Federal do Maranhão (UFMA – MA)	3
Academia Brasileira de Direito Médico (ABRADIMED – SP)	2
Centro Universitário Christus (Unichristus – CE)	2
Centro Universitário da Serra Gaúcha (FSG – RS)	2
Centro Universitário de Goiatuba (UNICERRADO – GO)	2
Centro Universitário de João Pessoa (UNIPÊ – PB)	2
Centro Universitário Newton Paiva (BH – MG)	2
Cirurgiã-Dentista Forense (BAFO/DVI – UK)	2
Cirurgião-dentista autônomo (Goiás – GO)	2
Cirurgião-Dentista Autônomo (RS)	2
Departamento de Polícia Técnica da Bahia (DPT – BA)	2
Escola Paulista de Direito (EPD – SP)	2
Faculdade SulAmericana (UniFASAM – GO)	2
Fundação Hermínio Ometto (FHO – SP)	2
Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (FIOCRUZ)	2
Instituto de Medicina Legal da Polícia Civil do Distrito Federal (IML/PC – DF)	2
Instituto Geral de Perícias (IGP – SC)	2
Instituto Médico Legal (PC/IML - ES)	2
Unidade de Ensino Superior Ingá (UNINGÁ – BA)	2
Universidad Adventista del Plata (UAP – AR)	2
Universidad Autónoma del Paraguay (UAP – PY)	2
Universidad Científica del Sur (UCSUR – PE)	2
Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA – AR)	2
Universidade Estadual da Paraíba (UEPB – PB)	2
Universidade Estadual de Campinas (UNICAMP – SP)	2
Universidade Estadual do Sudoeste da Bahia (UESB – BA)	2
Universidade Estadual Paulista (FOAR/UNESP – Araraquara)	2
Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (UFJF – MG)	2
Universidade Federal do Maranhão (UFMA)	2
Universidade Paulista (UNIP – GO)	2
Universidade Salgado de Oliveira (UNIVERSO – RJ)	2
Universidade Vila Velha (UVV – ES)	2

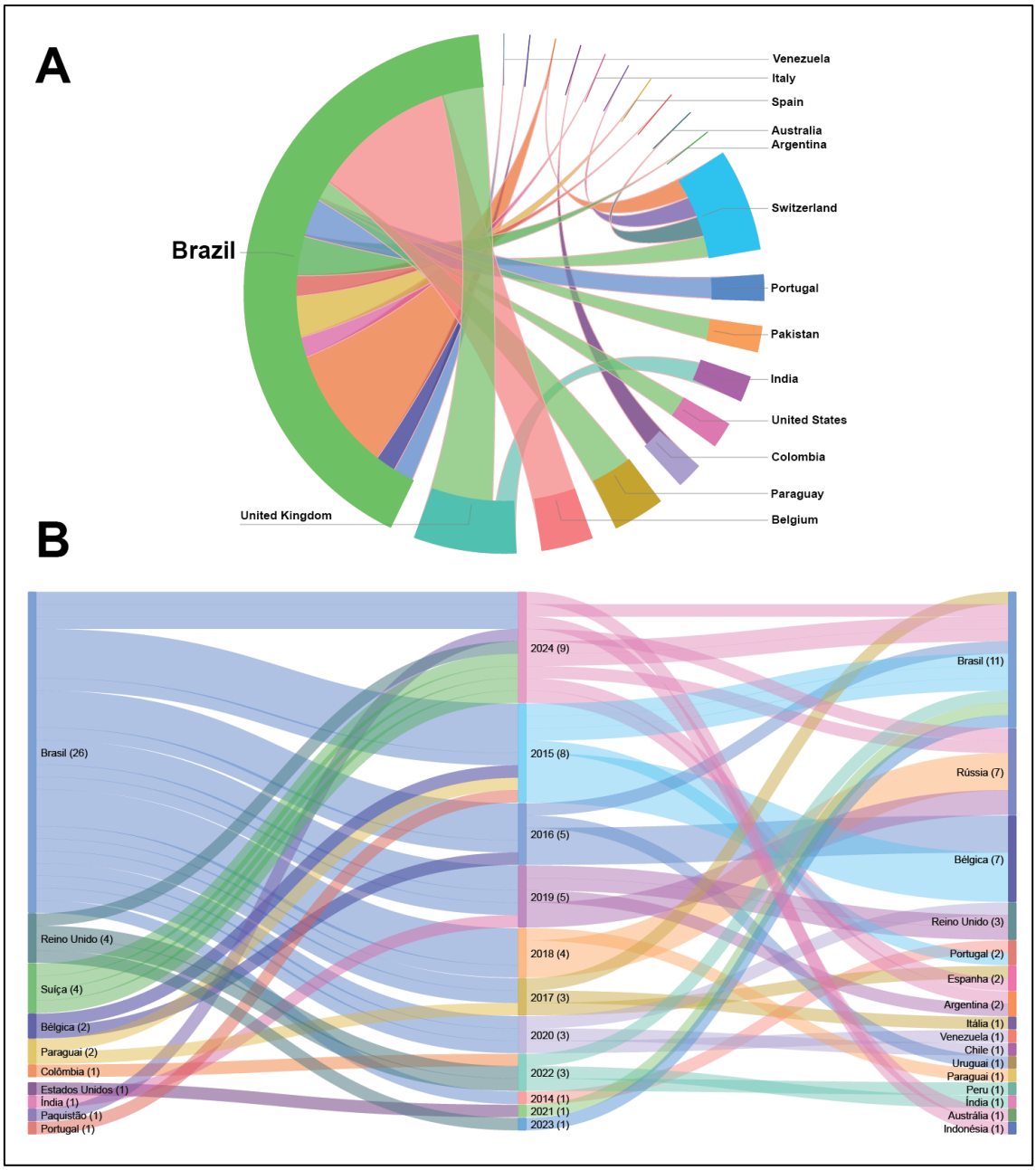

Figure 5 – Chord diagram (A) showing the intensity and destinations of international collaborations. Larger slices represent a higher number of studies originating from each country; colors indicate collaboration destinations; the thickness of the chords reflects the frequency of interactions. The temporal distribution of collaborations over the years (B), presented through a Sankey diagram.

The most frequent keywords (appearing in Portuguese) were “odontologia legal” (n = 259), “identificação humana” (n = 50), and “antropologia forense” (n = 44) (Figure 8).

A total of 24 study designs were identified. The ten most common types are presented in Table 2. The most prevalent were “observational descriptive cross-sectional” studies (n = 99), “literature reviews” (n = 67), and “case reports” (n = 40).

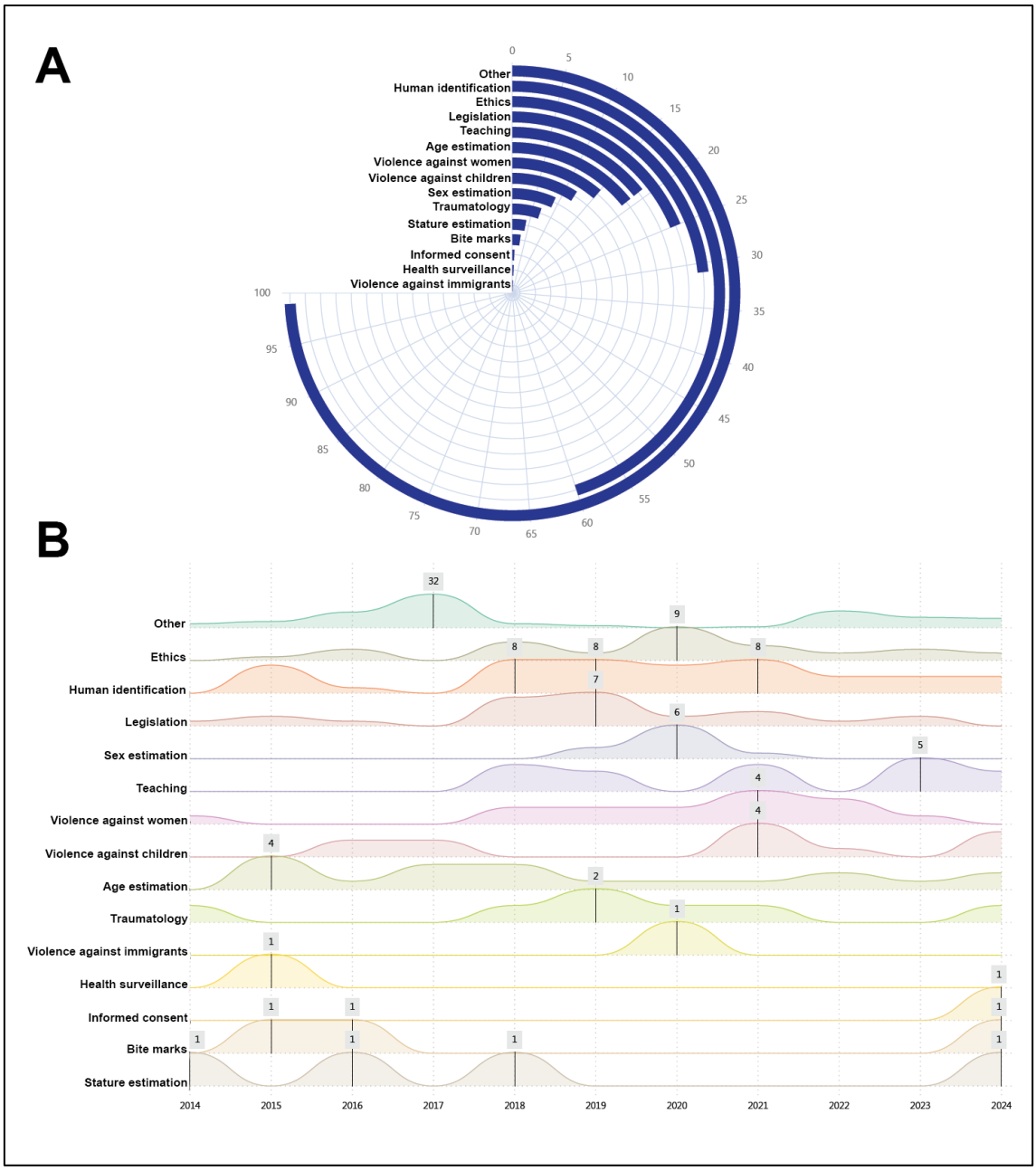

Figure 6 – Radial radar chart of topic distribution (A) and ridgeline plot (B) showing annual variation by topic, with peaks representing the highest yearly frequency.

DISCUSSON

This bibliometric review examines the RBOL publications in the context of its 10th anniversary, with focus on its trajectory from 2014 to 2024. The main purpose of the present study was to analyze the journal's research profile, authorship dynamics, institutional and international collaborations, thematic evolution trend, and methodological approaches. This review presents RBOL as a platform for scientific communication a repository for forensic odontology research, highlighting its role in the development of the theme in Brazil and abroad.

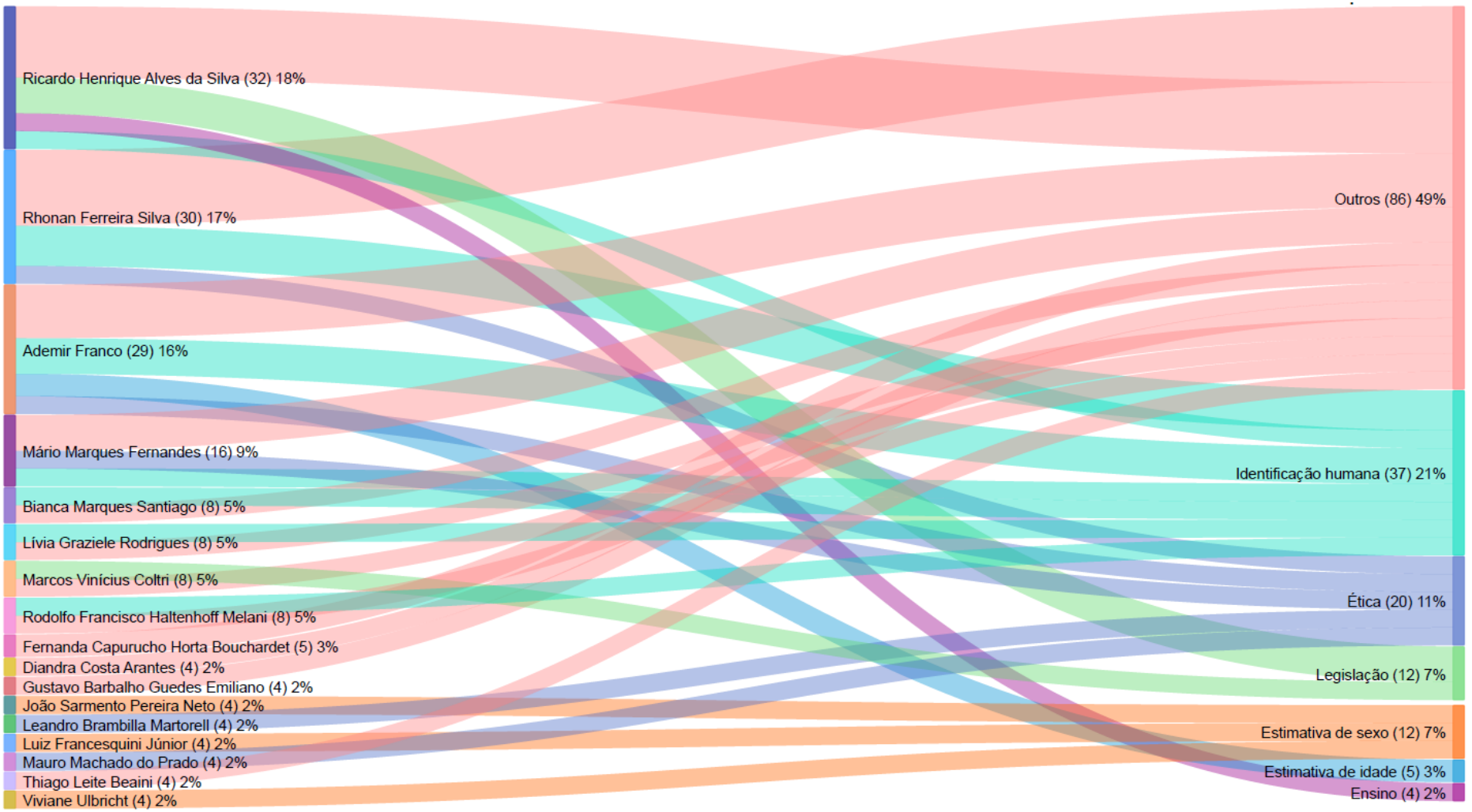

Figure 7 – Sankey diagram linking topics to authors, including only occurrences greater than four.

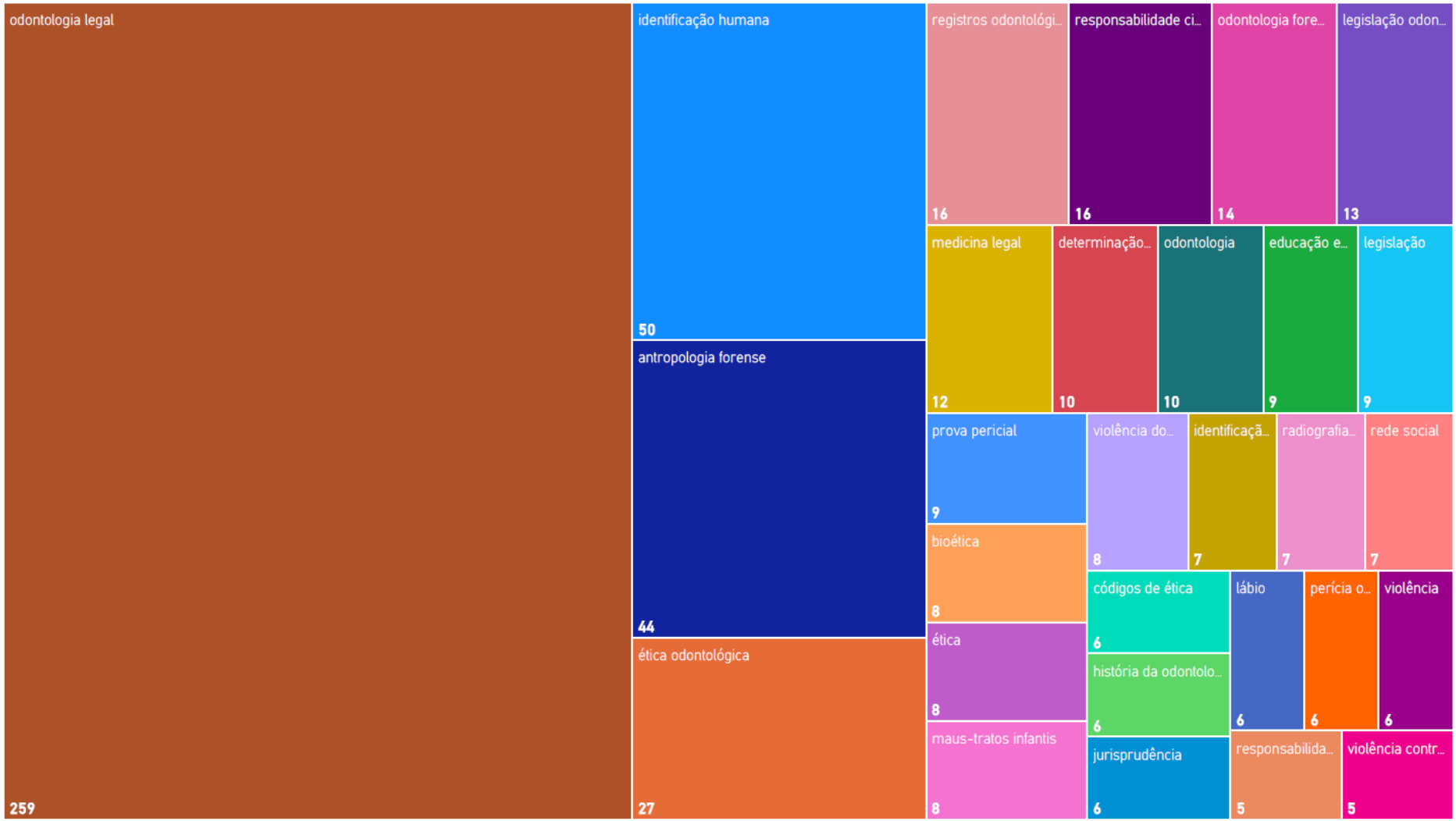

Figure 8 – Treemap of keyword prevalence in the included studies, with a filter applied for a minimum of five occurrences.

Table 2 – Ten most common types of study designs detected

Study design	n
Observational descriptive cross-sectional	99
Literature review	67
Case report	40
Retrospective documental descriptive	23
Book review	15
Observational descriptive retrospective	14
Observational analytical cross-sectional	11
Experimental ex vivo	7
Theoretical reflexive	7
Interview	4

The bibliometric analysis of publication distribution reveals 2017 as the year with the highest output, totaling 39 articles. Following this peak, the journal stabilized at an average of approximately 29 publications annually. This trend indicates RBOL's role as a consistent outlet for scientific communication. Variations in publication counts may stem from methodological choices in this study, particularly the exclusion of editorials and annals of scientific proceedings. Moreover, 2017 also marked the transition from biannual to quarterly publications, which likely influenced output patterns. More importantly, publication metrics reflect editorial management and increasing indexing within scientific databases. The rise of forensic odontology as a recognized research area is further evidenced.

Geographically, contributions originated from 16 countries, with Brazil as the primary contributor. This is consistent with RBOL's national scope and identity as the official journal of ABOL. The journal addresses topics of national significance to the Brazilian community of forensic odontologists, students and instructors. Examples are the recent and expanding problem-based scenario of biological dentistry[6] and the studies addressing country-specific ethical[7,8] and legal[9] regulation of dentistry and dental law, respectively. Nevertheless, the presence of articles from the United Kingdom, Argentina, Belgium, and other countries highlights RBOL's progressive internationalization[10-13]. The fact that Brazil frequently collaborated with Belgium, Russia, and the United Kingdom demonstrates the journal's capacity to foster scientific bridges and to contribute to global forensic science dialogue. It also reflects academic collaborations triggered by Brazilian authors with for formal education abroad and long-term participation in international research teams. Such collaborations should be interpreted as a sign of RBOL's increasing credibility and its ability to attract contributions from leading international centers.

The authorship analysis revealed 1,235 researchers contributed to the 306 eligible studies. A core of prolific authors suggests an established expert group through the RBOL archive. On the other hand, these findings also highlight the need for continued strategies to expand the pool of contributors and promote wider diversity of voices in forensic odontology research. Brazil has about one thousand specialists in the field, but only a few are trained and dedicated to research. Expanding the base

of active contributors is essential to ensure fresh perspectives, innovation, and sustainability of the field. Strengthening research training among specialists and fostering international collaborations may transform RBOL into an even stronger global reference for forensic odontology.

Institutionally, the Federal University of Goias (UFG–GO) emerged as the leading contributor, both in number of publications and inter-institutional collaborations. Partnerships between UFG–GO and international institutions such as Sechenov University (Russia) and the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Belgium) further illustrate the role of RBOL as a platform that strengthens both national and international academic networks. Importantly, the collaborative links identified in this study highlight a healthy tendency toward global integration without leaving behind research applicability to Brazilian forensic practice. Studies with international bridges have included topics such as dental age estimation[14], human identification[2,15], artificial intelligence[16], dental law and ethics[17,18].

Regarding international collaborations, 38 articles involved partnerships between Brazil and other countries, peaking in 2024 (21% of internationally co-authored articles). This reflects RBOL's integration into global forensic odontology research agendas, reflecting the growing perception of Brazil as a relevant contributor to the field. The recurrence of collaborations with Switzerland, Belgium, and the United Kingdom emphasizes the value of transnational cooperation in diversifying methodological approaches. The peak of international collaborations in 2024 is also a positive finding, suggesting that forensic odontology research overseas is a current reality for Brazilian experts.

Keywords analysis highlighted the diverse research landscape within forensic odontology, revealing two additional clusters centered on "Human identification" and "Ethics". The cluster of "others" corroborates the broad spectrum of research and interdisciplinarity of forensic odontology. This is an interesting finding that shows how the journal's interest is distributed between both criminal/forensic and deontological and disciplines. It also endorses the proper fit of the journal's scope with its readership consisting of forensic odontologists, general dentists, other specialists, students, instructors (professors and others), lawyers, among others. Temporal shifts also revealed peaks in specific areas, suggesting responsiveness to emerging forensic issues. Given the dominance of Portuguese-speaking scientific community in RBOL's readership, Portuguese keywords were expected, being confirmed by means of "odontologia legal," (general and optimal indexing term for "forensic odontology"), "identificação humana" ("human identification") and "antropologia forense" ("forensic anthropology") – the latter two driving the audience towards more technical aspects of expertise in criminal/forensic practice. Forensic anthropology deserves major attention in Brazil, as a considerable proportion of the experts practicing in this field are trained dentists. This unique scenario stems from

the historical development of forensic odontology in the country, which has traditionally integrated research, teaching, and applied reconstructive procedures. Over time, forensic odontology training programs in Brazil have emphasized detailed knowledge of skeletal anatomy as a core component, enabling dentists to acquire skills that overlap with and contribute to the practice of forensic anthropology. As a result, the professional landscape in Brazil highlights a distinctive intersection between dentistry and anthropology, reinforcing the need for continued investment in education, research, and institutional support for this area.

The distribution of study designs reveals a predominance of observational descriptive cross-sectional studies, literature reviews, and case reports. This reflects the typical methodological profile of forensic odontology[3], where descriptive data, clinical cases, and literature-based analyses are critical for documenting practical experiences and consolidating methodological knowledge. However, the relatively lower presence of experimental studies, or even more complex observational models (namely cohorts or case-control studies), suggests an opportunity for the field to embrace more robust methodological designs, capable of producing higher levels of scientific evidence.

Taken together, the results demonstrate that RBOL has successfully fulfilled its mission as the primary platform for forensic odontology in Latin America, while progressively building an international footprint. Looking to the future, the journal may continue to strengthen its scientific impact by encouraging the submission of studies with stronger methodological rigor, promoting open science practices, and expanding its indexing in international databases. From a disciplinary perspective, forensic odontology is likely to expand toward computational and AI-based approaches[19,20] integration with advanced imaging technologies, and a deeper exploration of interdisciplinary interfaces with forensic anthropology. RBOL is well positioned to lead this evolution, ensuring that forensic odontology remains not only scientifically relevant but also socially and legally impactful.

CONCLUSION

RBOL is the main platform for forensic odontology in Latin America and one of the few worldwide dedicated exclusively to the field. Over its first decade, the journal has demonstrated consistent productivity, strong authorship networks, and increasing international collaborations, particularly with Europe and Latin America. The predominance of observational studies (originals and case reports) and literature reviews reflects consolidation of knowledge and an important bridge between academy and practice. Recent advances indicate a research shift toward innovative and technology-driven approaches. RBOL's trajectory highlights Brazil's unique role in linking forensic odontology and anthropology, and its continued evolution will further strengthen global integration, scientific rigor, and disciplinary impact.

RESUMO
A Revista Brasileira de Odontologia Legal (RBOL) é a primeira revista na América Latina dedicada exclusivamente à odontologia legal e uma das poucas publicações mundiais na área. Em comemoração ao seu 10º aniversário, esta revisão bibliométrica revisitou a trajetória da RBOL de 2014 a 2024 para caracterizar seu desenvolvimento editorial. Foram utilizados indicadores bibliométricos, como coautoria, colaborações institucionais e internacionais, tendências de evolução temática e abordagens metodológicas. Todas as publicações da RBOL foram incluídas, exceto editoriais e anais. Os dados foram extraídos e analisados com o Microsoft Power BI e o R (pacote Bibliometrix), gerando mapas temporais, geográficos e temáticos. O total de estudos elegíveis foi de 306. A análise revelou um pico de produtividade em 2017, com uma média de 29 artigos por ano. As contribuições originaram-se de 16 países, com o Brasil respondendo pela maioria, seguido pelo Reino Unido, Argentina e Bélgica. A Universidade Federal de Goias destacou-se como a instituição mais produtiva, enquanto Bélgica, Rússia e Reino Unido foram os principais parceiros internacionais. Estudos descritivos observacionais, revisões de literatura e relatos de casos foram mais prevalentes, com mapeamento temático destacando agrupamentos em identificação humana, ética e aplicações interdisciplinares. A RBOL consolidou-se como um veículo científico consistente e confiável, promovendo a capacidade de pesquisa nacional e integrando-se progressivamente às redes globais de ciência forense. Sua trajetória reflete não apenas a consolidação da odontologia forense no Brasil, mas também seu crescente diálogo com o público forense internacional.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE
Bibliometria; Odontologia forense; Revisão de literatura.

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