

Bibliometric profile of the top 100 cited articles of the journal "La Tunisie Médicale"

Profil bibliométrique du top 100 des articles les plus cités de la revue «La Tunisie Médicale»

النمط الببليومتري لأكثر 100 مقالة استشهاداً بها في "المجلة الطبية التونسية"

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ABSTRACT

Background: Studying the most-cited papers of scientific journals, is necessary to establish editorial strategies especially in low and middle-income countries where journals face higher challenges in both production and visibility such as 'La Tunisie Médicale' ('Tunis Med').

Aim: To describe the editorial and thematic profile of the 'top 100' cited papers in 2025 published by the journal 'Tunis Med' and their citing papers.

Methods: This was a bibliometric study of the 'top 100' cited articles of 'Tunis Med' from its inception until 08/07/2025. We extracted from Scopus, Web of Science (WoS) and PubMed, the titles, authors year of publication, MeSH (PubMed) and Research areas (WoS). For citing papers, we retrieved the titles, journals, and authors with their affiliations. To explore the research areas and MeSH, we calculated a Mean Citation Score. The statistical analysis and visualisation were done using R software.

Results: The 'top 100' articles published by the journal 'Tunis Med' was characterised by a moderate visibility a median of 20 citations per paper for a total of 2357 citations from 2061 publications. About half of these papers (45%) were cited in 2025. The most-cited papers were methodological or focused on the epidemiology of a specific health problem of Tunisia. These articles were referenced by authors affiliated to Tunisia (n=659), USA (n=318), and China (n=302).

Conclusion: The most cited article of 'Tunis Med' had a moderate visibility, an interdisciplinary approach, a focus on methodological papers or epidemiology specific to Tunisia, a wide world coverage for citing papers. Identifying papers with these characteristics and promoting them may help 'Tunis Med' in publishing high impact research.

Keywords: Bibliometrics – Publications – Periodicals as topic – Biomedical Research– Africa, Northern – Tunisia.

RÉSUMÉ

Introduction: L'étude des articles « les plus cités » des journaux scientifiques est essentielle à l'établissement des stratégies de promotion de leur visibilité éditoriale, particulièrement dans les pays à revenu faible ou intermédiaire.

Objectif: Décrire le profil éditorial et thématique de la liste « top 100 » des articles « les plus cités » de la revue « Tunis Med » en 2025.

Méthode: Il s'agissait d'une étude bibliométrique du « top 100 » des articles « les plus cités » du journal « Tunis Med », depuis son indexation bibliographique jusqu'au 08/07/2025. À partir de Scopus, Web of Science (WoS) et PubMed, ont été extraites les données suivantes : titres, auteurs, années de publication, MeSH (PubMed) et aires de recherche (WoS). Pour les papiers « citants », les auteurs et leurs affiliations ont été récupérés. Pour explorer les aires de recherche et les MeSH, un score de citations moyen a été calculé. L'analyse statistique et la visualisation ont été réalisées sur le logiciel R.

Résultats: Le « top 100 » du journal « Tunis Med » avait une visibilité modérée avec 2357 citations provenant de 2061 publications et une médiane de 20 citations par papier. Environ la moitié (45%) de cette liste a été citée en 2025. Ces papiers « très cités » étaient de type méthodologique ou focalisés sur l'épidémiologie des problèmes locaux de santé. Outre la Tunisie (n=659), ils ont été référencés par des auteurs affiliés aux USA (n=318) et en Chine (n=302).

Conclusion: Les articles « les plus cités » de la revue « Tunis Med » ont été caractérisés par une visibilité modérée, une approche interdisciplinaire focalisée sur la méthodologie ou l'épidémiologie locale et une couverture géographique large des papiers « citants ». Leur identification et leur promotion contribueraient à l'amélioration de la visibilité bibliométrique et du rayonnement international du journal.

Mots-clés: Bibliométrie– Publications – Périodiques comme sujet – Recherche biomédicale –Afrique du Nord– Tunisie.

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الملخص

المقدمة: تُعدّ دراسة المقالات "الأكثر استشهاداً" بها في المجلات العلمية أمراً أساسياً لوضع استراتيجيات لتعزيز حضورها التّحريرى، لاسيّما في البلدان منخفضة ومتوسطة الدّخل.

الهدف: توصيف السمات التّحريرية والموضوعاتية لأكثر 100 مقال "استشهاداً به" في المجلّة الطّبيّة التّونسيّة خلال سنة 2025.

المنهجية: هذه دراسة بيبليومترية لأكثر 100 مقالة "استشهاداً بها" في المجلّة الطّبيّة التّونسيّة، بدءاً من تاريخ فهرستها البيبليوغرافية حتى 8 يوليو 2025. استُخرجت البيانات التالية من Scopus و Web of Science (WoS) و PubMed : العناوين، المؤلفون، سنوات النشر، الكلمات المفتاحيّة (PubMed)، ومجالات البحث (WoS). بالنسبة لاقتباس الأوراق البحثيّة، تمّ استخراج عناوين المقالات وبيانات المجلات وأسماء المؤلفين مع انتماءاتهم المؤسّساتيّة. ولتحليل مجالات البحث ومصطلحات عناوين الموضوعات الطّبيّة (MeSH)، احتسبنا متوسط عدد الاقتباسات (Mean Citation Score). أجري التحليل الإحصائي وتصوّر البيانات باستخدام برمجية R.

النتائج: حظيت أفضل 100 مقالة "استشهاداً بها" في المجلّة الطّبيّة التّونسيّة بمرئيّة معتدلة، بواقع 2357 اقتباساً من 2061 منشور، وكان المتوسط 20 اقتباساً لكل مقالة. تمّ ذلك لحوالي نصف هذه القائمة (45%) في عام 2025. وكانت هذه المقالات "ذات الاستشهاد العالي" ذات طابع منهجيّ وركّزت على وبائيات المشاكل الصّحيّة المحليّة. وبالإضافة إلى تونس (عددها=659)، استشهد بهذه المقالات من قبل مؤلّفين من الولايات المتّحدة الأمريكيّة (عددها=318) والصّين (عددها=302).

الخلاصة: تميّزت المقالات "الأكثر استشهاداً" بها في المجلّة الطّبيّة التّونسيّة بمرئيّة متوسطة، ومقاربة متعدّدة التّخصّصات مُركّزة على مناهج البحث ووبائيات المشاكل الصّحيّة المحليّة، وتغطية جغرافيّة واسعة للمقالات "المقتبسة". ومن شأن تحديد هذه المقالات والترويج لها أن يُسهما في تحسين المرئيّة البيبليومترية للمجلة الوطنيّة وانتشارها الدّولي.

الكلمات المفتاحيّة: البيبليومتريّات - المقالات - الدّوريات كموضوع - البحث الطّبيّ الحيوي - شمال أفريقيا - تونس.

INTRODUCTION

Academic excellence was evaluated through a series of indicators, primarily using the number of scientific publications (productivity). However, in recent years, apart from this indicators, there was an increasing interest in studying the quality of publications [1]. This is mainly evaluated by the number of citations received by a research paper and dubbed impact. The underlying assumption is that a paper that contributes heavily towards human knowledge would be used as a foundation for future research and thus cited more often [2,3]. This assessment of quality using bibliometric studies, was applied to countries, institutions, disciplines [4,5], authors and even journals as a promotional tool. Although the study of top cited articles in a given field are common [4,5] the same kind of study for journals remains limited [6]. In recent bibliometric studies, there is a shift from impact scores based on average values of all papers towards indicators reflecting the top of the citation distribution, such as the number of 'highly cited' or 'top' articles [7]. This study could help the journal's editorial board in choosing editorial strategies for a better visibility and better identify potential high impact submissions. Moreover, it could help researchers in identifying topics of interest to the scientific community. The need for promoting research is higher in low- and middle-income countries which suffer from many challenges in both production and visibility of their research [8,9]. In North Africa, 'La Tunisie Médicale' is the oldest and only medical journal indexed in multiple databases (Scopus, PubMed, ...). This study aims to describe the editorial and thematic profile of the 'top 100' cited papers in 2025, published by the journal 'La Tunisie Médicale' and their citing papers.

METHODS

This was a bibliometric study of the 'top 100' cited articles of the scientific journal 'La Tunisie Médicale' (ISSN: 0041-413). Data were extracted from Scopus, Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection and MEDLINE via PubMed. For each article, we extracted the title, year of publication, journal, affiliation (academic and professional) PubMed identifier (PMID), research area (according to WoS) and Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) of the National Library of Medicine of the United States as csv files from each database as of 08/07/2025. To ensure data quality and that repeated entries did not affect our results, 10% more articles than required were retrieved. Then, duplicates were identified by manually cross-checking the bibliometric information for each entry (DOI, volume, issue, pages, authors, ...). The database merge was verified through similar cross-checking, and errors were corrected to produce the 'top 100' most-cited articles. For the citing papers, the affiliations of all authors were used to extract all the listed countries. Whole counting was applied at the country level: each country was counted once, irrespective of the number of mentions or its position; consequently, a citing article could be attributed to multiple countries [10]. For each research areas and MeSH (A), we determined the subset of articles (SA) from the 'top 100' indexed under A. A Mean Citation Score (MCS) was calculated by dividing the sum of citations received by the of articles of subset SA by the number of articles of this subset. For research areas and MeSH, a MCS was calculated by dividing the sum of citations received by the number of articles written for that research area or MeSH. Data was analysed using R software and plots were drawn using 'ggplot2' and themed using the 'unhcrthemes' packages.

RESULTS

Editorial profile of the 'top 100' cited papers

As of the study date, Scopus database indexed 8468 articles published by '*La Tunisie Médicale*', of which 3762 (44%) were cited at least once (08/07/2025). The number of papers cited at least 10 times (i-10) was 247 (3% of all publication). The number of citations per articles ranged from 15 to 88 with a median of 20 (IQR=[16-25]) for a total of 2357 citations originating from 2061 publications. After exclusion of auto citations, the median of citations per articles was 17 (IQR=[15-23]). These papers were

published between 1986 and 2023 with a maximum of 55 between 2006 and 2013 (maximum of 12 in 2010). Table 1 summarizes the 20 most cited papers published by '*La Tunisie Médicale*' since its indexing, the full list is available in supplemental material Supp 1(on line). The paper titled 'Principal Component Analysis (PCA)' was the highest cited paper with a total of 88 citations. Half of the 'top 100' cited papers of '*La Tunisie Médicale*' were cited at least once in 2025, reflecting a durable relevance for these papers. The paper titled 'Treatment of hepatic hydatid cyst in sheep by echographic puncture' published in 1986 was cited in 2025.

Table 1. The 20 most cited papers of '*La Tunisie Médicale*' (Scopus, 2025)

Articles	Reference	First author	Year	Citations
Public health, research and methodology				
1 Principal Component Analysis (PCA)	99(04): 383-9	Ben Salem K.	2021	88
5 How to calculate the size of a sample for an observational study?	98(01): 1-7	Serhier Z.	2020	44
18 Artificial Intelligence and Promoting Open Access in Academic Publishing	101(6):533-6	Dergaa I.	2023	32
20 Epidemiological transition and health impact in Tunisia	83 Suppl 5:1-7	Ben Romdhane H.	2005	30
Non-transmissible diseases				
2 Consanguinity in the population of northern Tunisia	67(3):167-72	Riou S.	1989	58
3 Food intake and high density lipoprotein cholesterol levels	84(10): 647-50	Lamine F.	2006	51
4 Rosacea: 244 Tunisian cases	88(08): 597-601	Khaled A.	2010	48
6 Breast cancer in Tunisia	87(07): 417-25	Ben Abdallah M.	2009	42
7 Hemoglobinopathies in Tunisia.	84(11): 687-96	Fattoum S.	2006	42
8 Spirometric reference values in a Tunisian population	73(2):125-31	Tabka Z.	1995	39
9 Assessment of cancer incidence in Tunisia 1993-1997	80 (02): 57-64	Hsairi M.	2002	37
10 Incidence of mucopolysaccharidoses in Tunisia	87(11):782-5	Ben Turkia H.	2009	37
11 Optimizing training and competition during the month of Ramadan	97(10): 1095-103	Chamari K.	2019	37
12 Etiologic factors in primary bronchial carcinoma in Tunisia	71(5):265-8	Hsairi M.	1993	36
13 Cutaneous adverse drug reactions in children	90(01): 45-50	Khaled A.	2012	35
15 Serum Copper, Zinc and Selenium levels	91(06): 402-5	Younes-Mhenni S.	2013	34
16 Psychiatric morbidity and quality of life in vitiligo	84(10):632-5	Mechri A.	2006	33
17 Immune system, apoptosis and angiogenesis in rheumatoid arthritis	85(12):991-8	Dhaouadi T.	2007	33
19 Biochemical markers of bone remodeling	84(11):751-7	Bahlous A.	2006	32
Transmissible diseases				
14 Treatment of hepatic hydatid cyst in sheep by echographic puncture	64(4):325-31	Ben Amor N.	1986	35

Thematic profile of the 'top 100' cited papers

The 'top 100' cited papers explored 73 research areas, 74% (n=54) were related to 'Life Sciences & Biomedicine' representing 82% (n=425) of the total number of mentions (n=518). This category was cited by 95% of the citing papers, followed by 'Social Sciences' (46%), 'Physical Sciences' (12%), 'Technology' (9%), and 'Art & Humanities' (8%). Figure 1 shows that the most explored research areas by the 'top 100' cited articles of '*La Tunisie Médicale*' were related to fundamental sciences. Humanities (Family studies, Sociology and religion) were also explored by multiple papers. While most of the top cited research areas are part of 'Life Sciences & Biomedicine', four of the five most explored research areas were part of 'Technology' (Computer Science and Microscopy), 'Social Sciences' (Family studies), and 'Physical Sciences' (Mathematics).

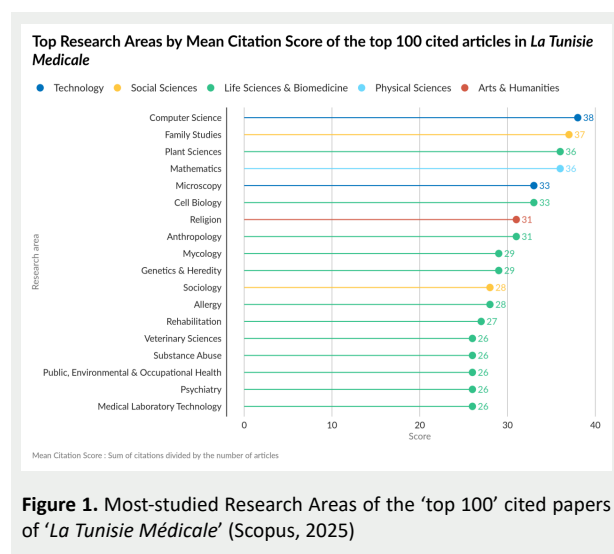


Figure 2 shows that the articles that tend to be cited were interested in topics related to methodologies (Principal Component Analysis, Sample Size, Mathematical computing, Epidemiological Research Design, and Biostatistics), and specific national epidemiology data (Consanguinity, Cholesterol, Body Weight, Blood Glucose, Rosacea).

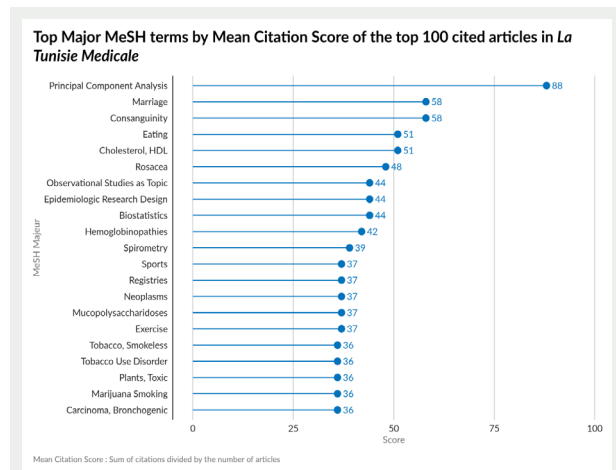


Figure 2. Most studied MeSH of the 'top 100' cited papers of 'La Tunisie Médicale' (Scopus, 2025)

Profile of the citing papers

In total, 1265 scientific journals cited the 'top 100' articles of 'La Tunisie Médicale'. The 20 most citing journals are mentioned in Table 2. The citations came primarily from generalist journals (PLOS One, ...), specialised in respiratory diseases (*Revue des Maladies Respiratoires*, ...), or specialised in Public Health (Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal, ...). Figure 3 illustrates the number of citations received by articles of the 'top 100' most cited articles from each country. The most citing country was Tunisia (n=659), followed by the United States of America (n=318), China (n=302) and France (n=179). Authors from countries similar to Tunisia were also among the top citing countries: Iran (n=97) and Morocco (n=91).

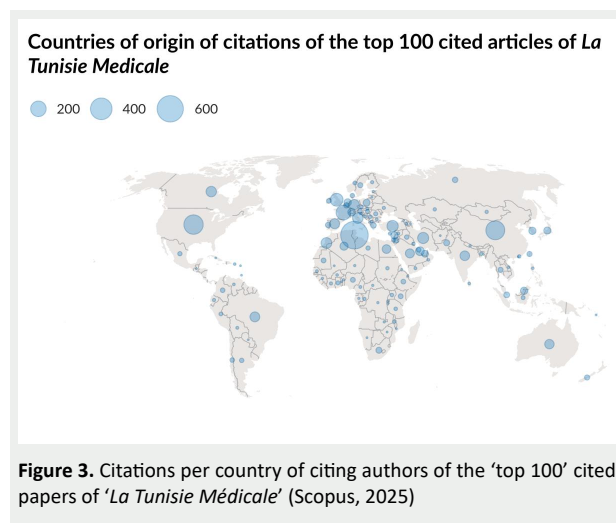


Figure 3. Citations per country of citing authors of the 'top 100' cited papers of 'La Tunisie Médicale' (Scopus, 2025)

Table 2. The 20 most citing journals of the most cited articles of 'La Tunisie Médicale' (Scopus, 2025)

	Journal*	Country	Quartile**	Citations
2	PLOS One	United States	Q1	36
3	Libyan Journal of Medicine	United Kingdom	Q3	19
4	Scientific Reports	United Kingdom	Q1	19
5	Revue des Maladies Respiratoires	France	Q4	15
6	American Journal of Men's Health	United States	Q1	14
7	Medicine (United States)	United States	Q3	13
8	Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal	Switzerland	Q3	12
9	International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	Switzerland	Q2	12
10	Nutrients	Switzerland	Q1	12
11	Pan African Medical Journal	Nigeria	Q3	12
12	Expert Review of Respiratory Medicine	United Kingdom	Q2	10
13	Revue d'Epidemiologie et de Sante Publique	France	-	10
14	Biology of Sport	Poland	Q1	9
15	International Journal of Molecular Sciences	Switzerland	Q1	9
16	British Journal of Dermatology	United Kingdom	Q1	8
17	Bulletin de la Société de Pathologie Exotique	France	=	8
18	Diagnostics	Switzerland	Q2	8
19	Frontiers in Physiology	Switzerland	Q2	8
20	Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology	United States	Q1	8

*Citations from 'La Tunisie Médicale' were excluded; **Quartile as presented in Scimago for 2024

DISCUSSION

Bibliometric and scientometric studies are increasingly shifted from measuring scientific production by quantity to assessing quality [11] and from including all the papers to the evaluation of top ranked articles [7]. Our study identified the most-cited articles of the journal 'La Tunisie Médicale' since its indexing in scientific databases such as MEDLINE, Scopus, and WoS (1950). These last two databases are considered as the most comprehensive data sources for various purpose including bibliometric studies [12,13] hence limiting a possible selection bias. To minimise it, data from both sources were combined and duplicates were removed both within and between databases through manual cross-checking article details (DOI, volume, issue, authors, ...). The MCS calculated in this bibliometric analysis may be influenced by publication age, thus research areas explored by recently published articles may therefore be underestimated as they had less time to accumulate citations.

This bibliometric study showed that the most-cited article of 'La Tunisie Médicale' were characterized by a modest visibility, a wide geographic and temporal coverage and interdisciplinarity.

A. Moderate Citations

The 'top 100' cited articles of '*La Tunisie Médicale*' were moderately cited with a median of 20 citations per paper [IQR=16-25]. In the journal *Medicine* (Baltimore), this ratio varied from 24 to 127 with a mean of 39 [6]. However, in the specialized journal *Naunyn-Schmiedeberg's Archives of Pharmacology*, the mean citations per article for the 'top 100' cited articles was 262.5 [14]. According to the update list of the 'top 100' cited articles in research published in 2025, the least cited article had over 30000 citations [15]. This difference between journals could be explained by the fact that the highly cited articles are outliers [16], the success of articles is attributed to the intrinsic properties and value of the paper and to chance, thus the probability of having an extreme value is correlated with the number of published papers. Currently, it is admitted that the visibility of a journal is a strong indicator of the strength of the currently of publication. In fact, a study published in *Scientometrics* showed a positive correlation between the Gross Domestic Product of a country and the impact factor and citability of its scientific journal [17].

B. Wide Coverage

The citations of the 'top 100' cited article of '*La Tunisie Médicale*' had a wide geographical and temporal coverage. In fact, the most occurring countries for citing foreign authors were the United States of America (USA), and China which may be related to their high scientific output [18,19]. In contrast, France, which had a five to six times less papers producing than USA and China, contributed relatively more to the citations of the 'top 100' cited papers, still published in French thus reflecting a language effect. Transitioning from a majority of French publications to English publications may produce a similar effect among English-speaking authors increasing international visibility and attracting more citations. However, this could be done at the detriment of French-speaking authors and potentially reduce overall citations from the journal's traditional audience. This effect could be mitigated by providing a French abstract which may help retain this audience. This policy should take into consideration the societal responsibility of the journal by requiring every article to include a Plain Language Summaries and graphical abstract to promote broader dissemination of the research within the community. Authors from other limited resource countries sharing the same health issues such as Morocco [20], also contributed to the citations. The relatively high contribution in citations of Morocco may be explained by the publication of Moroccan authors in the journal which contribute to more visibility in said countries [21]. Thus, inviting authors from other neighbouring countries could lead to more visibility and also to international collaboration which was linked to higher citations especially for low and middle income countries [22]. The majority of the 'top 100' cited papers of '*La Tunisie Médicale*' (45%) are still being cited in 2025, with the oldest article being published in 1986, reflecting the

lasting impact of highly cited papers on the biomedical literature [23]. This phenomenon was observed in other journals such as *Naunyn-Schmiedeberg's Archives of Pharmacology*, where a bibliometric studies of published articles between 1969 and 2024 found that the oldest papers of the list published in 1970 had 56 citable years [14]. A bibliometric study of all cited scientific research papers in 2023 showed that among the 20 most cited articles, one was published in 1981 [23].

C. Factors driving visibility and impact

Although 74% of 'top 100' articles of '*La Tunisie Médicale*' were attributed to 'Life Sciences and Biomedicine', four of the five most-studied research areas were related to other categories (mainly Technology, Social Sciences). This may reflect the impact of interdisciplinarity research on the number of citations by combining innovative topics (positively correlated with the number of citation) [24,25]. Thus, these interdisciplinary papers may benefit from a greater opportunity to get exposed to a wider audience and receive more citations. Surprisingly, international collaboration seems to produce less novel and more conventional research probably due to the barrier of communication that hamper productive exchanges and the emergence of new ideas [26]. Thus, authors might consider collaborating with other researchers and scientists that they can communicate with freely. Authors and editors alike should be aware that with higher novelty comes a higher risk of delayed recognition and leading to papers called 'sleeping beauties' [27]. In addition, a high proportion of articles of the 'top 100' of '*La Tunisie Médicale*' covered a global topic contextualised to the local epidemiology (Consanguinity, Breast cancer) or a universal methodology (Multivariate description and dimensionality-reduction technique, sample size calculation). Methodological papers have a higher citation count than other types, in fact, the most cited scientific article in history describe a dosing method for protein [15].

In summary, the profile of the 'top 100' cited papers of the journal '*La Tunisie Médicale*' was characterised by a moderate citation, spanning across a wide geographical area with durable relevance, and an interdisciplinary approach combining clinical practice with social and fundamental sciences. The journal's strategy to enhance its international visibility should be done according to an elaborated roadmap [28] that aims to attract prolific authors from neighbouring countries [29], and promote universal methodological research papers and specific epidemiological findings. It should also adopt an interdisciplinary editorial policy open to broader range of health sciences, as well as mathematical and human sciences. The selection of such articles by the editorial board of '*La Tunisie Médicale*' may help in promoting broader and more sustainable international visibility of its publications.

Supplements:

Supplement 1: List of the 'top 100' cited articles published in '*La Tunisie Médicale*' (2025) available from:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19765020>

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