

Research on the Hotspots and Development of “Internet+ Nursing Services” in China: A Bibliometric Analysis Based on CiteSpace

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Abstract: *Objective:* This study aims to explore the current research status, hotspots, and trends of the emerging nursing model of “Internet+ nursing service” in China, and to provide theoretical references for further research and development. *Methods:* The literature related to “Internet+ nursing service” was retrieved from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), Wanfang database, VIP database, and SinoMed. Subsequently, visual analysis was performed using the CiteSpace scientific knowledge mapping software. *Results:* A total of 1223 articles were included. The number of papers published in this field has been increasing yearly, and a core group of authors has been formed. Research institutions are mainly comprised of universities and hospitals and a high percentage of projects were funded provincially and municipally, while the least percentage of projects were funded nationally. The main research hotspots include the nurse standardized management for online appointments, the current application situation for the nursing model, and factors influencing its application amongst the elderly and also in women and children’s groups. *Conclusion:* Although the “Internet+ nursing service” in China is still in its early stages, considerable progress has been made in relevant research. Future research should focus on identifying and omitting factors that hinder the industry’s growth, thereby establishing an effective long-term model of care.

Keywords: Internet+; Online nurse; Home care; Visual analytics; Aging

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1. Introduction

The “Internet+ Nursing Service” is an emerging nursing model that relies on the Internet to provide relevant home-based nursing services to patients ^[1]. This approach effectively alleviates the drawbacks of the uneven distribution of medical resources and facilitates the integration and sharing of high-quality medical resources ^[1]. Currently, this model is mainly facilitated through the deployment of nurses by medical institutions or health organizations to provide home care services, including basic care, professional care, chronic disease management, palliative care, etc. Costs are mainly covered by commercial insurance and individuals, with a relatively functional

service quality assurance system ^[2]. In China, this model is still in the initial development stages with many problems that need to be addressed. Recently, Chinese scholars have conducted various research to improve the user experience of “Internet+ nursing service” and enhance its architecture model ^[3,4]. However, few studies have systematically analyzed the current status of research and identified hotspots in the field of “Internet+ nursing services,” making it challenging for researchers to gain a quick overview of this field. The purpose of this study is to conduct a visual analysis of conducted research in this field to clarify the current research status, identify hotspots and trends in this research field, and provide theoretical references for future research and development.

2. Methods

2.1. Data sources and screening strategy

The literature data used in this study were obtained from CNKI, Wanfang database, VIP database, and SinoMed. The literature search was conducted from January 1, 2004, to November 23, 2023, primarily focusing on Chinese literature. The search keywords include: “Internet+ nursing service” OR “Internet+ continuous nursing” OR “Internet+ home nursing” OR “online appointment nurse” OR “shared nurse.” To avoid bias in the literature data caused by database updates, the literature data used in this study were exported on the same day November 23, 2023, and a total of 2855 documents were retrieved. The obtained literature was de-duplicated using the NoteExpress software and was independently screened and reviewed by two researchers (SYK and ZC) to withdraw non-research articles such as conference reports and notification newsletters, and literature that were irrelevant to the topic of this study. A third researcher (CSH) made the final decision regarding literature selection when there was a dispute, and 1223 articles were finally chosen to be included in this study. The literature screening process is shown in **Figure 1**.

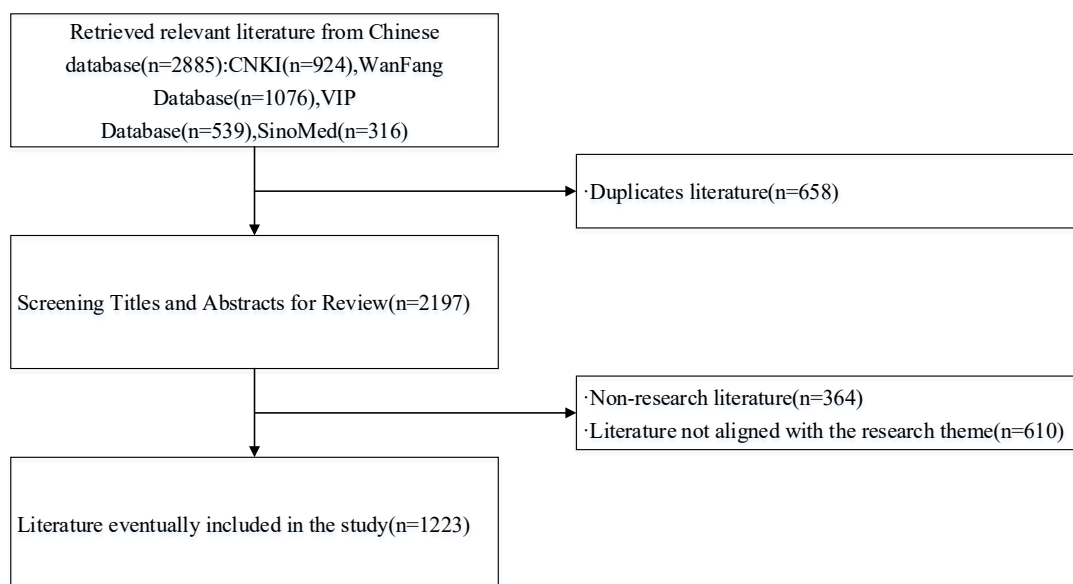


Figure 1. Flowchart of literature selection

2.2. Bibliometric analysis

CiteSpace is a citation visualization software based on Java language developed by Dr. Chen ^[5] and the nature of their intellectual contributions is validated by leading scientists in the field. The analysis has demonstrated that a search for intellectual turning points can be narrowed down to visually salient nodes in

the visualized network. The method provides a promising way to simplify otherwise cognitively demanding tasks to a search for landmarks, pivots, and hubs. In this study, CiteSpace (5.8.R3) was used to analyze the visualization of authors, institutions, and keywords in the field of “Internet+ nursing services.” The specific parameters of CiteSpace included: time sliced from 2004–2023 with one year per slice; selection criteria (g-index, $k = 25$); and network pruning via Pathfinder.

3. Results

3.1. Annual publication volume distribution

This study encompassed a total of 1223 articles and the annual publication volume was depicted in **Figure 2**. Analysis of literature regarding “Internet+ nursing services” commenced in 2015, marking the start of a consistent upward trend in annual publications. This trend demonstrated a strong positive correlation according to their respective publication years ($R^2 = 0.9191$). There was a relatively low annual issuance during 2015–2018, with a more substantial increase observed from 2019 onward. It is noteworthy that the statistics for 2023 are pending completion, resulting in a notable drop in the data.

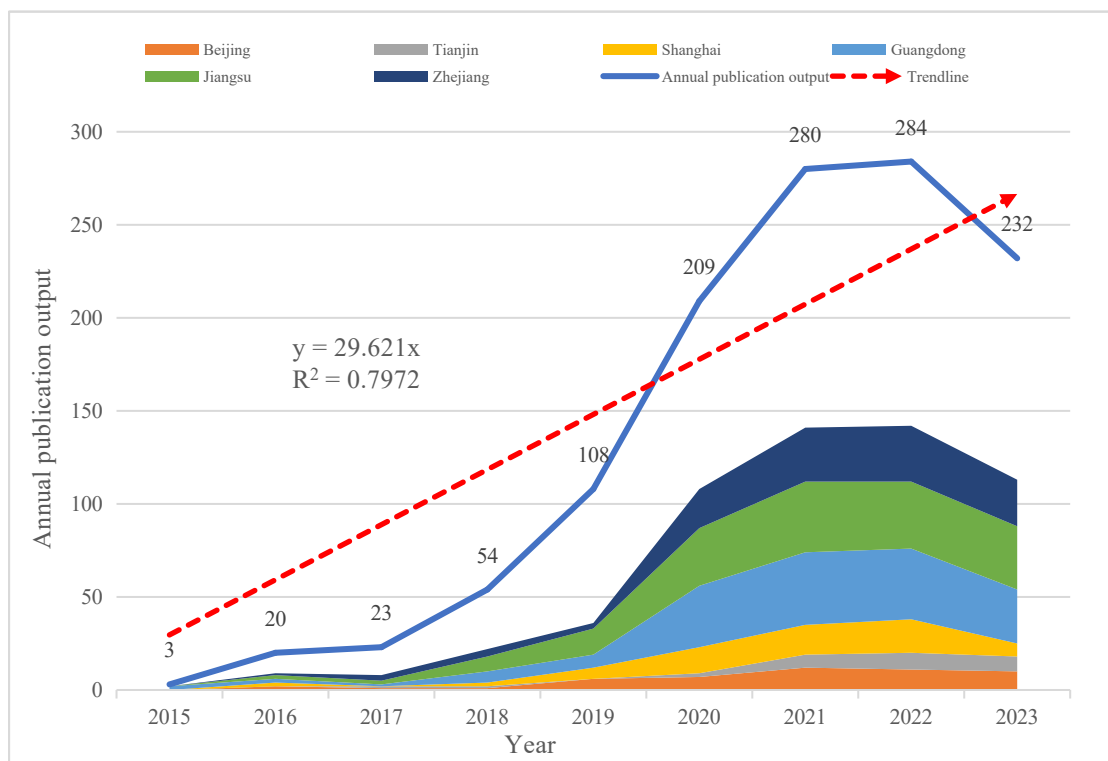


Figure 2. Annual distribution of literature in the field of “Internet+ nursing service”

3.2. Author and institution distribution

There were 2792 authors in the research field of “Internet+ nursing services,” with author Zhiren Sheng having the most publications ($n = 11$, 0.90%). The top 10 authors are shown in **Table 1**. According to Price’s law of core authorship^[6], there were 110 core authors in this field, accounting for 3.94% of total authors. The institution with the highest number of publications was the Gulou Hospital of Nanjing University School of Medicine ($n = 19$, 1.55%). The relevant literature was mainly published by universities and their affiliated

hospitals, as shown in **Table 2**. In addition, there were 985 collaborative research papers in this field, accounting for 80.54% of the total literature volume. Among them, there were 263 cross-institutional collaborations, accounting for 21.50% of the literature’s total volume, and 41 cross-regional collaborations, accounting for 3.35% of the total publication volume.

Table 1. Top 10 authors and institutions in the field of “Internet + nursing services”

Rank	Author	Number of articles (%)	Affiliation
1	Zhiren Sheng	11 (0.90%)	Affiliated Hospital of Ningbo University Medical College
2	Hongyan Sun	10 (0.81%)	Southwest Medical University
3	Yan Zhang	8 (0.65%)	Zhengzhou University
4	Yongyi Shen	7 (0.54%)	Hunan Cancer Hospital
4	Jianli Hu	7 (0.54%)	Affiliated Hospital of Ningbo University Medical College
4	Yan Chen	7 (0.54%)	Gulou Hospital of Nanjing University Medical School
7	Dongyun Xia	6 (0.49%)	Gulou Hospital of Nanjing University Medical School
7	Maomin Jiang	6 (0.49%)	Shanghai University of Engineering and Technology
7	Qing Wang	6 (0.49%)	Affiliated Hospital of Southwest Medical University
7	Chunyan Xie	6 (0.49%)	Nanchang University

Table 2. Top 10 institutions in the field of “Internet + nursing services”

Rank	Institutions	Number of articles (%)
1	Gulou Hospital of Nanjing University Medical School	19 (1.55%)
2	Shanghai University of Engineering and Technology	15 (1.23%)
2	Affiliated Hospital of Ningbo University Medical College	15 (1.23%)
4	Zhejiang University of Traditional Chinese Medicine	12 (1.08%)
4	Zhengzhou University	12 (0.98%)
6	Southwest Medical University	11 (0.90%)
7	The First Affiliated Hospital of Anhui Medical University	10 (0.82%)
7	Hospital of Sichuan North Medical College	10 (0.82%)
7	Hunan Provincial People’s Hospital	10 (0.82%)
7	Hunan Cancer Hospital	10 (0.82%)

3.3. Distribution of regional issuance and fund distribution

In this study, statistical analysis was conducted on the number of articles published in each region in the field of “Internet+ nursing service.” The region with the highest number of publications was the Jiangsu Province ($n = 165$, 13.25%), and the first six pilot provinces and cities in China accounted for about 47.59% of the total literature volume. However, the number of articles published in the northwestern region and Yunnan-Guizhou region was relatively low. **Table 3** summarizes the five regions with the most funded projects and their respective funding categories. There were 534 funded papers in this field, accounting for 43.70% of the total literature. Guangdong Province had the most funding projects ($n = 66$, 5.40%) and the highest funding category was provincial funds ($n = 283$, 23.14%), while there were relatively few nationally ($n = 67$, 5.48%) and institutionally ($n = 100$, 8.18%) funded projects.

Table 3. Top 5 funding regions and categories of funds in the field of “Internet + nursing services”

Rank	Region	Funded Project (%)	Fund Category	Funded Projects (%)
1	Guangdong	66 (5.40%)	National level funds	67 (5.48%)
2	Zhejiang	63 (5.15%)	Provincial funds	283 (23.14%)
3	Jiangsu	58 (4.74%)	Municipal funds	175 (14.31%)
4	Sichuan	33 (2.70%)	Institutional funds	100 (8.18%)
5	Shandong	28 (2.29%)	Other funds	14 (1.14%)

3.4. Keyword cluster distribution

Keywords are the core aspect of literature and represent the main ideas of the research. Analyzing keywords enables understanding regarding the hotspots of research in the field of “Internet+ nursing services.” The distribution of keyword clusters is shown in **Figure 3**, whereby the modularity Q is 0.616 ($Q > 0.3$) and the mean silhouette is 0.868 ($S > 0.7$). These data indicated that the clustering results can represent the research hotspots in the field of “Internet + nursing services.” There were five major keyword clusters: (1) Extended care, including “life quality,” “complications,” etc.; (2) internet plus, including “home care,” “elderly care model,” etc.; (3) nursing service, including “online appointment nurse,” “status survey,” etc.; (4) willingness, including “multi-site practice,” “cognition,” etc.; (5) demand, including “elderly people,” “influencing factors,” etc.

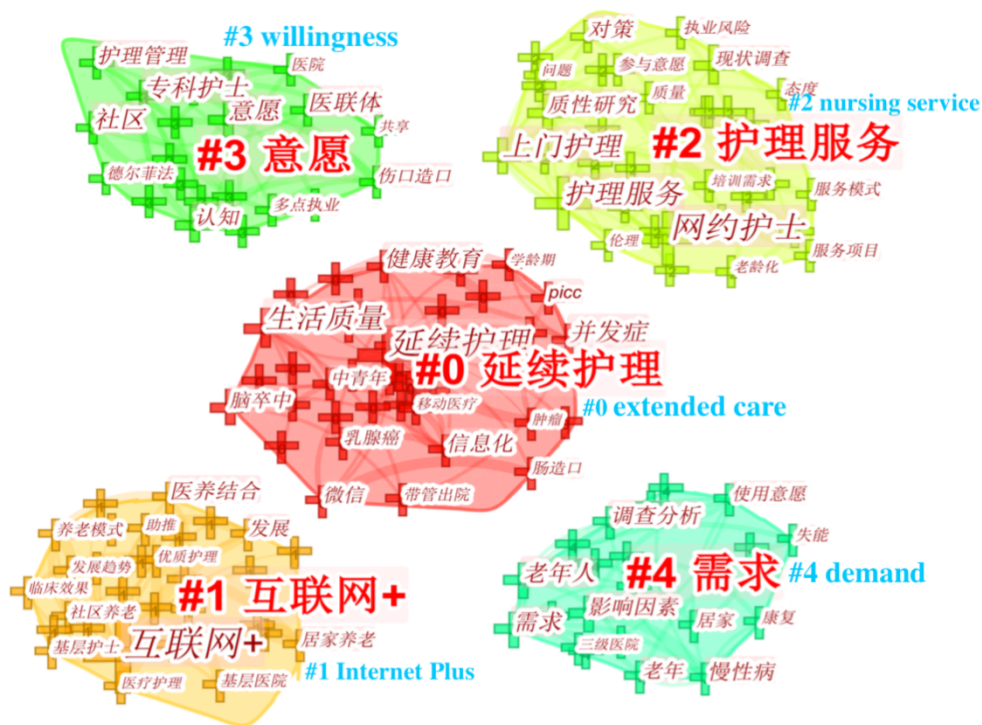


Figure 3. Keyword clusters in the field of “Internet+ care service”

3.5. Emergent keyword distribution

Emergent keywords are important indicators of research frontier issues in a given period [7], there has been a rapid increase in this field. However, there was few bibliometric studies to provide an overall review of this field. This study aims to evaluate the literature output and trends in researches on precision cancer medicine-related rashes from a global perspective. \nMethods: Collected publications on precision cancer medicine-related rashes from the Web of Science Core Collection database, which were limited to articles and reviews in English. Microsoft Excel, VOS viewer and CiteSpace V were used for quantitative and visual analysis. \nResults: A total of 1,229 papers were identified. From 2008 to 2021, annual publications increased year by year. The United States published the most papers in this field (44.9%. The top 20 emergent keywords in the research field of “Internet+ nursing services” are shown in **Table 4**. In previous years, high-intensity emergent keywords included: “applications,” “WeChat,” “self-management,” “negative emotions,” “multi-site practice,” and “development.” Recently, the main emergent keywords in this field have evolved into: “satisfaction,” “willingness to use,” “health behavior,” “maternity,” “postnatal period,” “specialist nurses,” and “core competencies,” etc.

Table 4. Top 20 emergent keywords in the research field of “Internet+ nursing services”

Keywords	Strength	Begin	End	2015–2023
Health education	1.32	2015	2018	
Applications	2.24	2016	2018	
Informatization	1.41	2016	2018	
WeChat	2.05	2017	2018	
Development	1.54	2017	2018	
Self-management	1.55	2018	2019	
Negative emotions	1.55	2018	2019	
Caregivers	1.47	2018	2020	
Mobile health	1.19	2018	2020	
Community aging	1.17	2018	2021	
Multi-site practice	1.96	2019	2021	
Question	1.26	2019	2021	
Satisfaction	1.31	2020	2023	
Maternity	0.93	2020	2023	
Willingness to use	0.93	2020	2023	
Specialist nurse	0.93	2020	2023	
Postnatal period	0.75	2020	2023	
Home	0.75	2020	2023	
Core competencies	0.75	2020	2023	
Health behavior	0.75	2020	2023	

4. Discussion

4.1. Analysis of the publication volume, authors, institutions, regions, and funds

According to the number of annual publications, the research development of “Internet+ nursing services” can be divided into two stages. The initial stage was carried out in 2015-2018 when the “Internet+ nursing services”

action plan was first proposed by the government ^[8] and the concept was still in the exploration stages. Since 2019, national and local governments have successively issued policies ^[9,10] to encourage the coordinated promotion of “Internet+ nursing services.” This was carried out to meet the diverse needs of society which in return has significantly increased the popularity of online appointment nursing, with an increase in research literature published regarding this field.

A team of core authors, led by Zhiren Sheng, was formed in the research field of “Internet+ nursing services.” However, the number of core authors is still lacking and most scholars have published only one paper. Hence, the research progression in this field is weak. The research institutions consist mainly of universities and hospitals in the pilot area, and there is a lack of cross-institutional and cross-regional cooperative exchanges and funding. This may be due to two reasons: First, “Internet+ nursing service” is a relatively new nursing model hence most scholars have a limited understanding in regards to this field. Second, “Internet+ nursing service” is still in the pilot stage and scholars may lack the relevant experience needed for research.

To alleviate this phenomenon, the government should focus on promoting the full-scale implementation of “Internet+ nursing services” pilot projects by encouraging grassroots hospitals to carry out related operations and identify and address any problems. The government should also strengthen the exchanges and cooperation between pilot and non-pilot institutions, and also between medical research institutions and internet technology enterprises. The goal is to achieve multidisciplinary cross-fertilization along with the sharing of high-quality resources and practical experience. Furthermore, scholars should actively engage in high-level projects to prompt scientific research and increase the depth of research to promote the all-round development of “Internet+ nursing services.”

4.2. Analysis of research hotspot

By further analyzing the keywords in the field of “Internet+ nursing service,” this study deduced that the hotspots of research in this field mainly revolve around three points: (1) Online appointment nurse standardized management, (2) current application status, (3) influencing factors of the utilization of “Internet+ nursing service” among elderly patients.

4.2.1. Online appointment nurse standardized management

As practitioners in the field of “Internet+ nursing services,” the nurses’ perceptions and willingness to participate in this emerging model will significantly impact the quality of services provided. Existing studies showed that more than half of the registered nurses were unwilling to participate or were not actively involved in online appointment nursing services, which were mostly due to personal safety risks and greater time costs ^[11,12]. Therefore, it is necessary to accelerate the establishment of a security system, create an audit and supervision platform, and optimize the process of online appointments. This is so that the market can expand in an orderly manner to protect the legitimate rights and interests of the practitioners. In addition, an access and evaluation system for online appointment nurses should also be established. Currently, the overall training time of the online appointment nurse team is lacking and there exists the phenomenon of induction before receiving standardized training ^[13], which could adversely impact the safety of the nurses and the patient. The system accessibility and training regimen must be improved in the future to form a regional unified standard. With this, the potential candidates can be thoroughly screened and the quality of online appointment nursing services can be guaranteed. In addition to the establishment and adherence to regulations and standards, nursing practitioners should also cultivate the spirit of discretion and humanistic care and enhance communication skills so that they can uphold professional standards and ethical norms in online nursing services. Through effective mediation, conflicts and misunderstandings can be resolved and patient experience and overall service satisfaction can be optimized.

4.2.2. Current situation of the application of “Internet + nursing service”

The emergence of “Internet+” has created a new form of home extended care, alleviating the problems of the backward service concept and the unclear distribution of responsibilities in the traditional extended care model ^[14]. Currently, a large number of studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of “Internet+ nursing services” in multiple fields and scenarios ^[1,15], to explore the preferred implementation options and analyze the advantages and disadvantages to promote the development of the industry. Some studies have shown that the application of “Internet+ nursing service” in the field of chronic intractable diseases was effective, delivering more convenient nursing services to patients while improving patients’ self-care ability and treatment compliance, and improving the quality of daily life and physical function of patients ^[16,17]. However, this model also suffers from problems such as high costs, risks to nurse-patient safety, and leakage of patient information ^[18,19], which decreases the patients’ confidence and prevents further expansion of this service in the market. Therefore, future research should also be oriented toward handling practical difficulties, prioritizing issues, and improving the quality of care and patient satisfaction.

4.2.3. Factors influencing the application of “Internet+ nursing service” in the elderly group

The emergence of “Internet+ nursing services” helped meet the increasing healthcare needs of the elderly population, significantly simplifying the process of accessing medical care and reducing the pressure on medical resource wastage. However, recent studies have shown that the awareness rate and willingness to use “Internet+ nursing services” among the elderly remain at a moderate level. This could be related to their knowledge and income level ^[20]. The elderly population is generally less educated and has a relatively poor ability to learn new things. Currently, online nursing services are mainly carried out via online appointments. However, the usage rate and proficiency of smartphones amongst the elderly are relatively low ^[21], and it is difficult for them to fully grasp the terms of services and knowledge associated with online appointment nursing. Additionally, many elders are also concerned about not being able to afford the cost of the service ^[22]. Traditional media or small community lectures that are easily understandable can be implemented in the future to promote proper understanding regarding online appointment care services among the elderly. The aging-appropriate transformation and improve the usage rate of smart products should be improved among the elderly population through organizing public learning classes for smart devices or traditional media teaching, etc. Relevant applications should be designed with the principle of simplicity and comprehensibility. In addition, online appointment care services must be incorporated into the health insurance system to increase the willingness of elderly people to use this service ^[23].

4.3. Research trend analysis

This study further analyzed the emerging keywords and found that recent frontier research issues in this field have mainly changed to focus on two fields of research; (1) Research on the construction of the evaluation system of “Internet+ nursing service”; (2) research on the construction of the core competence system of online appointment nurses. Both fields of research promoted the standardization of “Internet+ nursing service,” allowing efficient practice amongst nursing staff and making patients feel at ease. Recently, research in the field of “Internet+ care services” has been gradually expanded to focus on women and children ^[24,25], which could be related to the national fertility policy. With the rising fertility rate, the demand for maternal and infant health care has also increased, and the willingness of the younger generation to accept and learn new things is also higher. Therefore, the “Internet+ nursing service” has greater development potential and research value among women and children’s groups.

5. Conclusion

This study summarized the status, hotspots, and trends of research in the field of “Internet+ nursing services.” The “Internet+ nursing service” has significant development potential in China due to a high proportion of elderly people and a large demand for healthy living. Although the application of this service is still in the initial stages, considerable progress has been made in the relevant business and research in this field. In the future, researchers should focus on establishing cross-collaboration among multiple disciplines, eliminating factors that hinder the development of the industry, and continuously improving the role of “Internet+ nursing service” in alleviating the pressure of medical resource usage and improving the quality of patient care, so that it can become a long-term effective nursing model. In addition, this study only conducted a visual analysis of Chinese databases and did not utilize English databases. Future studies can focus on comparing the progress of Chinese and foreign studies, to guide the development of “Internet+ nursing services” worldwide.

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