

For more information about journal clubs or if you need help from a librarian in searching for articles or critical appraisal, or setting up a club, please contact the library.

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Journal Clubs



Thinking of starting a Journal Club?

Some points to consider...

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What is a Journal Club?

A definition: “ A group of individuals who meet regularly to discuss critically the clinical applicability of articles in the current medical journals” (Linzer 1987)



Journal clubs have been around a long time. The first recorded one was at MacGill University in 1885, and was run by Sir William Osler with the aim of distributing and paying for journals to which he could not afford to subscribe. Nowadays the aims have changed but essentially the practice remains as an excellent way to keep abreast with developments in your field.

Why have a Journal club?



In recent years the importance of “evidence based medicine or healthcare” has grown and there has been an increasing drive to incorporate evidence based practice into clinical practice.

EBM has been described as, “the conscious, explicit and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions regarding the welfare of those in need” (Sheldon & Chivers, 2000). It seems obvious therefore that a well run journal club could be a key method for reviewing current literature and discussing its implications for practice.

Aims and Objectives

Be clear from the outset what the aims and objectives of your club are to be. This will make life much easier when you come to planning sessions and deciding on articles.

“The aims of any journal club should be to critically evaluate the literature and assess current advances for that speciality” (Gibbons, A J 2002)

Schwartz, M. et al, 2007, Improving journal club presentations, or, I can present that paper in under 10 minutes, *Evidence Based Medicine*, Vol 12 p66-68

SVN Research Committee, 2009, Practical Tips for starting a journal club, *Journal of Vascular Nursing*, Vol 27 p18-19

Swift, G., 2004, How to make journal clubs interesting, *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*, Vol 10, p67-72

Thompson, C., 2006, Fostering skills for evidence based practice:the student journal club, *Nurse Education in Practice*, Vol 6 p 69-77

Websites and useful resources

American Journal of Critical Care, 2002, What is a Journal club
ajcc.aacnjournals.org/site/misc/journalclubwebpage.pdf Accessed 21/12/2010

Bull, Sheila, 2007, Clubbing together, Synergy Imaging Therapy and Practice
www.toolkit-publications.co.uk/Content/clubbing.pdf Accessed 20/12/2010

Newman, Tom, 2007, Suggestions for leading a journal club,
www.epibiostat.ucsf.edu/epidem/.../newman.../JOCLUB_12Jun07.doc
Accessed 21/12/2010

BestBets- A critical appraisal database
www.bestbets.org

Centre for Evidence Based Medicine
www.cebm.net

The Cochrane Library
www.thecochranelibrary.com

The Cochrane Library Journal Club
www.cochranejournalclub.com



- What suggestions do you have for the development of the journal club?
- What suggestions do you have for future club topics?

For more objective assessment you could perform pre and post-tests to assess understanding of principles of study design, methodology, critical appraisal, statistics.

Keep a record of events so that learning is logged and can be referred to in the future.



Reading on which this document is based.

Dawson, Susan, 2004, *Journal Clubs*, *Hospital Doctor*, Oct 7, p61

Deenadayalan, Y. et al, 2008, **How to run an effective journal club: a systematic review**, *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice*, Vol 14 p898-911

Gibbons, A. J., 2002, **Organising a successful journal club**, *BMJ*, Vol 325 S137-8

Hartzell, J. et al, 2009, **Resident run journal club: A model based on the adult learning theory**, *Medical Teacher*, Vol 31 e156-e161

Hunt, C. & Topham, L., 2002, **Setting up a multidisciplinary journal club in learning disability**, *British Journal of Nursing*, Vol 11 No 10 p688-693

Kelly, A. et al, 2010, **Setting up, maintaining and evaluating an evidence based radiology journal club**, *Academic Radiology*, Vol 17, pp1073-1078

Kleinpell, R., 2002, **Rediscovering the value of the journal club**, *American Journal of Critical Care*, Vol 11 p412-414

McQueen, J. et al, 2006, **An investigation into the use of a journal club for evidence based practice**, *International Journal of Therapy & Rehabilitation*, Vol 13, No.7 p 311-316

A review of the literature about journal clubs has found a wide range of aims and objectives for clubs, including...

- To provide a bridge between research and practice and foster an application of research to the clinical setting, (Lindquist et al, 1990)
- Locate the best evidence on which to base your practice
- Helping research awareness
- Keeping abreast of current research
- Strengthening critical appraisal skills
- Understanding of biostatistical and epidemiological methods
- Increasing confidence in dealing with evidence/research
- Improving professional reading habits
- Develop team/multidisciplinary relationships
- Fulfil requirements for Continual Professional Development
- To maintain and improve professional knowledge and competence which impacts on quality of care
- To develop local guidelines



Who is your group for?

Identify your group members. You may be part of a multidisciplinary team or a group of colleagues with a common interest in a particular topic. Is attendance at the club to be mandatory or voluntary?

You may want to promote and market the personal benefits of a Journal Club to ensure commitment from your colleagues. Some identified benefits of your Journal Club may include:

- Allows individuals to practice and develop critical appraisal techniques in a supportive environment
- Further develops the analytical, evaluative, reflective and presentation skills of the participants
- Assists practitioners in keeping up to date with current literature / evidence

- To learn from each other- share the reading load
- Promotes debate and confidence
- Provides a good starting point for anyone interested in research or writing for publication
- Supports the application of the best available evidence to clinical and non-clinical practice
- Demonstrates a commitment to evidence-based practice and quality improvement
- Beneficial to patients in ensuring most effective treatments are used.
- It may be possible to get CPD accreditation for your club from your professional body (check their website for information)

Management backing

You need leadership and management support for your club to flourish. A Journal Club can be a powerful marketing tool for your department - by running a Journal Club you demonstrate a commitment to evidence based practice. Getting your Manager to champion your Journal Club will help with implementing the findings of the group into practice.

Determine the size of your group

A Journal Club group generally consists of between five and twenty people. Ideally you want enough people present to generate a lively debate but not so many that some people do not have the chance to speak.

Evidence suggests that mandatory attendance improves the success of a journal club.

Identify the training needs of your group

Your group members may not be confident about searching for articles or you may not want to dive straight in to critical appraisal if you feel that the information handling skills of your group need a refresher.

Critical Appraisal

- Used established CA approaches/structured worksheets such as those produced by **CASP**. Question sheets for different types of research including randomized controlled trials and systematic reviews can be found at www.sph.nhs.uk/what-we-do/public-health-workforce/resources/critical-appraisals-skills-programme
- Another approach is **GATE: critical appraisal with pictures** (Rod Jackson et al, 2006, Evidence Based Medicine, Volume 11, pages 35-38), abstract of article can be found here <http://ebm.bmj.com/content/11/2/35.extract>
- Or you could try the two mnemonics method **PICO** and **RAMMBO**, a “quick” critical appraisal method. See Powerpoint Presentation *How do we nurture evidence based practice?* by Paul Glasziou at www.cebm.net/index.aspx?o=1483
- The presenter could create a **CAT**, Critical Appraised Topic to present using the **CATMAKER software** available to download from the Centre for Evidence Based Medicine website. www.cebm.net/index.aspx?o=1216



Outcomes/Evaluation / Feedback

You may want to think about collecting evaluation or feedback from the Journal Club meetings so that future meetings can be improved. Survey participants regularly to assess their satisfaction with the club. Ask questions like...

- *Was the topic relevant to your practice?*
- *Were your personal objectives met?*
- *Was the discussion well organised?*
- *Was there adequate time?*

Agenda, contents and structure

The structure of the meeting may be as follows:



- ◆ *The co-ordinator welcomes the group and introduces the presenter*
 - ◆ *The presenter presents and appraises the article using the Power Point template found on our website or by leading a discussion using their preferred critical appraisal method*
 - ◆ *An open discussion about the article is facilitated by the co-ordinator*
 - ◆ *Formally conclude each meeting by putting the article in context of clinical practice.*
 - ◆ *The co-ordinator thanks the presenter and summarises the meeting.*
 - ◆ *The presenter for the next meeting is chosen and a date decided*
- You can vary the type of article you look at, to add to the learning experience. Think about whether you want an article on aetiology, prognosis, diagnosis or therapy.
 - Use different article formats, prospective, retrospective, randomized controlled trials, experimental studies, observational studies, case control studies.
 - Using all of the above on a similar topic can help to highlight strengths and weaknesses of each research method.
 - Try looking at two articles on same subject with opposing hypothesis, methods or conclusions, to make people think about which one is preferable to base clinical decisions on.
 - Choosing a classic/seminal article on which practice/ textbooks/ current opinion is based can give an historical perspective and challenge participants to determine if they agree with accepted dogma.
 - You could split an article into sections i.e. one group looking at methods, another data or conclusions, with accompanying questions. Get them to think about them on their own and then get into groups to discuss, unify responses and have a report back session.
 - Have two teams spend part of the session looking at the same article then come together to discuss findings, see if you agree.

The Library can provide training in literature searching (our Finding the Evidence course) and in Critical Appraisal to help your group understand the concepts that underpin your Journal Club. For details of our training sessions, see our website or ask a librarian.

Identify the key roles within your Journal Club

You may want to identify individuals to assume the following roles within your group: .

- Select a **director or moderator**, someone who is committed to the idea and importance of a JC and is willing to give the time. Evidence shows that the most successful clubs are those with strong committed leadership. This person does not have to present every week. Sometimes clubs work better if this person identifies the relevant papers for discussion
- **Co-ordinator / Facilitator** - to lead the Journal Club meeting. The role of the co-ordinator will be to organise date, time and facilities for the meeting, record attendance and maintain administrative records of the meeting. The co-ordinator will also facilitate discussion during the Journal Club meeting. The co-ordinator role may be rotated but for continuity each co-ordinator should facilitate a few meetings before handing over the role.
- **Presenter** - this will probably be rotated each meeting and will involve locating an article, organising distribution of the article to all group members and presenting the article to the group.

Journal Club Director

- Volunteer Position
- Self-nominate
- Duties
 - Ensure smooth running of Journal Club
 - Develop ways to ensure Journal Club remains viable and successful
- Expected commitment: 1-2 hours/week (including JC time)

If **administrative/secretarial support** is available then having someone type up and circulate notes helps effective management of the club.

Preparing role outlines might help to ensure that each person is aware of their responsibilities.

It may help the group to draw up a timetable so that roles are rotated fairly.

Decide on a title for your group

You don't have to be called a 'Journal Club'; you may want your group title to reflect your purpose.

Consider the timing and location of your meetings

- A journal club needs to be held at regular intervals, depending on how much time you have. Some flourish on weekly meetings but it seems more usual to have them monthly. It needs to be regular so people can plan their time accordingly.
- The length of each Journal Club meeting will be determined by how much time you will need for presentation and discussion but also by how much time can be spared by the people attending. Probably an hour if possible is the optimum length.
- The location of your meetings will depend on the geographical spread of the group members. It needs to be somewhere easily accessible by everyone attending.
- Certain times may be better for attracting the optimum number of attendees, e.g. lunchtimes (lunch and learn sessions).
- It's probably best to set aside a regular time, same time/same day each month.
- If you are unsure about permanently committing to a journal club, try for a defined period of time, i.e. once a month for 6 months, to see how it goes and then evaluate.
- You may wish to offer incentives for attendance - refreshments, prizes etc. Food is always a good attraction, (Cakes and Critical Appraisal).
- Regular attendance should be expected and recorded.



Preparing for meetings

- You need to make sure your group members perceive the importance of the Club and put attendance as a priority (success correlates with attendance).
- Make sure that everyone knows their role in advance.
- Ensure the presenter has done their preparation.
- Email about 2/3 weeks in advance to ask for article suggestions.
- Send reminders a week ahead, and make sure participants have the required article ahead of the meeting.



- Remember Copyright rules. See our website for more information.
- Make sure that the summary and evaluation of each meeting is sent to all participants.
- Move furniture around. Seat people in a circle if possible to increase eye contact and promote interaction.
- Record the meeting for those unable to attend

Your topic

The topic may arise from a recent clinical scenario, a gap in knowledge or it may be a subject of common interest, something that is relevant to the whole group. If your group is multi-professional, you may want to draw up a timetable of topics so that different areas of practice are addressed equally.

You could also think about inviting guest speakers who have expert knowledge relevant to that weeks topic.