

Journal Club: Student Participant Preparation Guide

Michael Ioerger, PhD, MPH, CSCS, ACE-FNS

Background

As a health care provider, it will be important for you to be able to critically evaluate academic journal articles and to confidently discuss them with your patients and colleagues. Journal club provides you with an opportunity to practice these skills. Each journal club will focus on discussing one journal article in depth. This journal club will be a group discussion that is focused not only on the findings presented in the journal article, but also the critical assessment of the methodology used and evidence presented in support of the authors conclusions. Expect journal club to be more of a debate and critical discussion, than a lecture describing the details of the article.

Expectations for Participants

As a participant in the journal club it is expected that you come having read the article and prepared to critically discuss the article's arguments, methods, and findings. Every article has strengths and weaknesses. The student leaders and faculty facilitator should guide a discussion that works through weighing these strengths and weaknesses, but it is your responsibility to add your voice and perspective to this discussion.

Preparing for the Discussion

Consider the questions below as you read through the article. You do not need to write out answers to each of these questions. However, they are common journal club questions, so thinking them through will help you be prepared to participate in the discussion. These and other discussion questions may be raised by the facilitator of the journal club.

Research Articles

Introduction

- What is the issue this study set out to investigate?
- Why is this issue important?
- What makes this study unique/novel?
- What is the hypothesis/research question this study set out to test/investigate?

Methods

- Generally, in 1-2 sentences, what did the authors do in this study?
- Do the methods allow for the authors to adequately test their hypothesis/answer their research question?
- What limitations exist based on the choices the authors made with respect to their methods for this study?
 - ◊ Who were the participants? How were they recruited?
 - ◊ How did the authors choose to define/measure their variables?
 - ◊ Are there any choices the authors made in how they conducted their study that could alter its outcome?

Results

- Do the types of analyses conducted make sense given the study's hypothesis/research question?
- What does the data tell you the study found?

Discussion

- Does the authors' summary of what was found in the study match your interpretation of what was found based on the data and methods?
- Do the authors adequately address any concerns you have with the design or findings of this study?
- Do you agree with the authors' conclusions about the implications of their work?
- What do the findings of this study mean for you as someone who will eventually be a health care provider?

Commentaries

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the primary point the author is trying to make?• Does the author provide compelling evidence to support the point being made?• Does the author accurately present the issue?• What assumptions are being made by the author? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What biases do the author seem to have?• Are there any parts of the author's conclusions or analysis with which you disagree?• Do you feel like this commentary will have any impact on the way you practice? |
|---|---|
-