

Running a Journal Club

Basing our practice on evidence is a fundamental part of being an allied health professional. It is important that we are able to critically appraise and analyse evidence and apply findings to our everyday practice.

A journal club can be a useful way to join a group of like-minded professionals together to consider evidence formally or informally and it is great CPD. This leaflet provides a handy 'Top 10 Tips' to help you to set up and run a journal club in your work area.

Tip 1 - Formal or informal?

Journal clubs can use evidence appraisal tools (such as CASP) to provide structure or can serve as an informal meeting about the topic in question. Tools can ensure you critically analyse the article whereas informal meetings may lend themselves more to discussion about the implications in a particular work area. Try each format and see which works best for you.

Tip 2 - Planning

Consider when and where to have your journal club. If a group exists already, could you join that one? Will people come during their lunch break? Are you naturally excluding someone by holding it on a certain day when they don't work? Dates may be best planned in advance for busy clinical services. How frequently will you hold journal club and where will you advertise it? Consider meeting with other peers if you are a lone worker.

Tip 3 – Group leadership

Journal clubs can be held in large multi-disciplinary groups or smaller special interest groups. Consider who is best to 'lead' the group in terms of keeping discussion focused. You could consider a rotational leader. It may be best if the club is not led by a manager, particularly if you want to promote idea exchange. A journal club should be promoted as a 'safe environment' to share ideas and question.

Tip 4 - Topic selection

Journal clubs work best when the topic is deemed relevant to current practice. Perhaps align with a new technique or procedure you are considering or to emerging evidence about how to enable your patients to cope better with treatment/ therapy. If you have a regular journal club audience you could take it in turns to suggest an article. Perhaps keep a log of what the topic has been to avoid duplication. Evidence can be considered broadly, search literature outside of your usual journal publications to offer a new perspective.

Tip 5 - The audience

Are the invited audience familiar with critically appraising literature? Will the thought of it put them off? Try to find ways to offer something for people with all levels of experience and promote the idea that attending will improve appraisal skills. A well run journal club will equally offer something for the less familiar with article reviewing but still challenge the more familiar. Inviting all levels of experience provides a useful forum for learning from each other.

Tip 6 – Promoting collaboration

Have you thought about offering a journal club for a range of staff across a multi-professional team. Different specialties could take turns in ‘hosting’ a journal club to enable attendees to learn about a host of services across a patient pathway.

Tip 7 – Implications for practice

A journal club can be a great opportunity to review changes to common practice and lead to reviews of policies and procedures in your work area. What better output can there be from reviewing literature than improvements to your patient’s care? Use the opportunity to plan small action groups to benchmark, implement changes and review. Align journal club topics to key departmental objectives.

Tip 8 – Refresh regularly

It is very easy for a journal club and regular audience to become stuck in their ways. Try to refresh regularly to check that journal club is still best serving its purpose and meeting the needs of all your colleagues.

Tip 9 - Evaluation

Ask peers what they wish to gain from attending journal club. Try to find out what puts people off if you find that you arrange journal club and only very few people attend. Do people lack time to review the article could this be solved by publishing it a little earlier or do you have time to read it within the allotted journal club session? Could people read the article and send their views if they are on leave - and be given feedback on what the group discuss.

Tip 10 - CPD

A journal club is an ideal opportunity to complete CPD. Remember to reflect discussions back to the implications for practice and include a summary of discussions into your CPD portfolio.

For contact details about your local hub and for further information about **cahpr** please visit our website www.cahpr.org.uk/cahpr

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