

## Practical Tips in Starting a Journal Club

**Journal Club Definition:** A group of individuals that meet to discuss and critique research that appears in professional journals.

### A. Identify Purpose & Goals

1. Generally the purpose is to generate questions & disseminate knowledge
2. Potential goals: Improve critical literature appraisal skills, to discuss controversies, to improve clinical practice, to generate ideas for future research

### B. Designate a Format (meaning who are the staff targeted for participation)

1. Unit-based (within one specific nursing unit)
2. Hospital-based (all nurses within a facility)
3. Multidisciplinary (open to other disciplines such as Respiratory Therapy, Pharmacy)
4. Online/Internet (need the institution's Informatics department to help set this up if feasible)
5. Formal versus Informal (members do not follow a critique checklist in the informal)

### C. Choose a Design (what to present at the meeting)

1. One article (most common & easiest to conduct)
  - a. Identify audience if 1-article design chosen – select a study that will appeal to the group
2. One topic (examine several research studies on a single topic – requires ↑ expertise to critique)
3. One journal (review all articles within a single journal – **NOTE:** may not be all research articles)

### D. Enlist Nursing Leadership Support

1. Not only the concept – but support attendance & the ability for staff to leave the bedside
2. Financial assistance for snacks/meals
3. Determine if nursing CE's may be awarded by working with Staff Education

### E. Designate a Leader

1. Person must be dedicated to the journal club concept & have a basic knowledge
2. Options: APN, Educator, Nursing Manager –
3. Leader's responsibilities:
  - a. Schedule meetings
  - b. Disseminate article to be read
  - c. Develop discussion questions in advance
  - d. May also be discussion leader or rotate that assignment to interested members

### F. Identify Length of Meeting/Location/Frequency/Schedule

1. Length: 30 to 60 minutes (do not make the meeting any longer than 60 minutes – lose interest)
2. Location: make it convenient for the nursing staff
3. Frequency: varies & depends upon resources (monthly/bimonthly/quarterly - repeated)
4. Schedule: Consider lunch & learn meetings/breakfast meetings – survey staff

### G. Meeting Structure (running the Journal Club meetings)

1. First meeting
  - a. Establish purpose/goals/chose format/design/length/frequency of meetings
  - b. Determine discussion leader requirements (present the article & lead the critique)
  - c. Determine participant requirements (example: reading the article before the meeting)

- d. Perform a mock critique
2. Incorporate brief sessions at the beginning of the first couple of meetings that cover:
  - a. What is included in a review of literature
  - b. Different types of study designs – what each means (quasi-experimental, descriptive)
  - c. Discussing p value and its meaning in statistics
3. All meetings
  - a. Discuss & critique article – identify implications for nursing
  - b. Evaluate each meeting
  - c. Identify topics for future review

**H. Other Potential Journal Club Activities**

1. Use a debate-team format during study critique
2. Writing a letter to the editor regarding a study
3. Consider replicating a study

**I. Develop a Standard Discussion/Review Critique Checklist (allows for consistency-see next page)**

**Journal Club Article Discussion Review Critique Checklist Example**

The overall goals of a research critique are to formulate a general evaluation of the merits of a study and to evaluate its applicability to clinical practice.

**General targeted areas when critiquing a research article:**

- The introduction and background information: is the problem statement/introduction clearly described. Is it relevant to the clinical topic selected, what are the objectives or aims of the research article?
- The presentation of the article: Is the research question or hypothesis clear. In the literature review: is it informative, is it research-based and does it support the purpose/problem. Are the references current and from respected sources?
- What study design and methods are used to collect the data? What is the sample size and characteristics, what statistics are utilized – are they appropriate?
- What are the results & conclusions drawn by the author? Any implications for clinical practice? Can the conclusions be generalized to various settings and populations of people?

**A. Description of the Study**

- What was the purpose of the research?
- Why is the research being conducted & why is it considered significant/important?
- Were the research questions, objectives or hypothesis(es) clearly stated?

**B. Literature Evaluation**

- Does the literature review seem thorough & recent (within the last 5 years)?
- Does the content of the literature review relate directly to the research problem?

**C. Conceptual Framework**

- Does the research use a theoretical or conceptual model?
- Does the model guide the research and seem appropriate?

**D. Sample**

- Who were the subjects?
- Were the inclusion/exclusion criteria specified?
- How representative is the sample?
- Was there any selection bias evident in the sample selection?

**E. Method and Design**

- Describe the study design – is it appropriate?
- How was the research conducted (the study procedure itself) & data collected?
- Were the subject's rights protected?
- Was IRBE approval obtained?

#### F. Analysis

- How were the data analyzed?
- Do the selected statistical tests appear appropriate?
- Were the results significant?

#### G. Results

- What were the findings of the study?
- Are the results presented in a clear and understandable way?
- How did the authors interpret the results?
- Were there any study limitations discussed?

#### H. Clinical Significance

- What were the implications of this study to clinical nursing practice?
- How does the study contribute to the body of knowledge?
- Could the study be replicated?
- What additional questions does the study raise?

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