TIPS AND ADVICE
Create your own journal club today.

BEST PRACTICES
- Learn how to maximize participation and get the most out of your journal club.

TEACHING TOOLS
- Use your journal club to reinforce lifelong learning.

DISCUSSION GUIDELINES
- Shape your journal club discussions.

INFORMATION KIT FOR A.S.P.E.N. JOURNAL CLUB

“Get over the idea that only children should spend their time in study. Be a student so long as you still have something to learn, and this will mean all your life.”

-Henry L. Doherty
Getting Started

What Is a Journal Club?

Common Goals of the Journal Club

A journal club is a regularly scheduled meeting of students or practitioners to discuss and evaluate an article or series of articles published in a journal that is relevant to their studies or discipline. The club can be arranged in any number of formats. Journal clubs can help participants learn to read more critically, challenge results presented in articles, and supplement the student’s or practitioner’s knowledge of the field by keeping them abreast of recent developments and research.

Common goals of journal clubs include keeping up with the literature, teaching appraisal skills, and impacting clinical practice. A journal club should establish a goal/set of goals, and investigate which goals its future members would find to be the most relevant. Goals can vary by journal club. For instance, the goals of a journal club in an academic institution might be teaching and learning reading and appraisal skills, whereas the goals of a journal club for a chapter may be to engage members as well as keep members up-to-date in their field.
Participation

Frequency/Logistics

Who Can Participate?

What Can I Do to Attract Participants?

Selling Points

Research shows that making attendance mandatory should be encouraged. Providing food is a motivator for attendance. Most institution-based journal clubs meet at least once monthly during working hours. It is important to have a designated leader or leadership team with a faculty member or faculty member and resident, respectively. The ideal group size is small (12 or fewer). Meeting in a faculty member’s house may make the journal club into more of a social event, which could either be a good thing or a bad thing depending on the goals of the individual club.

Depending on the target audience for your journal club, your participants will vary. Journal clubs are often attended by undergraduate students, graduate students, new or seasoned practitioners, or chapter members. A.S.P.E.N. encourages interdisciplinary participation with representation from dietitians, nurses, MDs, pharmacists, and other practitioners. The audience for your journal club will vary depending on your institution and the goals defined for your club.

You can attract participation by posting a flyer on a bulletin board in your department or a website, sending out an email to people you think may be interested (and asking them to forward it to others who you may not know), and talking to others in person. We have included a flyer for you to use as part of this packet. Just print it out, write in the relevant information, and post it wherever you think people who might be interested will see it.

Selling points for joining the journal club include learning critical reading and evaluation skills, being part of a community, making new friends, and staying current in the field.

Participation tends to start off stronger in the beginning and wane over time.
Uses

Journal Club as a Teaching Tool
Increasing Chapter Participation With Journal Club

You can use your journal club in a number of ways. The goals of your journal club should reflect the audience. If you are a university professor, you can use the journal club as a tool to teach critical reading and appraisal skills, which will benefit your students throughout their careers. If you are an experienced practitioner, a journal club can provide an opportunity for higher level professional development.

Implementing a journal club in your regional chapter of A.S.P.E.N. may also be a good way to drive engagement with members, and a great way to attract new members who may perceive value in this opportunity to network with peers in nutrition support and stay current in the field.
Suggested Guidelines for Participants

Journal clubs should have discussion guidelines in place and a clearly defined organizer/leader. This leader could be a faculty member or senior staff member, or you can involve students by rotating the position of the leader for each discussion. Do what works for your group; no two journal clubs will be the same. Tailor your guidelines to suit the needs of your club.

Consider using the Article Review Form in this packet as a template for participants to prepare for the discussion.
Discussion Guidelines

To facilitate discussions, A.S.P.E.N. will provide a link to a discussion group on ASPENConnect. For the Journal of Parenteral & Enteral Nutrition (JPEN), these discussion points are included in the Journal Club column by Ronald L. Koretz, MD.

For maximum efficiency, we suggest that all participants read the article(s) and review the discussion points/questions ahead of time to think about meaningful points to discuss. Also consider using the Article Review Form found at the end of this kit.

Some important considerations:

- Give everyone an equal chance to talk
- Be respectful of the opinions of others even if you don’t agree
- Be courteous and don’t interrupt others while they are speaking
Getting the Most out of the Journal Club

Tips for Article Selection
Expanding the Discussion

Many journal clubs only discuss original research articles. The most effective journal clubs review articles that are directly in the participants’ field of practice.

A.S.P.E.N. encourages you to continue the discussion beyond the meeting by participating in ASPENConnect community discussion boards for identified articles. Individuals who are unable to join a meeting may choose to gain their professional development solely through the discussion board conversation.
Keeping the Momentum

Journal clubs tend to start out strong, with interest high with the club’s newness. Once this newness wears off, however, excitement tends to decline.

Keep people coming back to your club by making it relevant to the day-to-day practices of being an on-the-job practitioner. For student groups, consider making attendance mandatory.

Provide food for the meetings to encourage attendance. Nobody is going to want to attend if the meeting is at lunch time and everyone is hungry.
Resources and References


Article: Saima Akhund and Muhammad Masood Kadir. 2006. BMC Medical Education. “Do community medicine residency trainees learn through journal club? An experience from a developing country.” (Pertains to community medicine.)


Article: Vanessa Shifflette, Chris Mitchell, Alicia Mangram, Ernest Dunn. 2012. Journal of Surgical Education. “Current Approaches to Journal Club by General Surgery Programs Within the Southwestern Surgical Congress.” (Pertains to a specific region [Southwest] and surgical field.)
Article Review Form

Use this form to help guide your Journal Club discussion. Prepare ahead by reading the article to be discussed and thinking about the questions below. Jot down notes, discussion points, and your own questions to stay on track!

Questions

1. What is the purpose of this article?

2. What was the scientific question the investigators were asking?

3. Can the methodology answer that question?

4. If the methodology is adequate, what is the answer to the research question, and how reliable is that answer?

5. How can you apply this article in your practice?

6. Do the findings from the article support the current policies and procedures in your practice?

7. What could the author(s) have done differently to further strengthen this article?

8. Do you spot any flaws with the research behind this article?

9. Do you see any conflicts of interest that would cause you to question the validity of this article?

10. In your opinion, should this article have been published?
A.S.P.E.N. Journals Club Meeting

Does understanding the latest medical literature make you want to scream? Come discuss the hot-topic research in clinical nutrition and metabolism with us! A great way to make friends and stay current in your field!

Where:

When:

Article:

For more details or to RSVP, please see ________________________________.

Become a better practitioner by staying current in the field. Join the Journal Club today!

Refreshments will be served.