

# JOURNAL CLUB SUPPORT

## Setting up and running a journal club

### **What is a Journal Club?**

A regularly held meeting of like minded professionals, where you read and appraise a piece of research, discussing how it applies to your practice. Usually this takes the form of one person introducing the research followed by discussion by the group. To help you do this there are a range of checklists to help you “critically appraise” the piece of research.

### **Why have a Journal Club?**

To enable you to apply research in your day-to-day clinical practice.

To improve your critical reading skills.

Make you more familiar with appropriate research and help keep you up to date.

Help you become more confident in giving presentations and sharing your ideas.

Help complete continuing professional development (CPD) targets.

### **Things to consider if you're setting up a journal club**

You will need a plan!

Do you have clear aims and objectives for the club?

Who will be invited? Will there be a maximum number of attendees?

How often will you meet, how long will the meetings be, where will you meet – online or in person?

Will the meetings be mandatory?

Who will lead the session, will you have a facilitator? Will this role rotate amongst the group?

How will you choose the article to be discussed? Will the leader choose, or will a discussion be held within the group and an article selected following this?

Will the article be sent out in advance? How long before the meeting?

What form of club are you most interested in – a more formal critical appraisal approach? If so, how will the article be appraised? Which appraisal tool will you use?

Or are you more interested in an evidence-based style where you look more generally at an article, usually one that covers a clinical topic or issue.

What form will the meeting take? Will everyone read and appraise the article at the meeting or will someone give a presentation about the article and then lead a discussion with the group?

## **Running the sessions**

Leader/Facilitator welcomes everyone to the meeting and introduces the session, highlighting what will be achieved in the session

### **Format 1**

Leader/Facilitator summarises the article

- Outlines the question/hypothesis addressed

- Briefly appraises the article using the agreed tool – covering the study design, level of evidence and the results

- The group discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the article – if the group is large attendees could work in smaller groups of 2 or 3

- Leader/Facilitator brings the group back together to discuss more generally, including what implications there are for changing clinical practice or learning for CPD

### **Format 2**

Leader/Facilitator briefly summarises the article

- All attendees read and reflect on the article – or sections of it

- Attendees are asked to comment on the article or various sections of it – you might look at specific themes or ideas the article covers

- Discussion could be as a group or if the group is large broken into smaller groups

- The Leader/Facilitator should have a few questions ready to put to the group to generate discussion for example how does the article meet evaluation criteria, is it current, relevant, who is the author, are they qualified to write on this topic, how reliable is the information?

- Again are there any implications for changing clinical practice or learning for CPD purposes

## **Tips on how to make the club a success**

Set a regular time for the meetings

Make sure the sessions begin and end promptly

Provide refreshments if the meeting is face-to-face

Make sure the sessions are published well in advance

Make sure everyone has a copy of the article, well in advance to allow them to prepare if the session will be online. If the session is face to face have some spare copies available

Try to make sure that the article discussed is relevant to the group and covers a real clinical issue

Formulate questions before the session to encourage discussion from the group. It can be easy for the session to go off track. Make sure you prepare questions to bring the discussion back to topic eg “the paper talks about...have you found this to be the case in your area?”

If your session is online think about strategies to include everyone, ask everyone to introduce themselves at the start of the meeting, ask people to participate using the chat feature as well as speaking out loud.

At the end of the session make sure there is a clear message of what has been achieved

## **How your Clinical Librarian can help**

Can help find articles to appraise and supply copies for you

Advise on the various critical appraisal tools and how they may be used

Talk you through the process and be available to attend your meeting

## **Critical Appraisal Tools**

A good [Introduction to Critical Appraisal](#) can be found in the online programme from elearning for healthcare

There are a variety of checklists that can be used depending on the type of research you are appraising

[Critical Appraisal Skills Programme \(CASP\) Tools & Checklists](#)

[Best Bets Critical Appraisal Worksheets](#)

[Birmingham Critical Appraisal Skills Programme](#)

[Understanding Health Research](#) is a useful tool that will “guide you through a series of questions to help you to review and interpret a published health research paper”

## **Further Reading**

Coghill, J. (2020) Running a successful journal club. *Paediatrics & Child Health*, 30 (2), p84-86.

Dingle, J. & Hooper, L. (2000) Establishing a journal club in an occupational therapy service: one service's experience