

Understanding evidence. How to write and share a good journal club.

As part of my CNS role within the Pulmonary Rehabilitation team at the Leicester Hospitals I regularly present a journal club to my peer group. Our academic leads have encouraged and supported a weekly journal club for the past 10 years. All team members take turns to lead a journal of their choice. The variety of themes presented is astonishing, mainly due to the diversity of the MDT.

The objective of a journal club is to portray the whole paper (often with large amounts of complex information and data) into a clear, easily understandable presentation, lasting around 50 minutes. It is an excellent way of disseminating evidence and good practice. Over the ten years I have been presenting I can honestly say that the actual presentation is just as hard as it has ever been! Presenting to your peers can be both nerve racking and skill enhancing in equal measure, however my skills in writing the journal club have vastly improved over the years. Here are 10 tips for those half thinking about starting a journal club within your own CNS role.

1. Choose a subject you are interested in. This is especially important when considering the impact that you hope your chosen paper to have upon your audience. For example, I am currently the only nurse within our MDT and I try to present papers that my colleagues would not otherwise be exposed to. Being familiar with a topic will also hugely enhance your presentation with the ability to apply background knowledge.
2. Once you have chosen your paper it is important to be as well prepared as possible before the day you present. Find out the time allocated and remember to leave space for discussion and feedback at the end. 'Knowing' your audience is also helpful for gaging the correct pitch. Are they specialist? Will there be students present? Checking the computer compatibility you will be using to present on is another consideration; I have been caught out when trying to embed a video onto my slides before.
3. When preparing your presentation start with your opening slide as the title of the study. Begin the presentation with a short snap of why you chose the paper and what you are hoping the audience to take away from the journal club.
4. Typically slide format are background, study aims, methods, results, discussion and conclusion. Finish your presentation with your own reflections and application to practice.
5. Have a maximum of four points to each slide, it is much easier for your audience to read and retain information that way. When you have read the chosen paper a couple of times you will be able to talk around the points when you are presenting. Take notes with you if you think word prompts may help with any nerves you perhaps expect.

6. Pictures are a real asset on slides. Some learners, like myself, are very visual and will remember pictures associated to important points you may wish them to remember.
7. Rehearse your presentation. I often practice in front of the mirror. If you appear comfortable your learners will reflect this, and are more likely to engage.
8. It is important to dress appropriately but comfortably (I have been known to take off my shoes with my peers, but I would not recommend this!) Stand or sit straight and project your voice to the back of the room. Try to also maintain varied eye contact with members of your audience to engage their interest.
9. Avoid reading your slides. Your learners can do that whilst you talk around the main points.
10. Try and smile, use varied tone in your voice and don't forget your sense of humour if appropriate. Allow if possible to bring your own personality into the presentation. It will enhance your own enjoyment.

When you have finished your journal club presentation ensure your take home message is embedded by asking for questions. This will hopefully provoke a discussion. Remember not to be defensive if they are not as passionate about the subject as you, and listen carefully to the feedback given. This is often when you enhance your own learning.

Finally, be proud of your presentation and your motive for sharing, and perhaps reward yourself with a strong cup of coffee.