

Guidelines for Journal Review

A journal review should provide a brief summary of what was done, how they did it, and the results. *After* the initial summary is presented without critique, *then* the real presentation begins; the methods, results, and conclusions are evaluated, discussed and critiqued. In a journal club setting some prefer to wait until after the presenter has completed step III- the take home message, before opening up the study to group discussion. However, we have found that it is valuable to solicit group input after the reviewer has discussed the strengths and limitations, and again when discussing how the study results should, or should not be placed into practice.

When you review a journal for your own information, scan the abstract to decide if further inquiry is worthwhile, and then go right to step 2. Critique the methods, and the results to decide on the strength of the findings and if the conclusions are justified by what was done, and the relevance to your patients.

I Summary

- Original Citation (include who did the study, and where was it done)
- Overall Study Question (with brief background if necessary)
- The methods used to answer the question (What was done to the subjects)
- A summary of the major results as reported by the author(s).
- The conclusions drawn and the implications made by the author(s).

II Critique- Evaluation

1. Review the strengths and the limitations of the study. Consider:

- Appropriate design to answer the study question?
- Was assignment of patients randomized?
- Were patients, their clinicians, and study personnel 'blind' to treatment?
- Were the groups similar at the start of the trial?
- Aside from the experimental intervention, were the groups treated equally?
- Were all patients who entered the trial properly accounted for and attributed at its conclusion?

**** Stop here and solicit group input on the study limitations, and discussion of the methods, the subjects, and results.**

2. Are there other factors that make the results unreliable?

- Are the results clinically significant? Are the results based on surrogate markers (nitrogen balance, prealbumin, CRP, etc.) or real outcomes?
- Were all clinically important outcomes considered?

3. Statement on conclusions- justified based on the data?

4. Will the Results Help Me in Caring for My Patients?

- Can the results be applied to my patient care? (Are there patients these results should NOT be applied to?)
- Are the likely treatment benefits worth the potential harms and costs?
- Relevance to the patients we deal with?

III Overall Assessment : Your take home message.