A RECOMMENDED JOURNAL CLUB FORMAT
(From Dr. Deb Grady, UCSF)

I.  Background, Context, & Motivation

II.  Research Question

III.  Design
    (E.g., prospective, double-blind, randomized, parallel, captopril-controlled clinical trial)

IV.  Subjects
    A.  Inclusion criteria
    B.  Exclusion criteria
    C.  Sampling (number of centers, etc.)

V.  Measurements
    A.  Predictor variables
    B.  Outcomes (including primary, secondary, others)

VI.  Follow-up
    How often and how long

VII. Analysis
    (Eg, logistic regression; intent-to-treat)

VIII. Findings
    Tables, graphs
    Highlight key results

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The following classic guidelines are from the JAMA series on Users' Guides to the Medical Literature. References:


Guyatt GH et al.  Users' guides to the medical literature:  II:  How to use an article about therapy or prevention.  A:  Are the results of the study valid?  JAMA 1993;270(21):2598-2601.

Guyatt GH et al.  Users' guides to the medical literature:  II:  How to use an article about therapy or prevention.  B:  What were the results and will they help me in caring for my patients?  JAMA 1994;271(1):59-63.

Jaeschke R et al. Users’ guides to the medical literature: III: How to use an article about a diagnostic test: B: What are the results and will they help me in caring for my patients? JAMA 1994;271(9):703-707.


Readers’ Guides for an Article About Therapy

- Are the results of the study valid?
  - Was the assignment of patients to treatments randomized?
  - Were all pts who entered the trial properly accounted for and attributed at its conclusion? Was follow-up complete? Were pts analyzed in the groups to which they were randomized?
  - Were patients, health workers, 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?
- What were the results?
  - How large was the treatment effect?
  - How precise was the estimate of the treatment effect?
- Will the results help me in caring for my patients?
  - Can the results be applied to my patient care?
  - Were all clinically important outcomes considered?
  - Are the likely treatment benefits worth the potential harms and costs?

Evaluating and Applying the Results of Studies of Diagnostic Tests

- Are the results of the study valid?
  - Was there an independent, blind comparison with a reference standard?
  - Did the patient sample include an appropriate spectrum of patients to whom the diagnostic test will be applied in clinical practice?
  - Did the results of the test being evaluated influence the decision to perform the reference standard?
  - Were the methods for performing the test described in sufficient detail to permit replication?
- What were the results?
  - Are likelihood ratios for the test presented or data necessary for their calculation provided?
- Will the results help me in caring for my patients?
o Will the reproducibility of the test result and its interpretation be satisfactory in my setting?
o Are the results applicable to my patient?
o Will the results change my management?
o Will patients be better off as a result of the test?

Users’ Guides to an Article About Harm
- Are the results of the study valid?
  o Were there clearly identified comparison groups that were similar with respect to important determinants of outcome, other than the one of interest?
  o Were the outcomes and exposures measured in the same way in the groups being compared?
  o Was follow-up sufficiently long and complete?
  o Is the temporal relationship correct?
  o Is there a dose-response gradient?
- What are the results?
  o How strong is the association between exposure and outcome?
  o How precise is the estimate of risk?
- Will the results help me in caring for my patients?
  o Are the results applicable to my practice?
  o What is the magnitude of the risk?
  o Should I attempt to stop the exposure?

Users’ Guides to an Article About Prognosis
- Are the results of the study valid?
  o Was there a representative and well-defined sample of patients at a similar point in the course of the disease?
  o Was follow-up sufficiently long and complete?
  o Were objective and unbiased outcome criteria used?
  o Was there adjustment for important prognostic factors?
- What are the results?
  o How large is the likelihood of the outcome event(s) in a specified period of time?
  o How precise are the estimates of the likelihood?
- Will the results help me in caring for my patients?
  o Were the study patients similar to my own?
  o Will the results lead directly to selecting or avoiding therapy?
  o Are the results useful for reassuring or counseling patients?