

## **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:

Oxman AD et al. Users' guides to the medical literature: I: How to get started. JAMA 1993;270(17):2093-2095.

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: A: Are the results of the test valid? JAMA 1994;271(5):389-391.

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.

Levine M et al. Users' guides to the medical literature: IV: How to use an article about harm. JAMA 1994;271(20):1615-1619.

Laupacis A et al. Users' guides to the medical literature: V: How to use an article about prognosis. JAMA 1994;272(3):234-237.

### **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?

- Will the reproducibility of the test result and its interpretation be satisfactory in my setting?
- Are the results applicable to my patient?
- Will the results change my management?
- 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?
  - Were there clearly identified comparison groups that were similar with respect to important determinants of outcome, other than the one of interest?
  - Were the outcomes and exposures measured in the same way in the groups being compared?
  - Was follow-up sufficiently long and complete?
  - Is the temporal relationship correct?
  - Is there a dose-response gradient?
- What are the results?
  - How strong is the association between exposure and outcome?
  - How precise is the estimate of risk?
- Will the results help me in caring for my patients?
  - Are the results applicable to my practice?
  - What is the magnitude of the risk?
  - Should I attempt to stop the exposure?

### **Users' Guides to an Article About Prognosis**

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