

Tips and experience to start off on a journal club

ABC of Journal Club

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After MBBS we were lucky to start our journey through post graduate studies. The curriculum, teaching, learning methodology, study technique everything was different from our under graduate course. Our first attention was on the time table in the notice board. "Journal club" was a new methodology which was unfamiliar to us. That was the first presentation. We were instructed to get particular journal & the topic was chosen by faculty. We prepared for the subject proper related to the article. There were new terminologies, methodologies, mathematical calculations etc. We presented the article, discussion went in a different way. We started to learn critiquing a journal article & more important was the assignment to find out the meaning of basic terminologies, used in a journal; ISSN number, Impact factor, DOI, PMID, MeSH, VOLUME, ISSUE, Type of articles etc. Over a period of two years, journal club has proved to be one of the good teaching learning methodologies in post graduate curriculum. Participation in research methodology, workshop, dissertation along with original articles presented in journal clubs has helped us to approach an article in a scientific way & removed apprehension towards statistics. Our perspective is changed in such a way that each journal club in our department is a learning ground, critically analyzing the pros & cons of the study. We present the basic terminologies learnt in the journal club in the initial phase.

IMPACT FACTOR (IF)

The Impact factor (IF) of an academic journal is a measure reflecting the average number of citations to recent articles published in the journal. It is frequently used as a proxy for the relative importance of a journal within its field, with journals with higher impact factors deemed to be more important than those with lower ones. The impact factor was devised by Eugene Garfield, the founder of the Institute for Scientific Information.

In any given year, the impact factor of a journal is the average number of citations received per paper

published in that journal during the two preceding years. For example, if a journal has an impact factor of 3 in 2008, then its papers published in 2006 and 2007 received 3 citations each on average in 2008. The 2008 impact factor of a journal would be calculated as follows:
 A = the number of times that articles published in that journal in 2006 and 2007, were cited by articles in indexed journals during 2008.

B = the total number of "citable items" published by that journal in 2006 and 2007. ("Citable items" are usually articles, reviews, proceedings, or notes; not editorials or letters to the editor.)

2008 impact factor = A/B .

(Note that 2008 impact factors are actually published in 2009; they cannot be calculated until all of the 2008 publications have been processed by the indexing agency.)

New journals, which are indexed from their first published issue, will receive an impact factor after two years of indexing.¹

International standard serial number (ISSN)

The International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) is an internationally accepted code which identifies the title of serial publications. It is an eight digit number consisting of seven digits plus a check digit which enables a computer to recognize when the number is incorrectly cited. The check digit may be an X; otherwise the ISSN is fully numeric. The ISSN was developed by the International Standards Organization (ISO) because of the need for a brief unique and unambiguous identification code for serial publications. The ISSN distinguishes a particular serial from others. A journal can have two International Standard Serial Numbers, one for the print version and other for its electronic version.

ISBN or International Standard Book Number is the book counterpart to the ISSN. It is a national and international standard identification number for uniquely identifying books, i.e., publications that are not

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intended to continue indefinitely. Unlike the ISBN, which contains country and publisher prefixes, the ISSN contains no inherent meaning.²

Digital object identifier (DOI)

A digital object identifier is a unique alphanumeric string assigned by a registration agency (the International DOI Foundation) to identify content and provide a persistent link to its location on the Internet. The publisher assigns a DOI when article is published and made available electronically.

All DOI numbers begin with '10' and contain a prefix and a suffix separated by a slash. The prefix is a unique number of four or more digits assigned to organizations; the suffix is assigned by the publisher and was designed to be flexible with publisher identification standards. The DOI is typically located on the first page of the electronic journal article, near the copyright notice.³

Medical subject headings (MeSH)

MeSH is the acronym for "Medical Subject Headings." MeSH is the authority list of the vocabulary terms used for subject analysis of biomedical literature at National Library of Medicine. MeSH vocabulary is used for indexing journal articles for MEDLINE and is also used for cataloging books and audiovisuals.

The MeSH controlled vocabulary is a distinctive feature of MEDLINE. It imposes uniformity and consistency to the indexing of biomedical literature. MeSH terms are arranged in a hierarchical categorized manner called MeSH Tree Structures and are updated annually.⁴

Pubmed identifier (PMID)

A PMID (PubMed identifier or PubMed unique identifier) is a unique number assigned to each PubMed record. A PMID is not the same as a PMCID which is the identifier for all works published in the free to access PubMed Central.

The assignment of a PMID or PMCID to a publication tells the reader nothing about the type or quality of the content. PMIDs are assigned to letters to the editor, editorial opinions and any other piece that the editor chooses to include in the journal, as well as peer-reviewed papers. The existence of the identification number is also not proof that the papers have not been retracted for fraud, incompetence, or misconduct. The announcement about any corrections to original papers may be assigned a PMID.⁵

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