Practical Tips in Starting a Journal Club

Journal Club Definition: A group of individuals that meet to discuss and critique research that appears in professional journals.

A. Identify Purpose & Goals
   1. Generally the purpose is to generate questions & disseminate knowledge
   2. Potential goals: Improve critical literature appraisal skills, to discuss controversies, to improve clinical practice, to generate ideas for future research

B. Designate a Format (meaning who are the staff targeted for participation)
   1. Unit-based (within one specific nursing unit)
   2. Hospital-based (all nurses within a facility)
   3. Multidisciplinary (open to other disciplines such as Respiratory Therapy, Pharmacy)
   4. Online/Internet (need the institution’s Informatics department to help set this up if feasible)
   5. Formal versus Informal (members do not follow a critique checklist in the informal)

C. Choose a Design (what to present at the meeting)
   1. One article (most common & easiest to conduct)
      a. Identify audience if 1-article design chosen – select a study that will appeal to the group
   2. One topic (examine several research studies on a single topic – requires expertise to critique)
   3. One journal (review all articles within a single journal – NOTE: may not be all research articles)

D. Enlist Nursing Leadership Support
   1. Not only the concept – but support attendance & the ability for staff to leave the bedside
   2. Financial assistance for snacks/meals
   3. Determine if nursing CE’s may be awarded by working with Staff Education

E. Designate a Leader
   1. Person must be dedicated to the journal club concept & have a basic knowledge
   2. Options: APN, Educator, Nursing Manager –
   3. Leader’s responsibilities:
      a. Schedule meetings
      b. Disseminate article to be read
      c. Develop discussion questions in advance
      d. May also be discussion leader or rotate that assignment to interested members

F. Identify Length of Meeting/Location/Frequency/Schedule
   1. Length: 30 to 60 minutes (do not make the meeting any longer than 60 minutes – lose interest)
   2. Location: make it convenient for the nursing staff
   3. Frequency: varies & depends upon resources (monthly/bimonthly/quarterly - repeated)
   4. Schedule: Consider lunch & learn meetings/breakfast meetings – survey staff

G. Meeting Structure (running the Journal Club meetings)
   1. First meeting
      a. Establish purpose/goals/chose format/design/length/frequency of meetings
      b. Determine discussion leader requirements (present the article & lead the critique)
c. Determine participant requirements (example: reading the article before the meeting)
   d. Perform a mock critique
2. Incorporate brief sessions at the beginning of the first couple of meetings that cover:
   a. What is included in a review of literature
   b. Different types of study designs – what each means (quasi-experimental, descriptive)
   c. Discussing p value and its meaning in statistics
3. All meetings
   a. Discuss & critique article – identify implications for nursing
   b. Evaluate each meeting
   c. Identify topics for future review

H. **Other Potential Journal Club Activities**
   1. Use a debate-team format during study critique
   2. Writing a letter to the editor regarding a study
   3. Consider replicating a study

I. **Develop a Standard Discussion/Review Critique Checklist (allows for consistency-see next page)**

   **Journal Club Article Discussion Review Critique Checklist Example**

   The overall goals of a research critique are to formulate a general evaluation of the merits of a study and to evaluate its applicability to clinical practice.

   **General targeted areas when critiquing a research article:**
   - The introduction and background information: is the problem statement/introduction clearly described. Is it relevant to the clinical topic selected, what are the objectives or aims of the research article?
   - The presentation of the article: Is the research question or hypothesis clear. In the literature review: is it informative, is it research-based and does it support the purpose/problem. Are the references current and from respected sources?
   - What study design and methods are used to collect the data? What is the sample size and characteristics, what statistics are utilized – are they appropriate?
   - What are the results & conclusions drawn by the author? Any implications for clinical practice? Can the conclusions be generalized to various settings and populations of people?

   **A. Description of the Study**
   - What was the purpose of the research?
   - Why is the research being conducted & why is it considered significant/important?
   - Were the research questions, objectives or hypothesis(es) clearly stated?

   **B. Literature Evaluation**
   - Does the literature review seem thorough & recent (within the last 5 years)?
   - Does the content of the literature review relate directly to the research problem?

   **C. Conceptual Framework**
   - Does the research use a theoretical or conceptual model?
   - Does the model guide the research and seem appropriate?

   **D. Sample**
   - Who were the subjects?
   - Were the inclusion/exclusion criteria specified?
   - How representative is the sample?
   - Was there any selection bias evident in the sample selection?

   **E. Method and Design**
   - Describe the study design – is it appropriate?
   - How was the research conducted (the study procedure itself) & data collected?
   - Were the subject’s rights protected?
Was IRBE approval obtained?

F. Analysis
- How were the data analyzed?
- Do the selected statistical tests appear appropriate?
- Were the results significant?

G. Results
- What were the findings of the study?
- Are the results presented in a clear and understandable way?
- How did the authors interpret the results?
- Were there any study limitations discussed?

H. Clinical Significance
- What were the implications of this study to clinical nursing practice?
- How does the study contribute to the body of knowledge?
- Could the study be replicated?
- What additional questions does the study raise?