

# The interdisciplinary journal club: a learning opportunity

**Boris Cantin, Gian Domenico Borasio** and **Michel Beauverd** present the weekly journal club of the palliative care service in a hospital in Lausanne, Switzerland, and what can be learned from implementing such a club for professionals in palliative care

**I**n palliative care, few papers have been published on the topic of journal clubs. However, journal clubs may have positive implications for clinical practice and can also generate ideas for research studies.<sup>1</sup>

Since 2006, an interdisciplinary journal club has been taking place weekly at the palliative care service of the Centre Hospitalier Universitaire Vaudois, an 850-bed tertiary referral centre and teaching hospital in Lausanne, Switzerland. The team comprises nurses, physicians, psychologists, chaplains and social workers. The journal club's instructions are to write a summary of a scientific paper in French and hand it out to the team. A template is available for the analysis of quantitative and qualitative studies. Presentations are restricted to 30–45 minutes, including discussion. After the presentation, a summary of the article and discussion is on display on a board in the

conference room for one month and then stored in the journal club network folder.

## Retrospective review

We performed a retrospective, descriptive review of the articles presented, examining the topics covered, type and source of the articles and profession of the reviewers.

Between 2006 and 2009, 140 journal clubs were held, spread over a period of 39 weeks per year (that is, 52 weeks minus traditional holidays and two months' summer break). The mean rate was 0.9 journal clubs per week. Forty-three per cent of articles came from palliative care journals. The majority of articles were in English (78%) and listed on PubMed (81%). The articles were distributed as follows: clinical trials (33%), reviews (19%), qualitative research (18%), quantitative surveys (16%) and other (14%).

Table 1 shows the topics covered according to the reviewers' professions. Two-thirds of articles were presented by physicians, with 'symptom management' as the main theme. Nurses presented a quarter of the papers, most of which were related to 'audit/quality control', psychology/communication' and 'education'. For the topic 'audit/quality control', the difference between nurses and physicians was significant ( $p=0.0001$ , Fisher's exact test). 'Spirituality' articles were reviewed mainly by the group of 'other professionals', which includes chaplains.

A brief satisfaction survey using numeric rating scales (0–10) was distributed to 15 participants. Answers were received from four out of five physicians, five out of five nurses and five out of five other professionals (one chaplain, two psychologists and two research

## Key points

- Since 2006, interdisciplinary palliative care team members (nurses, physicians, psychologists, chaplains, social workers) of a hospital in Lausanne, Switzerland, take part in a weekly journal club.
- A review of the articles presented shows a rich diversity of themes, reflecting the different backgrounds of the participants.
- Participants reported that the journal club enhanced knowledge in palliative care and critical analysis of published research, as well as improved multiprofessional exchange and team spirit.
- To include staff with limited English language skills, participants have to write a summary of the article they present in French. This enables the participation of non-medical professions, enlarges the scope of the articles and allows true interdisciplinary exchange.



■ A journal club can increase knowledge and improve team spirit

**Table 1. Theme of presented articles according to profession**

Themes	Physician, n	Nurse, n	Other, n	Total, n (%)
Symptom management	56	4	1	61 (44%)
Assessment tools	2	1	0	3 (2%)
Education	5	5	1	11 (8%)
Ethics	5	3	2	10 (7%)
Psychology/communication	9	6	4	19 (14%)
Audit/quality control	3	10	0	13 (9%)
Epidemiology	4	0	0	4 (3%)
Family/caregivers	4	3	0	7 (5%)
Methodological research	2	1	1	4 (3%)
Spirituality	1	2	5	8 (6%)
Total of presented articles	91 (65%)	35 (25%)	14 (10%)	140

managers). It showed a generally high degree of satisfaction with the journal club (mean 7.4/10); physicians were the most satisfied (8.3/10), followed by other professionals (7.8/10) and nurses (6.0/10). Most participants thought that the journal club enhanced their knowledge in palliative care and in critical analysis of published research. Nine out of the 14 participants who replied thought that the journal club improved multiprofessional exchange and team spirit. The journal club was also reported to have a positive impact on clinical practice (6.5/10).

One of the challenges of a journal club in a non-English-speaking setting is to include professionals, such as nurses, who often have limited English language skills. This was overcome by having each reviewer write a summary of the paper in French.

The retrospective review of presented articles shows a rich diversity of themes, reflecting the different backgrounds of the participants. The emphasis on symptom management is a reflection of its importance in clinical practice (70% of the referrals to our team concern

symptom control). One main limitation of the review is that we could not measure the journal club's real impact on clinical practice. Another limitation is the small sample size.

## Conclusion

In our experience, implementing a multiprofessional journal club in a palliative care team is a worthwhile educational effort, as shown by a high attendance and satisfaction among our team members. The additional work of writing a French summary and of using a template is largely offset by the fact that this facilitates the participation of non-medical professions. This, in turn, enlarges the scope of the presented articles and allows true interdisciplinary exchange. Journal clubs can also help to select good papers that can be circulated by the team in the hospital. Further research is needed to measure the impact of journal clubs on clinical practice.

### Declaration of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

### Reference

1. Mazuryk M, Daeninck P, Neumann CM, Bruera E. Daily journal club: an education tool in palliative care. *Palliat Med* 2002; 16: 57–61.

*Boris Cantin, Medical Doctor, Palliative Care Service, HFR Châtel-St-Denis, Fribourg; Gian Domenico Borasio, Professor, Palliative Care Service, Centre Hospitalier Universitaire Vaudois, Lausanne; Michel Beauverd, Medical Doctor, Palliative Care Service, Centre Hospitalier Universitaire Vaudois, Lausanne, Switzerland*