Beginning with this issue of the *Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing*, one article will be identified as a good reference for analysis in your journal club. This issue, the article chosen by the editor is “Quality of Life and Exercise: Strengthening the Connections” (Hacker, 2009; see pp. 31–39). If you don’t already have a journal club at your institution, this month’s Evidence-Based Practice column provides helpful hints on how to get one started.

### Setting Up a Journal Club at Your Institution

First, determine why you want to develop a journal club. Do you want to develop a journal club to meet criteria for Magnet status (Atkinson, Turkel, & Cashy, 2008; “Certification for Accreditation Program and Magnet Recognition Program,” 2008; Murray, 2008; Reigle et al., 2008; Wolf, Triolo, & Ponte, 2008)? Does the nursing staff have a genuine interest in staying abreast of clinical practice? A journal club likely will be more successful if it is of interest to you and your staff rather than if it is developed purely to meet a national standard.

Next, determine what support resources are available in your organization to help you develop and implement a journal club. Most organizations enlist the assistance of support resources such as the hospital librarian, advanced practice nurses, staff development educators, nursing leaders, and members of the Nursing Research Council (Grossman & Hooton, 1993; Reigle et al., 2008; Schwartz & Iobst, 2008; Wolf et al., 2008). Before you get started, determine the scope of the nursing journal club as well as any logistical issues that might affect its success. Do you want to have the journal club for oncology nurses exclusively, or will you consider inviting other nurses to attend? How often and where will you meet? Is the location of the journal club close to the nursing unit, or will the nurses have to leave the unit to participate? Are the size and set-up of the room conducive to audience participation? As you select a location, consider whether you will have audiovisual support resources, such as a laptop computer, projection system, and Internet connectivity. If you decide to keep your journal club more informal, then limiting the use of technology may promote a less threatening environment for participants (Dobrzenska & Cromack, 2005; Griffith, Larkin, Cierpial, Gettings, & Capasso, 2007; Sierpina, 1999).

What day of the week is best to schedule the journal club? How will you ensure that the night and weekend staffs also have access to the information? Most hospitals find that set days and times promote attendance (Griffith et al., 2007). Lunchtime activities or time set aside at the end of a shift may be workable options for your clinical setting (Carroll-Johnson, 2005). Accordingly, the Lee Memorial Health System ascribes to multiple journal club formats to meet the needs of its diverse nursing workforce. Lee Memorial has designed journal clubs around specific clinical content and research methods and even has one specifically for the night shift staff (Lee Memorial Health System, 2008).

After you determine when and where your journal club will meet, determine how long each session will be. Length may depend on the location of the meeting, how long the nurses can be off the unit to attend, and support resources available. If you anticipate awarding continuing nursing education credit through the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), one credit hour is equal to 60 minutes of an organized activity, either didactic or experiential (ANCC). The minimum number of contact hours to be awarded by ANCC is 0.5 (30 contact minutes). The Oncology Nursing Society is an approved provider of ANCC contact hours (Oncology Nursing Society, n.d.a) as may be your state nurses association or local university. A list of accredited providers is available on the ANCC Web site to assist you in obtaining contact education credits for nurses who attend your journal club meetings (ANCC, 2008). You may want to start at 30 minutes and build to 60 once you have momentum established, your audience matures, and additional support is available. Even if you decide not to award contact hours for your journal club meetings, keep track of who attends as well as who leads discussions (Carroll-Johnson, 2005).

What type of article will you select: an article that focuses primarily on research,
evidence-based practice, or a clinical topic? The clinical topic approach is the safest route for a group just beginning a nursing journal club, because staff nurses may not understand complex research designs and can get lost in statistics at first (Griffith et al., 2007). Initially consider selecting articles with global interest to oncology nurses as well as others. However, once or twice a year, encourage your staff to stretch beyond their comfort zone and choose a research article or an article about a clinical problem rarely managed on your nursing unit (Carroll-Johnson, 2005).

Think about how you will distribute articles to the nursing staff. Copyright laws prohibit making multiple copies of articles for distribution. Do the nurses have access to an electronic database so that they can download articles themselves? Could you post articles in a central location for the nurses to review prior to meetings (Carroll-Johnson, 2005)? Other popular venues include online attachments via e-mail and institutional nursing community Web pages (Lee Memorial Health System, 2008; Levin & Feldman, 2006).

Determining the format of your nursing journal club is essential. Will you allow nurses to come and go, or will they be required to stay for the full meeting? If the club provides contact hours, nurses must sign in, participate in the full discussion, and complete an evaluation to be eligible for continuing nursing education credit (Oncology Nursing Society, n.d.a). Will you offer snacks or encourage them to bring lunch, or will food not be allowed during discussion? Food restrictions may limit nurses’ ability to get away from their units if they also must take a separate lunch break to eat. A common trend is to allow or provide food, have an opening period of networking followed by the presentation of the article, and end with group discussion (Carroll-Johnson, 2005; Levin & Feldman, 2006).

Depending on the type of article you choose, you should determine critiquing guidelines. For a clinical article, pose questions such as, “How does the article content compare to our practice, policies, and procedures?” and “What are the pros and cons of the recommendations?” and “What issues are evident with implementing at your practice site?” (see Figure 1). For research articles, consider a simple review; comparison of research methods, results, or conclusions; pre- or post-tests; quantitative versus qualitative design studies; application to practice; and comparing results to regulatory, national, or professional guidelines (see Figure 2). The PP-ICONS (Problem, Patient/Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcomes, Number of Subjects, Statistics/Significance) approach is a clinical format to facilitate research article discussion that provides relevance to bedside nurses (Flaherty, 2004). The format will depend on the type of article and can vary as your nursing journal club evolves.

Overcoming Barriers

Overcoming potential barriers is the key to success. Identifying an article that will interest staff and ensuring coverage of patient care are two of the most common challenges (Fink, Thompson, & Bonnes, 2005; Griffith et al., 2007; Rasool, 2005; Roberts, 1985). Consider using an article from the Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing initially because the articles are more clinically applicable without bogging nurses down with elaborate statistics and research designs. As your group matures, the Oncology Nursing Forum, which also regularly identifies journal club articles, can provide an additional resource for discussions.

Covering patient care is a significant challenge that affects attendance even at the best planned and executed journal club meetings. Repeating a session might be an alternative to enhance participation and dissemination. Videotaping journal club content also might be an option, but alternative presentation styles must be delineated clearly in the continuing education credit application if the nursing staff is to receive contact hours for participating in recorded journal club sessions (Oncology Nursing Society, n.d.b). Having nurse managers or other leadership staff manage patient care while the staff nurses are in journal club meetings may be an option to consider because the more nurses who attend journal club meetings, the more interest that will be generated.

Evaluating Your Success

At the completion of each session, evaluating your success and identifying opportunities for improvement are important. In the evaluation tool, include specific objectives and a Likert-type scale for participants to rank achievement of objectives. Ask whether the information presented was relevant and beneficial to their practice. Have the participants identify what they learned and how they will apply that knowledge to their daily practice.

Figure 1. Article Review Question Guidelines:
• What is the clinical practice question the authors are trying to answer?
• Is the purpose of the article described clearly?
• Is the literature review comprehensive, and are major concepts identified and defined?
• Are the clinical recommendations supported by evidence?
• How do the clinical recommendations compare to your current practice, hospital policy, and hospital procedure?
• What practice change recommendations will you make based on the evidence presented?

Figure 2. Article Review Question Guidelines:
• What is the research question the authors are trying to answer?
• Is the purpose of the article described clearly?
• Is the literature review comprehensive, and are major concepts identified and defined?
• Are the sampling methods discussed?
• Are the data-analysis methods appropriate?
• Do the results, discussion, and conclusions support findings presented in the article?
• Can the findings be applied to oncology nursing practice? What additional work needs to be done? How will you change your nursing practice or unit policies to incorporate findings from the article?
practice. Encourage participants to offer suggestions for future topics. Solicit open comments on the article, presentation, discussion, and format of the session. If you are providing continuing nursing education for the session, ensure that you receive completed evaluations and participants’ demographic sheets for certificate creation.

**Application of Journal Club Principles**

Using the journal club article published in this issue of the Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing, let’s apply the principles discussed. First, is the article clinically focused, or does it concentrate on research? The authors wrote, “The purpose of this article is to explore in greater detail the links between exercise and quality of life in people with cancer and to examine issues that impact the development, implementation, and evaluation of exercise programs for people with cancer” (Hacker, 2009).

The purpose lends itself to a research synthesis for clinical application, rather than a single research study. Thus, guidelines for review need to fit the stated purpose. To get you started, the guidelines for appraisal have been applied to this issue’s identified Journal Club article (see Table 1).

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**References**


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**Do You Have an Interesting Topic to Share?**

Evidence-Based Practice offers information to help nurses integrate research-based findings into practice. Length should be no more than 1,000–1,500 words, exclusive of tables, figures, insets, and references. If interested, contact Associate Editor Susan K. Steele-Moses, DNS, APRN, AOCN®, at susan.steele-moses@ololmc.com.