Five Years of Journal Clubs With Pediatric Nurses and Allied Health Professionals: A Retrospective Study and Satisfaction Survey

Immacolata Dall’Oglio, PedRN, MSN a,⁎, Valentina Vanzi, PedRN b, Emanuela Tioso, PedRN, MSN a, Orsola Gawronski, RN, MSN a, Valentina Biagioli, RN, MSN, PhD a, Serena Tucci, PedRN c, Massimiliano Raponi, MD d

a Professional Development, Continuing Education and Nursing Research Service, Bambino Gesù Children’s Hospital, IRCCS, Piazza Sant’Onofrio 4, 00165 Rome, Italy
b University Department of Pediatrics, Bambino Gesù Children’s Hospital, IRCCS, Piazza Sant’Onofrio 4, 00165 Rome, Italy
c Specialist Pediatric Department, Bambino Gesù Children’s Hospital, IRCCS, Piazza Sant’Onofrio 4, 00165 Rome, Italy
d Medical Direction, Bambino Gesù Children’s Hospital, IRCCS, Piazza Sant’Onofrio 4, 00165 Rome, Italy

⁎ Corresponding author at: Professional Development, Continuing Education and Nursing Research Service, Medical Direction, Bambino Gesù Children’s Hospital, IRCCS, P.zza Sant’Onofrio 4, 00165 Rome, Italy.
E-mail addresses: immacolata.dalloglio@opbg.net (I. Dall’Oglio), valentina.vanzi@opbg.net (V. Vanzi), emanuela.tioso@opbg.net (E. Tioso), orsola.gawronski@opbg.net (O. Gawronski), valentina.biagioli@pec.ipasvi.roma.it (V. Biagioli), serena.tucci@opbg.net (S. Tucci), massimiliano.raponi@opbg.net (M. Raponi).

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Journal Clubs (JCs) for nurses and allied health professionals have been held in an Italian pediatric hospital since April 2008. This study aimed to: examine what type of articles have been used during JCs across 5 years; investigate the potential implications for clinical and organizational practice; assess the participants’ satisfaction about JCs and their contribution to professional development.

Design and Methods: Using a retrospective design, all articles proposed in the JCs were examined. Specific criteria were used to evaluate the implications for practice within the hospital, which were classified as direct or indirect. Using a cross-sectional design, 63 JCs participants were asked to express their opinion and satisfaction about the JC sessions attended.

Results: Overall, 132 articles were analyzed: most of them focused on pediatric care (64.4%) and nursing (96.2%). Almost half of the articles (n = 60, 45.6%) were appraised as having brought implications for clinical practice, both direct (58.3%) and indirect (41.7%). Forty-one participants (12 attendees; 29 active participants) completed a questionnaire about their opinion about JCS. Most of participants (80.5%) reported that the topics selected for the JCs were interesting and relevant to their everyday practice.

Conclusions: Multidisciplinary JCs were considered useful for clinical practice, improvement of the quality of care, and professional development. However, lack of pragmatism and the difficulty to bridge the gap between research and practice were reported as weaknesses.

Practice Implications: JCs can represent a quality improvement strategy for promoting research utilization among health professionals and thereby improving the quality of care.

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Introduction

Journal Clubs (JCs) for nursing and allied health professionals have been suggested as an excellent strategy to promote evidence-based practice (Chabot et al., 2011; O’Nan, 2011; Patel et al., 2011). Indeed, sharing scientific literature might improve the quality of the care by keeping health providers up-to-date with new clinical evidence and organizational models (St Pierre, 2005). The summary, interpretation, selection, and critical appraisal of articles can encourage health professionals to conduct new research with higher competencies in study design, research methods, and data collection processes (Ravin, 2012). Therefore, JCs also represent an educational activity for the participants. Since implementing a successful JC requires planning, communication, facilitation, and evaluation (Fowler, DruiSt, & Dillon-Zwerdling, 2011), it is important to verify if the JC promotes positive outcomes.

We introduced JCs in a research pediatric hospital in 2008. It was hypothesized that the information collected by reading and sharing scientific literature could improve clinical practice and professional or organizational culture.

Background

A JC was defined as an educational meeting in which a group of individuals critically discuss and review current articles published in professional journals and their clinical applicability (Ebbert, Montori, &...
Schultz, 2001). JCs were initially used by physicians as an educational tool in the academic setting and recently as a forum to provide its members with an update on recent research, as well as to teach critical appraisal techniques (Pollard & Taylor, 1997; Rudolph & Stephen, 1997). The earliest reference to a JC is found in a book of memoirs and letters by the late Sir James Paget, a British surgeon and one of the founders of modern pathology. He described a group at St. Bartholomew’s Hospital in London in the mid-1800s as “a kind of club...a small room over a baker’s shop near the Hospital-gate where we could sit and read the journals” (Milbrandt & Vincent, 2004, p.401). The first formal JC was apparently founded by Sir William Osler at McGill University in Montreal in 1875 to review the latest medical research and to recommend new periodicals for the hospital library (Linzer, 1987).

Over the years, the format of JCs has become more multidisciplinary and participants included undergraduates, graduates undertaking clinical training, and clinicians from many health-care settings (Deenadayalan et al., 2008; Dobrzanska & Cromach, 2005; Duffy et al., 2011). Particularly, nursing JCs are considered a strategy to keep participants up-to-date with clinical evidence and it has been recommended as a useful method to promote research utilization and Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) (Hughes 2010; Mikos-Schild, Endara & Calvario, 2010; Patel et al., 2011). Allied health practitioners, such as health professionals of technical sciences and physiotherapists, can also benefit from participating in a multidisciplinary JC (Lizarondo et al., 2012). Participating in a multidisciplinary JC has many advantages such as keeping abreast of new knowledge, promoting awareness of current research findings, and putting different disciplinary perspectives in comparison (Stelmach, 1984). Furthermore, nurses and allied health professionals should develop the necessary skills to keep up with the vast amount of information available, learning to critique and appraise research reports, becoming familiar with the best current clinical research, and encouraging research utilization (St Pierre, 2005; Dyckoff, Manela &Valente, 2004).

JCs have been recommended for different purposes and can be conducted with different approaches, as well as a teaching technique for registered nurses and students (Kerber, Jenkins,With & Kim, 2012; Mattila, Rekola, Koponen, & Eriksson, 2013; Sheehan, 1994; Thompson, 2006). Scholars suggest that the key to a successful JC is promoting awareness, having a facilitator to moderate discussion, and scheduling the club meetings for maximum attendance (Krugman, 2009). The possible JC formats include focusing on one article, one journal, or one topic (Kirchhoff & Beck, 1995). The preparation process of a JC differs widely (Deenadayalan et al., 2008; SNV Research Committee, 2009). During the planning of the JC sessions, considering all the topics to discuss with participants in advance is important to avoid repetitions. It might also be better to select articles with respect to their study design.

This study aimed to: (1) examine what type of articles have been used during JCs for nurses and allied health professionals across 5 years in an Italian Pediatric hospital; (2) evaluate the potential implications for clinical and organizational practice and (3) investigate the participants’ opinion and satisfaction about JCs and their contribution to professional development.

Methods
Design
Two different study designs were used: 1) a retrospective study design to examine the characteristics of the articles and the implications for hospital practice and 2) a cross-sectional survey to investigate the participants’ opinion and satisfaction about JCs and their contribution to professional development.

Sample and Setting
For the retrospective component of the study, all the syntheses of articles used in all the JC sessions from April 2008 to December 2012 were considered. For the cross-sectional survey, 63 nurses and allied health professionals attending the JC meetings since 2008 were invited to participate. The study was conducted in a large tertiary pediatric research hospital accredited by Joint Commission International.

Format and Preparation of our JC
The Professional Development, Continuous Education, and Nursing Research Service of the hospital started holding JCs in April 2008. The JC was for nurses (advanced nurse specialists, nurse educators, and nurse researchers) and allied health professionals (e.g., radiographers, dietitians, and rehabilitation therapists) involved in the research groups of the hospital. They were identified by the hospital managers as clinical specialists or high-potential professionals (Dall’Oglio, Gawronska, & Tiozzo, 2009). The group, through JCs and other learning activities, played a key role in fostering professional development of healthcare providers in every hospital department (e.g. medical, surgical, and emergency). Occasionally, some nurse managers and staff nurses who were interested in a specific topic also participated in the JCs. The average attendance rate at each session was of 12 (SD = 5) participants. JCs were organized monthly and each one lasted about 2 h. An invitation was sent via email to all health professionals involved. The meetings were scheduled in the early afternoon to accommodate healthcare providers at shift change. All participants had their 2-hour time spent for the JCs recognized as monthly work hours and as credits for the continuing medical education national system. The time spent summarizing articles and preparing JCs was considered personal time.

Among the possible JC formats (Kirchhoff & Beck, 1995), we chose the single topic with a preparatory literature search. The aim was to consider an overview of retrievable studies in one session. This approach allowed participants to highlight the scientific value of the selected articles, any discordant findings, their potential applications, and to compare the research results with current clinical practice within the hospital. Considering the pediatric setting, clinical research topics relevant to the care needs of healthy and ill infants, children, and adolescents were selected for the JCs. The specific topic for each JC was suggested by the participants according to their clinical interests, curiosity in specific fields, or questions or problems faced in clinical settings. Moreover, some topics concerned clinical or organizational innovations indicated by the hospital Medical Directorate. The coordinator of the JC selected the final topics. For each topic, three different members of the hospital research group involved in the JC preselected three articles (if available: a review/guideline, a methodologically well-designed research study and one with high impact for clinical practice) and shared them with the coordinator of the JC program. After approval, the three members read, analyzed, and conducted a synthesis of the full text in Italian. The syntheses were structured in a specific format to facilitate the understanding of the original article. The format included a brief synopsis of several subheadings: title of the article, authors, keywords, design, purpose, methods, results, and comments. During the JC each participant was provided with the Italian synthesis of the articles and the original full-text was available for more depth. This approach helped participants share three articles during each JC and offered the opportunity to healthcare providers who do not speak English to approach international scientific literature by reading the synthesis in Italian. The language barrier was considered crucial, since a previous study conducted in the same pediatric hospital reported that only 8.9% of 664 nurses read international literature (Dall’Oglio et al., 2010). To record the JC sessions and make them available to those who could not attend, synthesis files were posted on the Intranet page of the hospital Medical Directorate.

In line with the suggestions provided by Krugman (2009), a facilitator for each JC session was selected. The same facilitator initially led the JC; when members became more confident with research critique and debate, the facilitator role was played by individual
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