Guidelines for Physician Scientist Journal Club

All students in the physician scientist experience participate in the seminar series. Students who are in the year-long experience may receive up to 2 credits while in the MCR program (0.5 credit per term).

The Article
Choose a good article. This doesn’t mean it has to be perfect, but don’t choose an article because you want to show that it is so replete with problems that it should never have been published to start with. Good articles will still have plenty of problems that you can criticize.

Choose an article that represents an important advance in our thinking about the topic at hand. In this respect, it may be wise to choose an article from a high impact factor journal, though it is recognized that publication in a high impact factor journal does not guarantee, nor does publication in a lesser journal preclude the article from being important.

If you have doubts about the article you are choosing, or you are presenting for the first time, ask one or more of your fellow students their opinion of the article before finalizing your selection. You should also consult with your mentor or program directors.

You should send the title and URL for your article to program coordinator about one week before your presentation.

Background
As members of the physician-scientist experience have a wide range of knowledge, it is particularly important to provide a background for the article you are presenting. This should place the article in the context of the body of literature in the field. An important function of journal club is to familiarize others in the program with the state of the art in the area relevant to the journal article you are presenting. You can assume that we all understand basic scientific techniques, but specialized techniques should be explained in a succinct fashion that an intelligent scientist can understand. All this is good practice, as even though you may frequently present your work to scientists familiar with your field of research, both here at OHSU and elsewhere, you will at some point be required to present your work to scientists not intimately acquainted with your field. If nowhere else, then certainly when you accept your Nobel Prize in Stockholm.

It is reasonable to spend about a third of your time on this. If the introduction of your article relies heavily on one or more previous studies, summarizing and discussing those studies may also be very helpful.

The Article Review
It isn’t required that you cover every figure in the paper, particularly in papers with extensive online supplements, but you should try to go though the important findings and the conclusions the authors draw. In doing so, it is important to consider whether the data are of sufficient quality, and whether the data support the authors’ conclusions. In this respect, remember that once graphs are published they tend to look better than they do when they are drawn on the back of a piece of paper towel. This does not mean the data are any more valid or the conclusions any more justified. You should also be prepared to discuss what questions the paper raises and future directions of research.

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In Summary

- Pick a good article with good data and innovative research
- Provide a background for the research
- Explain any non-standard techniques
- Present important findings
- Discuss authors’ conclusions and whether the data support it
- Put conclusions in context of future research