

Creating a Virtual Journal Club: A Community of Practice Using Multiple Social Media Strategies

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The Challenge

A journal club provides an opportunity to critically appraise the medical literature and apply it to clinical practice. Traditional, in-person journal clubs face challenges of scheduling participants and facilitators, recruiting local experts, and having a limited, local impact.

What Is Known

Journal clubs may help develop communities of practice involving “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.”¹ With the advent of modern digital technologies, online medical-related journal clubs are increasing: participation can be synchronous or asynchronous, experts can be recruited from a global pool, and discussions are digitally archived for broader dissemination. In addition, these journal clubs may disseminate educational innovations and interventions to a wider audience for further study, and they provide rapid feedback to authors regarding similar work occurring elsewhere. These online discourses, however, typically incorporate a single social media strategy, such as Twitter-based journal clubs (#UroJC,² #NephJC, <http://www.nephjc.com>).

In an age where we view, engage, and learn from multiple digital streams, a virtual journal club requires a multimodal social media strategy to optimize reach and engagement. In January 2015, a virtual medical education journal club called “JGME-ALiEM Hot Topics in Medical Education” was piloted as a joint collaboration between the *Journal of Graduate Medical Education* and Academic Life in Emergency Medicine (ALiEM, an education blog with 1.2 million page views per year).³ This Rip Out describes how to move from hosting an online, single

Rip Out Action Items

Health professions educators should:

1. Incorporate multiple social media strategies when developing a virtual journal club.
2. Ensure that facilitators are familiar with different social media platforms, including blogs, Twitter, and Google Hangouts on Air videoconferencing.
3. Identify the core team, which consists of at least 4 individuals with unique roles and responsibilities: a primary facilitator, a secondary facilitator/social media expert, a featured author, and an expert discussant.
4. Prepare, host, and conclude the virtual journal club in a 5-stage approach: preparation, promotion, journal club launch, livestream video discussion, and curated dissemination.
5. Use web analytics to trend use and reach as indirect measures of success and impact.

platform to a virtual, multimodal journal club by using a blog platform as the central repository of information to house blog comments, embedded Twitter comments, and embedded Google Hangouts on Air video discussions.

How You Can Start TODAY

1. *Technology platform setup*
 - a. Create a (or join an existing) blog.
 - b. Ensure that each facilitator has a Twitter account.
 - c. Create a free YouTube channel to host the livestreamed Google Hangouts on Air videoconference.
2. *Build the core team:* A minimum of 4 core team members are needed to host a virtual journal club.
 - a. Primary facilitator across the platforms (blog, Twitter, videoconference)
 - b. Secondary facilitator and expert in social media platforms
 - c. Author from the featured journal club publication, to participate in the videoconference discussion
 - d. Topic expert to participate in the videoconference discussion

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Editor's Note: The online version of this article contains the framework used for the blog post featuring the JGME/ALiEM Hot Topics in Medical Education journal club.

3. *Setup for the 5 stages of the virtual journal club*
 - a. *Preparation* (1–3 weeks before launch): Compose and preschedule the blog post with the guiding questions; ensure that the core team members are familiar with the social media platforms.
 - b. *Promotion* (3–7 days before launch): Tweet and e-mail colleagues about the journal club event; register the hashtag with symplur.com to track real-time Twitter analytics; prerecord a promotional video, introducing the paper to embed into the blog post.
 - c. *Launch the virtual journal club* (14-day period): Publish the blog post featuring the journal club article, questions to guide discussion, embedded introductory video, and Twitter board. The framework used for the blog post featuring the JGME-ALiEM Hot Topics in Medical Education journal club is provided as online supplemental material.³ Monitor and facilitate discussions in the blog comments section and on Twitter.
 - d. *Livestream the video panel discussion* (midway through the virtual journal club): Host a live video panel discussion using free Google Hangouts on Air technology to address the guiding questions posed on the blog, as well as participant comments from the blog and Twitter. The audience can view this video live or asynchronously via archiving on a YouTube channel and embedded in the blog post.
 - e. *Curation and dissemination* (after the journal club): Curate and summarize the conversations and themes from the blog, Twitter, and video discussion into a single archived document. Especially for those who missed the initial virtual journal club event, this summary piece can serve as a foundation for continued discussion. This might be posted on the original blog as a follow-up piece,⁴ or in a journal.⁵

2. *Blog analytics*: Record blog post readership numbers and demographics from the virtual journal club using the free Google Analytics service associated with the site. This service requires a 1-time setup on the blog site prior to launching the virtual journal club. Additionally, the number of comments on the blog can be tracked.
3. *Twitter analytics*: After registering the virtual journal club's unique hashtag at symplur.com, use its tracking service to record the number of tweets and Twitter "impressions" that the designated hashtag generated. "Impressions" is defined as the number of times that a hashtagged tweet appeared in users' Twitter streams.
4. *Video analytics*: Record the Google Hangouts on Air videos' viewership numbers and demographics using the free YouTube analytics service, which requires no extra setup.

Resources

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4. Chan TM, Thoma B, Lin M. Creating, curating, and sharing online faculty development resources: the Medical Education in Cases Series Experience. *Acad Med*. 2015;90(6):785–789.
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What You Can Do LONG TERM

1. There is not yet a gold standard for how to measure the success, quality, and effectiveness of online journal clubs. Analyzing web traffic and free data analytics offers a means to measure the "success" of a journal club, with the assumption that bigger numbers equate greater success and impact.

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