

Implementation of a Monthly Journal Club to Promote Evidence-Based Practice in an Orthotics Service

Alice Dudley and Nicky Eddison



Introduction

Engagement with research is a core expectation of the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) for registration and continued professional development for orthotists. However, clinical workloads and service pressures can limit opportunities for structured research engagement. A journal club offers a practical, collaborative approach to critically appraise literature, share knowledge, and enhance evidence-based clinical decision-making. This initiative was designed to address professional standards while fostering a culture of reflective practice.

Aim

Implement and evaluate a monthly journal club within an orthotics service, to meet HCPC requirements for research engagement and to strengthen evidence-based clinical practice.

Method

The journal club was established, meeting for 1 hour twice a month. The facilitator created a schedule shown in figure 1 with a link to the article and critiques using structured appraisal tools (CASP) checklist. Participants were advised to prepare critiques using CASP. Meetings followed a standardised format. Over six months, attendance, participation levels, and qualitative feedback were recorded and a pre- and post-intervention survey assessed participants' confidence in appraising research and integrating findings into clinical decision-making.

Journal club diary

Date	Document	Review Checklist	Present	Completed checklist
02/07/2025	(2018) Post critical: for adults with knee	systematic review: meta-analysis random		2 July checklist.docx
13/08/2025	(2018) Post critical: for adults with knee	systematic review: meta-analysis random		13 August Checklist.docx
27/08/2025	(2018) Post critical: for adults with knee	systematic review: meta-analysis random		27 August.docx
24/09/2025	(2018) Post critical: for adults with knee	systematic review: meta-analysis random		24/09/25.docx
08/10/2025	(2018) Post critical: for adults with knee	systematic review: meta-analysis random		08 October.docx

Figure 1. Journal club diary

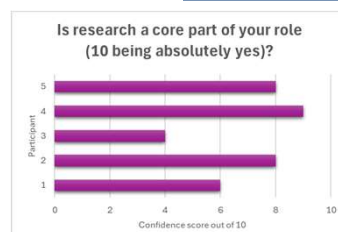


Figure 2a. Is research a core role?

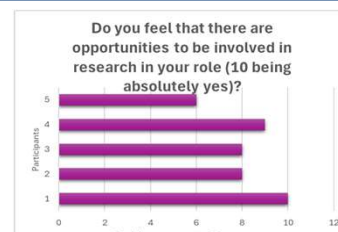


Figure 3a. Opportunity rating

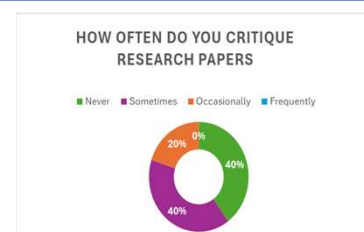


Figure 4a. How often do you critique?

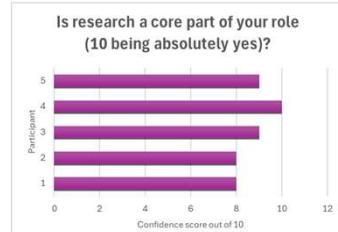


Figure 2b. Is research a core role?

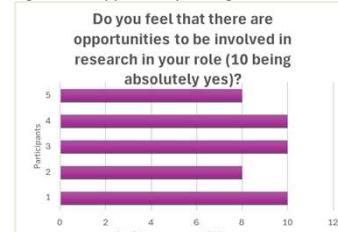


Figure 3b. Opportunity rating

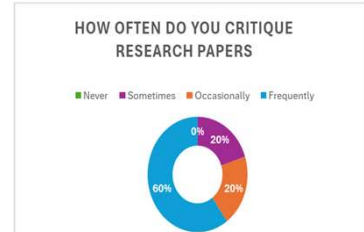


Figure 4b. How often do you critique?

Figures 2 – 4:

a = pre intervention rating

b = post intervention rating

Results

During the initial stages the orthotists had a lack of confidence and understanding in critiquing literature which reduced overall engagement. As a result, the format was changed. Prior to meeting, the participants performed a basic individual analysis, followed by a collaborative in-depth critique using the CASP checklist. Taking this approach has encouraged teamwork and vulnerability as the participants had to be transparent on gaps in their research knowledge. Over the six-month evaluation period, average attendance was 5 staff members per session, including orthotists, apprentices, and students. Attendance remained consistent. Pre-intervention surveys indicated that only 40% of participants felt confident critically appraising research. Post-intervention, this increased to 100%. Qualitative feedback highlighted that participants valued the relaxed culture, learning together, and the structured approach. Barriers included limited preparation time and occasional difficulty accessing full-text articles. Overall, the journal club was perceived as a meaningful and accessible method for meeting HCPC expectations while directly enhancing clinical practice relevance and decision-making. See figure 2 to 4 for further results.

Discussion

The journal club successfully promoted research engagement and strengthened evidence-based practice in line with HCPC requirements. The involvement of all staff groups within the service enriched discussions and broadened clinical perspectives. An element of teamwork-built relationships, encouraged vulnerability, and evoked inclusive collaborative working. While time constraints remain a barrier, the structured, regular format facilitated sustained participation. Future plans include rotating facilitators, expanding topic diversity, and integrating journal club discussions into service quality improvement activities. This model demonstrates that structured research engagement can be achieved without significant disruption to clinical services.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates the importance of appraising research in an orthotic service. Using a structured platform can improve attendance and maximise engagement. Implementing regular practice of critiquing research improves confidence and ability. Therefore, a journal club should be considered as standard practice to meet HCPC expectations.

References

- Health and Care Professions Council. Standards of proficiency: Orthotists and Prosthetists. HCPC, 2023.
- Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP). CASP Checklists. 2024. Available from: <https://casp-uk.net>