

Pharmacology Student Journal Club

General Information

The Student Journal Club allows first, second, and third year students a chance to meet every other week in a relaxed setting to discuss journal articles and current research. We hope everyone takes advantage of this opportunity, as it is a great way to practice speaking in front of a group, critically analyze papers, be introduced to new techniques, and be aware of the state-of-the-art advances in our disciplines.

To make these meetings as productive as possible, there are a few general guidelines that should be considered, both as presenter and audience member:

Journal Articles

1. Each presenter must each select a paper that they consider to be either the single most significant paper within the past 2 years in a particular broad field (broad e.g., stem cells, ion channels, breast cancer, chemotherapy) or the most controversial. They should make a case for why it is significant, controversial, or both.
2. When selecting an article, consider your audience. We do not all come from the same background or have interests in the same areas. Instead of a paper with a very narrow focus having to do only with your lab, present a paper everyone can benefit from – one with broad significance. This could mean several things: the paper uses a novel technique applicable to many uses; the topic covered is one that we do not see in our coursework here; the paper contains interesting and new developments of interest to a wide audience.
3. The presenter should stand while they are presenting, to better engage the audience.
4. Rather than spending time preparing slides consisting of text prompts for themselves, the presenter should focus on presenting the actual figures from the paper (in whole or in part). The presenter is permitted one or two additional figures if they aid understanding of difficult concepts, and a summary slide.
5. Active discussion is a key part to the journal club. The presenter may ask questions and invite discussion from the audience, but the audience members should feel free to ask questions and add comments at any time, whether invited or not. The goal here is to critically analyze papers and techniques, as well as learn something about current science – discussion is important in meeting these goals! Thus, everyone in the room MUST ask at least one question!

Research-in-Progress

1. All of us will be required to talk about our research formally during our time here; the journal club should be an informal way to practice talking about your research and data. The club should be seen as a way to develop and present a complete seminar: introduction, significance, and conclusions, as well as data.
2. Audience members should also critically analyze these talks. While the club isn't here to design your next experiment for you, it is important for the speaker to

receive feedback and suggestions from the audience on both the presentation of data and on the experimental design.

Presentation Format

The schedule of presenters has been put together by the Pharmacology department office (E409) to include all first, second, and third year students. Please check our website for the most recent schedule. If you have a conflict with the date you have been assigned and would like to switch to another date, make arrangements with another student and notify one of the Pharmacology department office of the change. (If you would like to practice your talk before you give it “for real”, you can check the schedule for the conference room (E415) in the Pharmacology department office.)

A few days in advance, email the reference to the journal article to pharmstudents@med.cornell.edu. In addition, please provide enough hard copies of the article, or at least the figures and legends, to have available for your audience. While it is common for people to give PowerPoint or overhead presentations, it is important for the audience to have a copy in front of them to refer to at their convenience.

All talks should be at least 20 minutes long.

Journal article presentations should include the following:

1. In-depth introduction: make sure the audience has the vocabulary they need to understand the paper. For research articles, be sure to explain the questions the researchers are asking and why they needed to be asked.
2. Overview of the data: the focus here should not be on each individual lane on a gel or bar on a graph, but rather the techniques used, why the experiment was done, and what conclusions can be drawn. Discuss any limitations, errors, or omissions that you’ve noticed in the data.
3. In-depth conclusion: what this paper accomplished, what significance it has on a broad scale, what questions are still unanswered.
4. Let us know why you picked the paper – just because you had to read the paper since your PI put it on your bench doesn’t mean your audience should!