

Virtual journal club during the pandemic: a valuable learning tool

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The term “Journal Club” is attributed to Sir James Paget, in 1835, when in a room of his hospital he gathered colleagues and students to discuss medical publications. However, the first journal club was made official by Sir William Osler, and in 1889 he formally organized the first meetings under that name, at John Hopkins University, to discuss the most important medical publications of that time with the club members.¹ This tool is an essential part of the medical training of all specialties, especially in resident’s educational growth and training, but it certainly depends on a structured organization, a work team, and a leader capable of directing and choosing, in the most objective way, the discussion of the selected article.²

With the growing use of technological platforms, greater access to social networks, availability of smart devices, and “anytime, anywhere” access to information, the concept of the traditional journal club has been transformed, giving step to a virtual forum.³ Among the benefits of this modality is the possibility of scheduling meetings at convenient times that do not interfere with the daily work routine and direct interaction with colleagues from other regions, in addition to providing an academic and disciplinary benefit.

In December 2019, the first Virtual Journal Club of gynecologic oncology was held in Colombia, with 20 participants (fellows, gynecologic oncologists, and international guests), coordinated by Dr Rene Pareja (Professor of Gynecologic Oncology) and Dr Juliana Rodriguez (gynecology oncologist and epidemiologist), in order to discuss articles of scientific interest related to the specialty. The activity was conducted weekly, at night, for 1 hour per week. In January 2020, this initiative expanded to other countries including Guatemala, El Salvador, and Venezuela, as well as other



Figure 1 Virtual Journal Club El Salvador-Venezuela.



Figure 2 Virtual Journal Club Colombia.

Corners of the world

groups in Colombia, taking place twice a month, for 1 hour, with the aim of bringing together gynecologic oncologists and other healthcare providers in female cancer from all over the region (Figures 1 and 2).

To date, a total of nearly 50 physicians (gynecologic oncologists, surgical oncologists, fellows) have gathered and at least six articles are discussed per month. Each article is presented in a structured format and discussed by all participants. These presentations are preceded by a basic course in evidence-based medicine and statistics. This academic session generates a historical precedent in the region, capable of encouraging new generations to understand the importance of comprehensive reading in scientific research, to have global perspectives, to achieve changes in the medical practice of their populations, based on robust evidence and under the guidance of a mentor.

Almost two hundred years after this historic idea of Sir William Osler, and especially in a year such as 2020 in which the COVID-19 pandemic forced social isolation,

the virtual journal club continues to be a useful tool in the academic growth of physicians, facilitating communication and learning among professionals of different nationalities.

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