



The Royal College of Pathologists

Journal article evaluation questions

Examples of questions for the journal article component of the Part 2 MRCPPath

What type/design of study is described (e.g. observational/experimental, survey, cohort study, clinical trial, case-control study, review paper; also double-blind, single-blind, cross-over etc.) Discuss the suitability of the chosen method to answer the research question.

Are the aims clearly stated?

Comment on the potential for bias in this study design?

List the statistical techniques used to evaluate this data and critically discuss the author's interpretation of the statistical data.

Was the sample size justified and is it sufficient to answer the research question?

Are the measurements of patient and/or laboratory data valid and reliable? Comment on possible alternatives.

Are the basic data fully and adequately described? Suggest additional methods or measures that should or could have been used.

The study determined a positive (negative) predictive value of XXX. How would the PVP (PVN) have changed in a population where disease Y was more/less common?

List the different types of data used to characterise the patients and/or evaluate the response: discuss how each data type should be compared statistically.

Summarise the methods used to select patients for study. How did the choices the authors made influence the interpretation of the data?

Are there missing data and are they fully explained; do the figures add up?

This study found a statistically significant difference between the two groups/tests, discuss whether this difference is clinically significant.

Describe how are 'null' (negative) findings interpreted, if at all, and their clinical//laboratory significance.

How do the results compare with previous reports (only for absolutely core topics).

Discuss how the results of this paper should change practice.

What further studies in this area should be done and how should they be designed?

In this paper, the author has used XXX as the control. Is this the optimal? Comment on how this alters the meaning of the results and suggest alternative controls.

Is their sufficient detail given such that the work could be repeated in another laboratory?

For surveys:

Comment on the description of the study design outlining whether it is clearly described and whether it is appropriate to the research question.

In this paper, how was the sample obtained? Discuss whether this method may have introduced biases into the results and indicate how this alters your interpretation of the paper.

Discuss how could the results of this paper be generalised to other hospitals/laboratories?

What are the implications of this study to vaccination practice?

What additional information would you wish to know about the study group and how would this influence the interpretation of the data?

What was the control group in this cohort study; discuss any deficiencies and suggests improvements to the design?

Was the response to the exposure or the intervention accurately measured and could any controls have been exposed?

Were the outcome measures appropriate; discuss additional or alternative methods?

Discuss the duration of intervention and outline your opinion on the method and timing of follow-up.

One of the conclusions of this paper is XXX. Could anything else have influenced this outcome and critically discuss these possibilities?