

TRANSCRIPT: How To Read More

On this episode, I want to talk about reading research. It's important for us to continuously engage with peer-reviewed, published research. It's part of ensuring our evidence-based practice, it supports our identities as health care professionals, it gives us ideas for ways to improve our programs, and it helps to put other professional development that we might engage in (such as webinars, courses, and conferences) into context.

BUT...there is so much research available to us, and yet so little time for clinicians to find articles, read them, and feel like it was time well spent! It isn't really required of pulmonary rehab professionals, so it is often the thing that gets dropped during a busy day. And many clinicians don't feel confident when reading an article. "I don't understand the statistics" is a common comment. I just want to say now, loud, emphatically, YOU DON'T NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE STATISTICS! to be able to read a research paper. The article has gone through peer review and so we have to have a little faith that all aspects of the research process, including the analysis, was done correctly.

In this episode, I'm not going to talk about HOW to read a paper, in terms of understanding all the components. I already do that when I talk about specific articles, and I'll devote further episodes to looking at each section, in the future. Today I'm going to talk more about how to find and select articles, and what to do with the information once you've read the article.

The first thing you need to figure out is: when am I going to read? If you don't already have a time, I suggest putting a specific time into your schedule. I suggest putting it for first thing on one day a week when you arrive to work. If you put it at the end of the day, it will always get bumped by something else that comes up. And it's hard to read when you're tired.

Now, if you work in a place where if you are sitting, you are seen as NOT working, then I suggest that you create the vision of working by having the article printed out or on a screen, and having pen and paper and make notes to yourself or comments. Try to hide if possible. Do whatever you can to present the vision of you working and are not to be disturbed. People will see you reading and will see this as idle time, that you're available to help with something. Do whatever you can to either not be visible, or to reinforce that you are working. It's sad that reading the literature is somehow seen as not working but that unfortunately is the reality in some workplaces.

How much to read is your next decision. If you don't read any research at this time, then I suggest one article a week. Like any behavior we are trying to adopt, don't go crazy and commit to a lot of articles. Just one is already more than what you're doing if you're not reading at all. So start small.

Okay, now you've found a time to read, and you've committed to one article a week. But how to decide what to read? There are hundreds of journals and thousands of articles. Well, here are a few suggestions:

1. Pick a few good, relevant to PR journals and subscribe to their mailing lists. They will send you a monthly table of content list and you can select from there. If you don't have access to journals through your institution, luckily there are several good open-access journals that are free for everyone to read. I'll put some lists of journals in the show notes. It's important that if you're just starting out, that you select journals from reputable publishers. When journals went open-access, they started charging researchers to publish in them (because they were no longer getting subscription fees from institutions). And then new publishers began creating journals

that accepted any articles, without bothering to review them, because they could make a lot of money. And researchers would pay it, because there is a lot of pressure on researchers to publish in order to keep their jobs. So we have a lot of publishers putting out what are called “predatory journal” and the research in them may not be trustworthy. But it’s not easy to tell which are the trustworthy journals and which are the predatory ones when you’re just starting out. But you can trust the ones I’ve put in the show notes. Once you’ve selected some, go to their websites and see if you can subscribe to their mailing list. They will then send you a Table of Contents or some other regular update with the titles and abstracts of articles, allowing you to select what you want.

2. Another way to pick articles to read is to look at the reference list of the article you just read. You will find other articles that are relevant to the topic, and are usually good quality articles as well.
3. If you’re really into it, try one of the new online AI tools like ResearchRabbit. This is an artificial intelligence tool that shows you articles in a given topic. You can search for a topic, or an article, and it suggests other papers that are linked to that paper in some way. Kind of like Amazon suggests but for research. The name ResearchRabbit is a good one – with this system you can really go down the rabbit hole. If you don’t know that expression, it means you can really get a bit lost in the topic, as each article you look at will suggest more, and more and more...

When you pick articles, you can read original research, and you can also read articles that summarize original research, such as systematic reviews, scoping reviews, and narrative reviews. Don’t rely too much on narrative reviews – these are the papers that provide an overview about a given topic, but are based on papers where the authors pick and choose whatever they want to support their review of the topic. But they are a good way to learn about a topic for the first time. Systematic reviews and scoping reviews are similar but the author can’t pick and choose, they systematically search the literature and summarize it based on certain inclusion and exclusion criteria.

So read papers on pulmonary rehab, including studies that look at the effects of different interventions, or studies which help to explain the patient populations, or studies which look at the accuracy of different measures. These types of papers are very relevant to pulmonary rehab clinicians. But also read outside of pulmonary rehab, such as the epidemiology of the condition, or risk factors for disease or different health outcomes, or studies on non-typical interventions.

And as you read, you can create a learning plan – to help guide your next selection. Think about what you would like to learn about, make a list, and keep it handy when you select your next article. You can’t read everything, so don’t feel overwhelmed by the mass amount of information out there. There is no ‘must’ here, read what interests you, what you’re curious about, and what you feel is relevant to your practice.

So what to do once you’ve read it? I have a few suggestions here as well.

1. Why not incorporate it into your rehab program? You could have the first five minutes of an education session with you talking about the paper you’ve read. How great that would be – this would be an opportunity for you to practice summarizing research findings into plain language, show your patients you are regularly reviewing the evidence, and talk about the implications for

rehab. A suggestion though – select articles that aren't depressing or focus on the negative aspects of chronic illness. Clinical trials that talk about interesting interventions are a good bet.

2. You could start a journal club. I keep saying this, but reach out to colleagues in your program, or in another program, and see if you can start an informal club. This can be in person if possible, or via Zoom. Don't worry if you read papers together and don't understand everything – your understanding will grow the more you read and discuss. I'll link to the episode on how to start a journal club in the shownotes.
3. And here's a small thing – you can just follow the author on Twitter or other social media if they have a professional account. Many of the authors will have a twitter account, and you can see what other pulmonary rehab related topics they discuss, like, or retweet.
4. And go back to your learning plan, what else would you like to read? Take a moment to pick that next article, dedicate time in your calendar, and continue on. If you like to summarize what you've learned or take notes, go for it. But even in the beginning, reading, reflecting and sharing may be exactly what you need to be engaged in evidence-based practice activities.

I hope this episode has inspired you to read more! Take care everyone, and I'll be back soon for another episode of LungFIT.