



*Perspective/Opinion*

## **KICS Journal Club: A safe space to discuss potentially transformational scholarship with the author**

*By Amy Farkas, MD, MS, and John Yoon, MD*

*In this essay and Q&A, we look back on the growth and success of the Kern Institute Collaboration for Scholarship (KICS) Medical Education Journal Club, which began in September 2021 to address a perceived need for educators across professional ranks and expertise to collaboratively examine research methodologies and means for educational scholarship...*

Not every journal club can tout discussions with authors and access to experts across the country. But the virtual nature of the KICS Journal Club, which meets monthly over Zoom, allows both the author of the paper and participants from within and outside MCW to join the conversation.

Journal Club covers a wide variety of topics from professional identity formation, to EPAs, the Delphi method, survey design, and the writing of position papers. Authors give a brief overview of their paper, then we enjoy discussion with the author and each other. Participation has grown from an average of 14 people a month in our first year to our current average of 26!

We asked Dr. John Yoon, visiting scholar at the Kern Institute and one of the KICS Journal Club's most dedicated attendees, to share his experience:

### **Why do you attend Journal Club?**

Usually, when I hear the phrase “journal club,” it triggers rather unpleasant memories from my residency days where I was struggling to decipher the methodological details of the latest Randomized Control Trial from the *New England Journal of Medicine*—and most of the time, sadly enough, I did so just to offer a slick critique that would impress my peers.

But gratefully, the KICS Journal Club has redeemed the phrase for me! Here we have a safe space for medical educators and researchers in medical education to informally discuss an example (or even skill) of scholarship that holds promise for medical education transformation.

**What is your favorite part of Journal Club?**

The accountability, like a book club!

Have you ever had a book or journal article you have always wanted to read all the way through and yet the time pressures of life lead you to skim it instead? Or do you just settle for reading the abstract?

I know by the second Wednesday of every month at 12:15pm, I will have read at least one thoughtfully selected article by an engaging speaker on a topic geared toward expanding my scholarly imagination in medical education.

But even when there were occasions where I could not read the article in advance, the author's summarized presentation of their own work ended up being a far more meaningful experience than skimming through the article's abstract! I was motivated even more to go back and read the article in greater detail afterwards.

**What is one thing you learned in the last year from Journal Club? Or what was your favorite paper discussed in Journal Club in the last year?**

One memorable session was the Journal Club featuring Dr. Tanya Nikiforova and her team's [article](#), "Best Practices for Survey Use in Medical Education: How to Design, Refine, and Administer High-Quality Surveys." This session was particularly memorable because it happened to be hosted around the time that I was assisting on an ambitious

survey questionnaire for the Kern Good Physician Project (led by Lana Minshew, Suma Thareja, and Justine Espisito).

During the process of developing our survey questionnaire, we had specific questions related to survey design that Dr. Nikiforova's session answered for us—literally on-the-spot. It was a privilege to engage an expert on a topic so relevant to our own research! The KICS team could not have timed it any better. Not to mention that I finally learned how to properly pronounce "Likert" scales. (It's pronounced LICK-ert, in case you didn't know.)

### **Why should educators at MCW attend Journal Club?**

The experience I shared above is one example of why educators at MCW might consider attending the KICS Journal Club! Like with my own experience, you never know how you might discover an answer to nagging methodological question. Not only that, you might find yourself finding inspiration to pursue a research project in medical education after dialoguing with the actual author of a published article.

I am personally inspired when a speaker pulls back the curtain and gives me a behind-the-scenes recounting of what it took to bring their project to fruition. We know that publishing any kind of scholarship in medical education can become a labor of love—and sometimes, there can be personal challenges and real-life drama behind it all.

By being present to an author's live presentation of their own work, I also have the chance to stand in solidarity with a fellow colleague in this unique community of medical educators and affirm the specific contribution they have made for the sake of our guild. It is a small but powerful gesture to communicate to a fellow wayfarer: *"You matter. You worked hard to make this contribution. Thank you."* Or, in the solemn words of one Mandalorian nodding in honor to another: *"This is the Way."*

### **What are you looking forward to for Journal Club next year?**

Based on my experiences these past two years, this journal club has become for me another interdisciplinary “playground” within the Kern Institute—one that brings together scholars and researchers with unique perspectives we all can learn from as we seek to generate transformative scholarship in medical education. For example, I look forward to some potential journal club sessions that might explore the following question: “What role does philosophy have in the day-to-day work of medical education?”

It is a question we started to explore recently in a past [Transformational Times issue](#). Together with my fellow colleagues in the Philosophies of Medical Education Transformation Lab (P-METaL), Human-Centered Design (HCD) Lab, as well as with other faculty throughout MCW and the Kern Institute, I would love for us to engage in dialogue with thought leaders who have written provocative articles that constructively invite medical educators to consider fundamental philosophical assumptions in medicine.

Basic philosophical assumptions undergirding medicine, education, and science (as well as the business enterprise of all three!) can often impede but also help to clarify and sustain more deeply humanizing values and approaches to medical education. If any of our readers have suggestions on thought leaders we could engage through the KICS Journal Club for this topic, I hope they will reach out to your team and [submit their suggestions](#)!

**If you are interested in joining us for Journal Club, you can register here:**

([https://mcw-edu.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_5uS\\_P6LyQwyYdosF\\_lg5mw](https://mcw-edu.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_5uS_P6LyQwyYdosF_lg5mw))

*Amy Farkas, MD, MS, is a general internist and Assistant Professor in the Department of Medicine at MCW.*

*John Yoon, MD, is a Visiting Scholar at the Robert D. and Patricia E. Kern Institute for the Transformation of Medical Education, where he serves as a member of the Philosophies of Medical Education Transformation Laboratory (P-METaL) and the Graduate Medical Education (GME) Pillar. He is also an academic hospitalist and Director of the Program on Medicine and Religion at the University of Chicago.*