A Step-by-Step Guide to Reading Research Articles

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Read the Abstract and find out the basics:
- What is the problem/purpose of the article?
- Spend a little bit of time investigating the background or literature review section.

Discussion:
- What type of research is it?
  - Experimental, non-experimental
  - Which type of experimental or non-experimental?
  - What is the strength of this type of research in the hierarchy of evidence?
- Methods: work to answer the following questions about the study methods including, but not limited to the following:
  - What statistical methods were used for analysis?
  - Are these methods sound?
  - Sample Size N=
  - Population breakdown: who (age, gender, etc.), where (location), when (timeframe of study)
  - Eligibility and exclusion criteria
  - Was there an intervention? If so, what groups was it compared to?
  - Were any tools, indexes or surveys used to measure or collect data?
    - If so, is it a valid tool? Has it been tested for its strength?
- Results:
  - What are the results (findings) of the study? Were they significant?
  - What are the strengths/weaknesses of the article?
- Is there other research related to this topic out there?

Implications of Findings:
- What do the results mean for chaplaincy practice in general? For our practice?
- If it was an intervention study are the results worth investigating for our practice?
Hierarchy of Evidence

Meta-analysis
(many RCTs evaluated together)

Randomized Control Trial
(Eliminates bias and variability)

Quasi-Experimental
(Has a control and experimental group but not randomized)

Non-Experimental
(Descriptive)

Qualitative Research

Case Study
(Isolated snapshot)

Clinical Guidelines/Expert Opinion

Experience

All Forms of Quantitative Research