

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

