

# JTASS Revisited

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Early in my career, I was taught an approach to critical appraisal that began with an acronym, JTASS. This was a brief screen to determine whether or not the article I was looking at would be useful to me. The letters here stand for Journal, Title, Author(s), Site and Summary. In doing a JTASS, thus, you could quickly make a determination that you could use the article, or at least look at it further. Now, keep in mind, that in most cases for clinicians, the idea is to find a piece of information that can be applied to a patient with a specific problem. So this is a quick screen to that.

*Journal*— do you recognize the journal? Is it important in your field? Do you trust it? This is an important question today, due to the explosion of online journal websites. I get, for example, literally hundreds of invitations to submit manuscripts to some new journal, which has a dedicated website, is open access, usually charges a fee, and will happily take my paper. In fact, there have been news reports about the provenance of some of these sites and their lack of quality control. So today, looking carefully at the journal is critical- you have to know it is a good publication.

*Title*— this is fairly self-evidence. But does the title intrigue you? Does it in some way let you know the paper will cover the topic area for which you are looking for information? In normal times, when we get a new journal (or access its home page, more likely), we first scan titles for anything that interests us. Only if it does do we look further into a given paper.

*Author*— do you recognize the author? Is he or she, or is the team, authorities in their field? Do they have, in your estimation, the credentials to ensure that you trust them? Now, if you are looking into other areas, where you may not know the authors quite as well as you might within our own profession, you can always enter their names into PubMed to see what other papers they have published and where they published them. And if you do not know the authors, you may still feel them trustworthy.

*Site*: this is an indication of the location of the study you are reading. Is the site similar to yours; that is, do the patients involved look sufficiently like yours so that you can then translate the data to your own practice setting? It is one thing to compare ambulatory low back patients to those in chiropractic settings; another if the patients are those who are seen in an emergency room, where they are likely far more critical than in the average chiropractic office.

*Summary*— really, this refers to the abstract. If the title is the first thing you look at, the abstract will be the second once you have decided the paper is worth looking at in more detail. Reading over the abstract will give you basic information about the paper, whether a study, a review or a case report. From this, you can decide to read the full paper, all in the hope of locating information to benefit your patient.

It is a quick screen, but a useful one.