
The Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association is also for students

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Are you reluctant to open the Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association? You don't have to be.



Photo: Nmf Tromsø

Medical students must cope with textbooks and websites, lectures and PowerPoint presentations. So will they have time to read a scientific medical journal, and will they benefit from it? We regularly discuss this question on the editorial board of the Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association. In 1998, Steinar Westin and Per Brodal, both of whom are experienced teachers and long-standing members of the Journal's editorial committee, had a meeting with a group of medical students (1). Many of the students were unaware of the Journal before they started receiving 'these heavy magazines in the post', which they often threw 'directly in the waste bin with the plastic still on' (1). Much has happened since 1998. The Journal no longer comes wrapped in plastic, and we are now better at sorting waste. However, many printed issues of the Journal are still likely to remain unopened.

As a student I rarely read the Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association, and many issues were left collecting dust on the shelf among the 'guilty conscience' literature. Perhaps it is still as Westin and Brodal assumed – students think they need to read the entire journal from A to Z in order to claim that they read it (1). That's anyhow what I thought every time I opened my letterbox and found a freshly printed issue.

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After completing my medical studies, I have now been working for some months as an assistant editor of the Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association. This job has given me a better overview of what I like to read, and how I can easily keep myself updated. For example, I do *not* need to read the entire issue from beginning to end. Now, I also see how useful it would have been for me to read the journal as a student. I wish to share this discovery with those of you who need a break from medical textbooks and reference works, who enjoy discussing medicine with your fellow students, or have half an hour to spare while sitting on the bus.

When it comes to staying updated, my best advice is to use the Journal's website. There, you can scroll through the pages just as you do on news media websites. This will be helpful when you later open the printed issue – you will know exactly which pages to turn to. You can also follow the Journal via Facebook and Instagram. As you will quickly discover, the Journal's editorial board is not a group of influencers, nor internet giants, nor YouTube stars. However, you may get a useful little hint that a new printed issue will soon be landing in your letterbox, or that a new episode of the Journal's podcast is available.

For you students, the *Educational case reports* and *Short case reports* will perhaps be of special interest. Although the content may sometimes appear overly specialised, and the diagnoses a little too rare, these articles contain insightful case histories that I believe will inspire good discussions in a study group.

The Journal's clinical review articles can serve as a good supplement to the literature on the reading list. The topics vary from brain metastases and meniscus injuries to autoimmune hepatitis and urinary dysfunction in children. When I was studying in Tromsø, we had a seminar class where we were instructed to read up on a topic published in such an article and then present it to the group. This lent an amusing twist to the regular teaching.

«You do not need to read the entire issue from beginning to end»

You do not need to read original articles in order to say that you read the Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association. Take a closer look at the editorials, debate articles, comments and interviews. They are often an easy read, yet rich in content, and provide a refreshing break from scientific medical articles. Many of the articles are written by students and younger doctors. So, if you have a topic that you would like to write about and that you believe should reach a bigger audience, the Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association could be your channel to the wider world.

If you need tips for books and podcasts for the next semester, you can take a quick glance at the book reviews. There you will find many suggestions, for example for good textbooks on internal medicine, interesting books on pandemics and some of the best medical podcasts in Norwegian. If you are fed up of reading or do not have the time, the Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association's podcast, Stetoskopet, could be a good alternative. It gives you a combination of interviews, conversations and comments on studies that have recently been published in the Journal or elsewhere. The episodes, each lasting 20–30 minutes, can be nice to tune into while doing other things.

My suggestion to those of you who are studying medicine in Tromsø, Trondheim, Bergen, Oslo or at a university abroad, is this: use the Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association actively. You will not regret it.

REFERENCES

1. Westin S, Brodal P. Tidsskriftet også for studentene? Tidsskr Nor Lægeforen 1998; 118: 2935. [PubMed]

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