



Journal Club Podcast: From Idea to Reality in Just a Few (Busy) Months

By Alicia Byrne
Managing Editor, *Wilderness & Environmental Medicine*
Origin Editorial

As Editorial Office staff, we wear a number of hats on any given day: communicator, facilitator, mediator, note-taker, list-maker, email ninja... and new responsibilities are added constantly. The journals we manage march forward with new ideas, initiatives, and goals. The thought of adding one more task to the ever-growing list is daunting, especially if it has to do with a podcast—far from our comfort zone of the written word!

I'm the Managing Editor for a quarterly medical journal, *Wilderness & Environmental Medicine* (*WEM*), the official journal of the Wilderness Medical Society (WMS). We just launched a journal club podcast in which articles of interest from each issue are discussed in an informal, conversational way. While I was initially intimidated by the thought of creating a podcast for the journal, I am now convinced that it adds an exciting element to *WEM* and is a lot of fun to plan and pull off!

The idea of a journal club podcast began simply enough, with a casual email from *WEM*'s new Editor-in-Chief to just the right person, asking whether this person thought there may be a need for a wilderness medicine journal club. Within a week I found myself with a newly appointed Media Editor (the recipient of that original email), a pages-long proposal, and a long list of to-dos. We began preliminary planning in November, and then dove in headfirst at the start of the New Year.

Now, a few months later, with the debut episode complete, and planning for the second one underway, I am in no way an expert in journal club podcasts, but I have learned a great deal and am eager to share! Here's my story of bringing a journal club podcast from idea to reality just a few (busy) months.

How It Works

Our journal club can be thought of as having two distinct parts. The first is the *WEM* journal club, a teleconference consisting of a discussion between the Media Editor (as host), the invited author(s) of select articles, invited commentator(s) on those articles, and audience members. The host introduces the article and shares why he selected the article, the authors provide a quick summary of their article, the commentator gives some feedback and asks a couple of questions, and the host invites members of the audience to ask any additional questions. The teleconference is recorded, and then the recording is edited and polished into the second part, the podcast, called *WEM Live*.

From Teleconference to Published Podcast

The Media Editor is sent the issue lineup about two-and-a-half months before the journal's publication date. Under the guidance of the Editor-in-Chief, he identifies two to five articles of interest, and I send the manuscripts/proofs to him for further evaluation. In making his selections, he takes into consideration the article's value to WMS members as well as to a broader audience of wilderness and/or emergency medicine practitioners and medical students. After he makes his final selections, I send the authors an invitation. This process takes a bit of time, so it is best to allow a week or two for responses and follow-ups.

Once the authors have been secured, the Media Editor selects a commentator for each article. The invitation process begins again for the commentators. If they accept, they read the article ahead of time and come up with several questions. Since the

article has already been accepted for publication and identified by the Media Editor and Editor-in-Chief as being of interest, we make it clear to commentators that this is not the time to critique or pick apart the article as they may do during peer review. We request commentators provide positive feedback and ask thoughtful questions.

The Media Editor hosts and records the teleconference from his location using [Zoom](#) Web conferencing. For our inaugural episode, we had five authors and five commentators calling in from every time zone across the United States as well as from Great Britain, Italy, and Antarctica. We also had a handful of audience members. With so many moving parts, we prepared for the worst and yet hoped for the best. I was thrilled that the teleconference and recording went off without a hitch—almost! To see what unexpected mishap transpired during our first podcast recording, have a listen!¹

Timeline

We follow the quarterly publication schedule of the journal. The podcast is scheduled to publish (post online) the same day the journal issue posts online. So, working backward from that date, we allow plenty of time to invite and secure authors, commentators, and audience members. The podcast is recorded about two weeks prior to the issue's publication. Once recorded, it is sent to a freelance Audio Editor who splices and polishes it into the finished podcast. The podcast is posted on the journal website and the WMS website. The podcast and all articles discussed are freely available.

Lessons Learned

We had no map to guide us in planning and pulling off this first podcast. There was a lot of trial and error, and lots of second-guessing and switching gears mid-plan. It certainly kept me on my toes and gave me something new and

challenging to focus on—a welcome break from chasing late reviewers! Here are a few things we learned during the whirlwind creation of the first episode:

- **Start small.** When a new initiative is launched, the desire to go big is strong. Editors are excited, the idea is fresh, and the energy is high. While it's a good idea to channel that fresh energy and brainstorm ideas, it's also a good idea to pace oneself so that burnout doesn't occur after the first episode. For example, in hindsight, having a journal club of five authors for the first episode was a little much, both from an administrative standpoint (so many emails!) and a time standpoint (trying to fit five articles into a 40-minute podcast). I would have liked to start with two or three articles for the first podcast.
- **Take the time to get organized.** Make sure all the details are ironed out internally before sending out information and invitations. The participants in the journal club are busy individuals volunteering their time and energy. I owe it to them to communicate information in a timely manner and outline exactly what is expected from them as participants.
- **Break every task down into the smallest detail.** This is when I found myself writing and editing intro and outro scripts, writing society and journal news headlines to be read during the podcast, creating a podcast logo as well as a logo for each episode, and coordinating with the Society and the publisher about promotion and website hosting.
- **Plan carefully for CME.** The editors and Society board were very enthusiastic to offer CME credits for listening to the podcast. As those who do CME for their journals know, it's a long and detailed process to get CME credit approved. We proceeded without really researching first what would be required to get CME approval for listening to the podcast, and we ended up not being able to offer it for the first episode, despite spending a lot of time planning for it. But all

1 The first episode of the WEM Live podcast is available via [iTunes](#) for Apple users and [SoundCloud](#) for PC users.

that work has now put us a few steps ahead, and we are on target to offer CME credit for the second episode.

- **Don't be afraid to get rid of what's not working.** The Media Editor has already made some changes based on his experience with episode one. For example, he realized he does not want authors to read a summary of their article verbatim, which is something we had originally required. Instead, he will spend a bit more time working with them ahead of the teleconference so that they are ready on the day of the call to present an informal, unscripted summary of their article.

- **Special considerations for Editorial Office staff.** As editorial office staff, we know all about keeping details organized behind the scenes. I took the time to set up all those details well in advance so that the administrative side of the journal club process could run smoothly. We now have a Dropbox folder to share article proofs, a spreadsheet schedule for each episode, a series of email templates, and a shared Google calendar to keep track of deadlines.

So, this is where the brand-new WEM Live podcast stands right now. Perhaps I will check in a year or two from now to see what has changed and what has stayed the same!

WHAT DRIVES US TO DELIVER...

You do.
 Your goals, your time,
 your resources, your revenue.

It's why we offer you...

Services for every aspect of production – from peer review management, copyediting and composition to author services and fulfillment.

Print and e-products of which you can be proud.

The perfect balance of technology and automation to quality craftsmanship and professional service.

Sheridan-developed processes and workflows to make you more efficient, and the training and support you need to use them.



Services to deliver your content on time and on budget.



www.sheridan.com



Ideas. Delivered.

Sheridan is the proud sponsor of Editorial Office News.