

A win-win proposition: Help us to build better evidence-based information systems for you

Editor's Note: We are re-running and updating this recent editorial. We are closing in on our target of recruiting 1500 "Sentinel Readers, but are not quite there yet. If you have already joined us, please pass along copies of this note to others who might enjoy this opportunity. If you haven't become a Sentinel Reader, please read on!

As readers of *ACP Journal Club (ACPJC)*, you may be interested in some of the developments currently under way to enhance the match between health care research reports and your own practice information needs. *ACPJC* uses validity and relevance checks to identify the best evidence for clinical practice from over 100 journals, but we realize that this range of topics is broader than the range of interest of most clinicians. Furthermore, our relevance assessments in the past have been based on the views of a combination of specialists and general internists, working at either the primary or referred care level. This may or may not represent your own interests well—we think we can do better, with a little help from you.

Recently, we have developed an online rating system that allows us to poll many more physicians as "sentinel readers," to determine the level of interest in a given article from the individual perspectives of physicians in primary care, hospital-based general internal medicine, and relevant subspecialties of internal medicine. This system is now being used to assess the practical relevance of articles that meet our criteria for scientific merit and is being used to help select the content featured in *ACPJC* and to inform authors of PIER, the Physicians' Information and Education Resource of the American College of Physicians. Our primary objective is to help physicians keep up to date with information that they believe is truly relevant to the care of their patients.

Physicians who participate as sentinel readers can specify the type and number of articles that are sent their way and will enjoy many benefits from the process. In addition to seeing critically appraised articles "hot off the press," readers can compare their ratings and comments with those of other readers, both in their

own disciplines and others. Readers are provided with regularly updated listings of "stellar articles," which are those that were most highly rated the previous week. Readers enjoy a choice of continuing education credit options, and credits are automatically tracked and provided annually in summary form. *ACPJC* and PIER will be better, more relevant resources as a result, and new alerting and look-up opportunities are under development.

Currently, there are over 1400 sentinel readers enrolled worldwide in the rating system, and we will continue to recruit until we reach a state in which all readers are perfectly comfortable with the rate at which articles are sent their way. At present, we estimate we will reach that goal with about 1500 readers.

We would like you to join us if you have the following qualifications:

- fully completed formal training in a primary care medical discipline (e.g., general practice, family practice, or internal medicine), hospital or referral-based general internal medicine, or subspecialty of internal medicine (e.g., cardiology, oncology, or neurology)
- in clinical practice at least part-time
- reliable Internet access
- able to respond quickly to e-mail requests for rating articles (rating an article takes about 10 minutes).

Please see our advertisement in this issue for more information on this project, or e-mail us at more@mcmaster.ca to let us know of your interest.

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