

## Introductory Course on Getting to Know Journals and on “Browsing” a Research Paper: First Steps to Proficiency in Scientific Communication

**Valerie Matarese**

UpTo Infotechnologies, Pieve di Soligo,  
Italy

> **Correspondence to:**

Valerie Matarese  
UpTo Infotechnologies – Biomedical  
editing, writing and information  
research  
Via Battistella 14  
I-31053 Pieve di Soligo (Treviso), Italy  
[vmatarese@uptoit.org](mailto:vmatarese@uptoit.org)

> **Received:** June 21, 2006

> **Accepted:** July 21, 2006

> **Croat Med J. 2006;47:767-75**

**Aim** To evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of a course that promotes familiarity with biomedical periodicals and teaches efficient reading skills.

**Methods** A 16-hour course was designed to help inexperienced readers gain confidence navigating the contents of a research paper (instead of reading only abstracts), and make the first steps to critical appraisal. The course consisted of short lessons and small group work in which research papers were read and presented to the class. Participants learned a method called “browsing” that guides the first, superficial reading of a research paper and substitutes abstract reading. The course was administered to 15 hospital physicians and 40 graduate students of molecular medicine, in 4 separate sessions.

**Results** At course entry, 45 of 55 participants normally read the abstract before consulting the body of a research paper. An end-of-course questionnaire, completed by 47 participants, revealed that only 3 would still read the abstract first, while 33 would perform browsing, 7 would scan figures and tables, and 4 would consult another section of a paper outside of their research interests; similar responses were given for a research paper within their fields. For 43 participants, the course was effective in developing reading skills. On a final comprehension test, participants had a median score of 69% correct responses (interquartile range, 56%-80%).

**Conclusion** This introductory course on reading scientific articles is effective in overcoming abstract-only reading and in developing confidence with the research literature. Considering participants’ subjective evaluation and test scores, the course contents are appropriate for both physicians and young researchers.















