

Pubmed commons: Pros and cons

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Madam, I want to draw your attention to a notable addition in the field of medical literature; Pub-med Commons. This is an innovative project by Pub-med which provides an interface to the consumers of research to comment on any pub-med indexed article and receive feedback from the authors instantly. This enables greater interaction and communication within the scientific world and allows for rapid proliferation of knowledge from one end to the other. Along with the commenting system a union of multiple journal clubs is also part of the package which allows many researchers and scientists sharing common interests to share a focal platform. The readers can join Pubmed commons using an already present email and NCBI account or referral by a member or organizing a group of one's institution.¹

The greatest achievement of Pub med Commons is to expedite post publication review and transfer of knowledge. For example a question was posed by a journal club to a laboratory doing an experiment on similar topic of interest and got an instant reply on it.² This is a faster way to share as opposed to the current status in which these communications might take 3 to 6 months to get available for the readers.³ Every innovation that has numerous advantages comes with possible drawbacks, and Commons is not an exception. A study conducted over the pilot trial demonstrated that the percentage of articles commented upon constituted only 0.05% of the total number of articles made available, which gives a hint that the contribution of this forum to the literature might

not be as prolific as expected.⁴ We also believe that commenting should not be only for the purpose to negatively bisect an article. A study done over the pilot phase revealed that negative comments constitute 30% while positive comments 17%.⁵ This could affect consumption of such articles as a negative comment by an inexperienced reader might deter others from using a potential valuable material. Another way to look at it would be that the same study revealed that 1% of the comments had to be removed by the moderators.⁵ This would be a possible challenge when Commons is fully functional and wide range of readers will have access to it.

We firmly believe that the sole purpose of this tool should be valuable additions and constructive criticism and this is the way this project can be of a potential benefit to the medical literature and scientific world.

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