In recent years, I have been amazed at the blossoming number of peer-reviewed articles published in sports medicine. At our Sports Medicine Research Company (www.sportsmedres.org) we screen more than 3,600 abstracts each month to find approximately 20 articles to share on our website or social media. Last year, we identified 29 position or consensus statements related to sports medicine, which was primarily driven by one organization that released 16 statements. This is an enormous amount of information for members of the sports medicine community to process and incorporate into their clinical practice and education. Fortunately, journal editors recognize this issue and are starting to offer numerous resources to help find relevant or high-impact articles. Furthermore, numerous online resources are just a few clicks away, ranging from web access to journal articles (even ahead of print), email alerts for searches or tables of contents, podcasts, online videos, blogs, mobile applications, and social media (e.g., Twitter, Reddit, Facebook, LinkedIn).

If you try these online resources, you’ll be amazed how often you find out about a research study before the journal arrives at your mailbox.

Social media services, such as Twitter, can be a valuable resource to clinicians, researchers, and educators. So often clinicians, researchers, and educators are balancing hectic schedules and may only get to interact a few times per year. However, these social services offer an exciting platform where clinicians, researchers, and educators can discuss ideas. For example, social media was flooded with news articles, podcasts, blogs, and discussions in response to an article where the authors reported that helmetless tackling training can decrease the number of head impacts. Recently Dr. James McDonald (@sportingjim)—a team physician, researcher, and associate editor of a sports medicine journal—tweeted that he believes it is reasonable to think that this helmetless tackling training program could result in less musculoskeletal conditions. As another example, Dr. Patrick McKeon (@pomcbeckon), co-editor for this journal, praised a study about the effect of running shoe types on injuries among runners, after we shared a summary of the study. In his reply, he asked if there may be a pattern of injuries among different types of running shoes. Sometimes the most valuable part of an article is the conversation it provokes on social media.

When we (@sportsmedres) shared an article suggesting there could be a link between musculoskeletal overuse injuries and heart rate variability, the lead author of the paper, Angela Gisselman (@ASGPhysio), replied by welcoming criticism and discussion about this topic. In many ways, the emergence of online resources, such as Twitter, blogs, and podcasts, are providing the foundation for online journal clubs. These online journal clubs could provide a forum where clinicians, educators, and researchers can exchange ideas and further advance clinical care and clinical research. Furthermore, when you use social media to keep up to date, you are not limited to one topic per journal club; you can engage with people one day about new information on concussions, and chronic ankle instability the next day. You can tailor your online experience to fit your needs or areas of interest.
Numerous resources and platforms are laying a foundation for online journal clubs. For example, many journals use social media to share not only selected articles from their pages but also from other resources. For example, the International Journal of Athletic Therapy & Training (@IJATT_HK) has shared links to their articles and articles from other journals. Some journals, such as the British Journal of Sports Medicine (@BJSM_BMJ) and Clinical Journal of Sport Medicine (@CJSMonline), have social media accounts, podcasts, and blogs to highlight recent research that they published (see Table for examples). Unfortunately, these resources fail to trigger the in-depth discussions that occur in a journal club, but one can hope that the discussions will grow as the sports medicine community realizes the full potential of these resources. In the meantime, these resources offer great ways to see what articles are being highlighted and to get some extra free information or insight about these articles. Furthermore, on social media you are no longer limited to local clinicians, but you can follow and communicate with clinicians, researchers, and educators around the world. This makes it easy to quickly see what people with specific interests, such as chronic ankle instability research, are discussing.

Beyond journals, there are other great ways to identify the latest evidence. For example, many researchers are on social media and frequently share research articles and related news articles (e.g., @jbdriban, @pomckeon, @TamaraCVMcLeod, @Jay_Hertel, @DarinPadua, @BPietrosimone). Furthermore, several organizations frequently share research relevant to their mission statement. For example, the Athletic Trainers’ Osteoarthritis Consortium (@atoac) often shares articles published by their members, which often focus on injury prevention, changes after joint injuries, and long-term joint health. MomsTEAM Institute (@momsteam) has a rich online presence, and they often share links to summaries of the latest sports medicine research on social media. Some mainstream news outlets also offer stories related to sports medicine research. For example, the New York Times Well Blog (@nytimeswell) frequently shares links to articles that summarize recent sports medicine research.

There are many online resources that offer brief summaries of the latest research in sports medicine. For example, at the Sports Medicine Research Company website (sportsmedres.org), you can find one to two summaries per week on some of the latest research. We also share links to related articles on social media accounts. In addition to articles, we offer a 5- to 15-min weekly podcast that summarizes that week’s research summaries and other research-related articles. We started our company for clinicians that were too busy to stay in touch with the latest research. Our goal was to provide summaries in a brief, easy-to-read format and to provide a forum where students, clinicians, educators, and researchers can discuss the latest evidence. Since January 2011, we have summarized more than 800 articles, including 99 position/consensus statements. These posts have sparked more than 2,000 comments on the site, which does not account for discussions that occur on social media. While we are excited by the interest in the Sports Medicine Research resources, we believe we still have a way to go to facilitate an online journal club environment.

While blogs and social media help make information accessible, sometimes you just need to answer a question or find out about a test. One strategy would be to search the online resources described above or search PubMed (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/). PubMed is a free resource with more than 25 million citations, which is maintained by the National Center for Biotechnology Information at the U.S. National Library of Medicine, which is located at the National Institutes of Health. There are numerous online tutorials to help you conduct a comprehensive search. You can even set up news feeds or email alerts for your favorite searches by clicking either “Create RSS” or “Create alert” under the search bar. For example, if you are interested in keeping up on the latest injury prevention research, you could search “(sports OR athletes) injury prevention randomized” and get daily, weekly, or monthly email alerts with any new abstracts that match your search criteria. Alternatively, you could create a news feed (RSS feed), which can be read using a feed reader (e.g., www.feedly.com). This option offers a simple way to have all of the abstracts that match your search criteria delivered to a news feed. At the Sports Medicine Research Company, we use a feed reader to have one website where we receive updates directly from the RSS feeds from the journals we are interested in and updates from a few predefined search criteria in PubMed. This enables us to receive > 3,600 sports medicine related abstracts per month in one place.

Although there is also a growing number of research papers that are available for free, some articles are not