Essential Journal Study

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THE MATALIA GROUP

Executive Summary

Savvy media planning requires a promotional budget to be maximally allocated to the most efficient channels first. The *Essential Journal Study*, conducted since 1989, facilitates such planning by identifying the publications physicians consider essential to their practice and read first and most frequently. To assist media planning further, it examines readers' use of technologies and in-person contact with advertisers' professional representatives.

This 2020 wave of the study was conducted among gastroenterologists, hematologists, internists, oncologists, and rheumatologists using an unaided and blinded readership model. It asked these participants to handwrite the names of four publications they viewed as essential to their practice and made an effort to read ("Essential"). In seeking this feedback, it neither showed neither publications' titles nor front covers. It also withheld the identity of the study sponsor from the participants to minimize the response bias.

The study instrument was distributed by direct mail to 1,870 randomly selected physicians whose primary practice focus was one of the five target specialties. The contact list was obtained from PTM One Source. Overall, 355 participants (19%) offered usable returns. The fieldwork was conducted between February 18 and May 3, i.e., during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. Although this timing lowered the response rates compared to prior studies, the fieldwork did produce statically adequate returns for key metrics for all five subspecialties. The analysis, conducted within each subspecialty, offered the following highlights:

- **Physicians' Essential Journals**. The *New England Journal of Medicine* ("NEJM") was the #1 Essential journal among internists and, more surprisingly, also among oncologists and rheumatologists displacing official society journals in these subspecialties. Among gastroenterologists and hematologists, it ranked second and next to society flagship publications. Moreover, NEJM managed to widen its base of Essential readers relative to 2018 (or 2016), while its lead competitors' readerships remained unchanged or shrunk.

- **Readership Rationale**. The NEJM readers underscored that the articles offering practice-changing, cutting-edge clinical trials prepared with gold editorial standards were why they viewed the journal as Essential. The study further demonstrated that (a.) high-perceived value of a printed NEJM deepened its multi-channel reader engagement, and (b.) congealed readers' trust in its content for clinical decisions.

- **Value of Medical Journals**. The study proved that medical journals in general are a major, if not the major, resource for physicians for keeping up their awareness of pharmaceutical products. The peer-review feature of the journals elevated physicians' trust in them above that in CME courses, society conferences, or colleagues.

- **Use of Mobile Devices**. Mobile computers are ubiquitous in medicine now, according to this study. Portability, Wi-Fi, bandwidth, feature-rich hardware, and institutional digital licenses have made smartphones, particularly, physicians' steady companions in seeking professional information.

- **Use of Websites to Access Medical Publications**. UpToDate has become the *de facto* web-based aggregator in medical practice, serving diverse user needs. There were a sizeable proportion of readers, however, that continue to rely on NEJM.org and society-owned websites.

- **Exposure to Pharmaceutical Representatives**. A majority of physicians in this study had met with both detail representatives and medical science liaisons. Between 10 to 30% of the physicians depending on a subspecialty had not seen any industry representatives.

In conclusion, using a time-tested research model, this study once again documented that the *New England Journal of Medicine* is a cost-efficient, high-engagement channel in internal medicine and subspecialties.

Objectives and Methodology

Objectives

The Matalia Group developed the *Essential Journal* model to provide a unique framework for a reader-based differentiation of the *New England Journal of Medicine* from its internal medicine and subspecialty competitors. The study had the following specific goals:

1. Identify the publications physicians view and read as essential to their practice ("Essential") and the frequency of readers' visits to these publications' websites;
2. Understand readers' rationale for viewing a journal as Essential;
3. Explore readers' trust in their Essential publications' practical value;
4. Prioritize physicians' sources of pharmaceutical product information;
5. Examine respondents' use of smartphones, tablets, and medical websites for their practice; and
6. Profile their contacts with pharmaceutical representatives and medical science liaisons.

Methodology

This study was conducted among primary specialty gastroenterologists, hematologists, internists, oncologists, and rheumatologists selected randomly from the mailing lists of PTM One Source, Canada. Their practice settings and languages were proportionate to their respective universe.

The survey instrument consisted of open-ended and multiple-choice questions. The question seeking to identify Essential journals included the definition of "Essential." It asked the participants to handwrite the names of up to four publications without offering any names or photographs. The questionnaire was printed in French for the physicians in the province of Quebec. The survey package included a nominal honorarium of $10. The identity of the study sponsor was withheld.

To obtain a statistically significant number of responses, two waves of the surveys were mailed. The study was fielded between February 18 and May 31, 2020. At cutoff, The Matalia Group had received 355 usable returns out of the 1,870 delivered surveys. The following are the survey logistics:

Specialty	Total Delivered	Usable Returns	Response Rate (%)
Gastroenterology	345	63	18
Hematology	340	63	19
Internal Medicine	484	74	15
Oncology	393	85	22
Rheumatology	308	70	23
Total	**1,870**	**355**	**19**

Although the above response rates were slightly lower compared to previous waves due to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, they were statistically sufficient for assessment of key metrics of the study. The data were analyzed by subspecialty. Summaries and data tables are presented below by specialty. The results are compared with those from the 2016 and 2018 studies, where meaningful. For further details, please contact Matt McMullan at mmcmullan@mediajls.com.

Oncology Report

Summary

1. **Receivership and Readership** (Tables 1a -2b). Nine in ten oncologists (89.4%), the highest percentage, read the *New England Journal of Medicine* ("NEJM") as their Essential journal. This readership was 10% above that in 2018. A majority of readers (53.9%) indicated that they had read NEJM most frequently. An equal proportion (52.6%) had a personal or library subscription to it. One in two readers (50%) also visited NEJM.org weekly for additional data on the printed articles, archived issues, and videos or images. Interest in the journal's videos and graphical data was twice as high as that in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology* ("JCO"), the official journal of the American Society of Clinical Oncology ("ASCO").

   JCO and *The Lancet Oncology* were the next two leading Essential journals. Their Essential readerships were significantly smaller than NEJM's (78.8% and 32.9%, respectively) and statistically the same as in 2018.

2. **Reasons for Regarding NEJM as Essential** (Tables 3a and 3b). NEJM's influence on practice decisions, groundbreaking clinical trials, up to date information, and editorial quality *sans tache* were the primary reasons why most readers valued it as Essential.

3. **Trust in Essential Publications** (Table 4). The readers were asked how strongly they trusted Essential publications for fulfilling their practice needs. Nearly all of them (≥93%) trusted NEJM's content for guiding their clinical decision, keeping up with therapeutic changes and breakthroughs, and preparing peer-to-peer treatment discussions. Because of the team approach used in cancer care, NEJM's influence on oncologists likely extends to other subspecialists beyond oncology.

4. **Value of Product Ads in Essential Publications** (Table 5). One in four oncologists (23.5%) considered product ads in their Essential publications *Somewhat* to *Very* informative.

5. **Leading Sources of Pharmaceutical Product Information** (Tables 6 and 7). Medical journals, society conferences, and CME courses were the three most-frequented sources of pharmaceutical product information, with medical journals being the distinct leader (65.9%) among them. The highest percentage of oncologists (57.6%) also viewed them as the most credible means of obtaining pharmaceutical product information.

6. **Use of Mobile Devices** (Tables 8 and 9). Three in four oncologists (74.1%) used their smartphones and one in four (23.5%) their tablet computers to access medical information. Between six to eight in ten users used these devices multiple times each day for this purpose. Fewer than one in five (17.6%) either did not use these devices for medical information or did not own them.

7. **Websites Visited** (Table 10). UpToDate, ASCO, and BCCancer were the three most-regularly-visited websites for professional information. They were visited by 56.5%, 22.4% and 18.8% of the oncologists, respectively. One in six oncologists (15.3%) also visited NEJM.org regularly.

8. **Detail Representatives and Medical Science Liaisons** (Table 11). Three in four oncologists (75.3%) had met with detail representatives and seven in ten (71.8%) with medical science liaisons. About one in ten (11.8%) had not seen either representative.

Results

Question: **Please write the names of the MEDICAL PUBLICATIONS you consider ESSENTIAL to your practice and make an effort to read** (starting with the most frequently read publication).

Table 1a
(n = 85)

Top Ten Printed Essential Journals	Readers (%)
The New England Journal of Medicine	**89.4**
Journal of Clinical Oncology	78.8
The Lancet Oncology	32.9
The Lancet	14.1
Blood	9.4
Annals of Oncology	9.4
Current Opinions in Oncology	9.4
Canadian Medical Association Journal	7.1
Journal of Thoracic Oncology	7.1
Journal of the American Medical Association Oncology	5.9

Table 1b

Journal Name	n	1st Mentions (%)	2nd Mentions (%)	3rd Mentions (%)	4th Mentions (%)	Total (%)
The New England Journal of Medicine	**76**	**53.9**	**23.7**	**14.5**	**7.9**	**100.0**
Journal of Clinical Oncology	67	40.3	37.3	17.9	4.5	100.0
The Lancet Oncology	28	10.7	28.6	53.6	7.1	100.0

Results

Question: **How do you access the printed copies of the ESSENTIAL journals?**

Table 1c

Journal Name	n	Subscribe (%)	Receive Free (%)	Colleague's Copy (%)	Library Copy (%)	Total (%)
The New England Journal of Medicine	**76**	**30.3**	**40.8**	**6.6**	**22.3**	**100.0**
Journal of Clinical Oncology	67	50.7	26.9	3.0	19.4	100.0
The Lancet Oncology	28	17.9	64.3	0.0	17.8	100.0

Results

Question: **How often do you visit the websites of these journals?**

Table 2a

Journal Name	n	Daily (%)	Weekly (%)	Monthly (%)	Less Often (%)	Never (%)	Total (%)
The New England Journal of Medicine	**76**	**2.6**	**47.4**	**30.3**	**9.2**	**10.5**	**100.0**
Journal of Clinical Oncology	67	3.0	47.8	29.9	11.9	7.4	100.0
The Lancet Oncology	28	0.0	25.0	21.4	25.0	28.6	100.0

Question: **If you visit the publication/s website/s, for what type of content?**

Table 2b

Journal Name *	n	Additional Data on Original Articles (%)	Videos, Images, etc. of Current Articles (%)	To Learn More About Advertised Products and Services (%)	Archived Issues
The New England Journal of Medicine	**68**	**80.9**	**30.9**	**7.4**	**52.9**
Journal of Clinical Oncology	62	77.4	17.7	4.8	58.1
The Lancet Oncology	20	70.0	25.0	0.0	50.0

* Multiple responses. Percentages do not add to 100.

Results

Question: **What makes the above publications (NEJM) "essential" for you?***

Table 3a
(n = 87 NEJM Reasons)

Reason Category*	Percent
High impact/important/practice changing	29.9
Quality	16.1
Up to date/keep current/up to date research	11.5
Cutting-edge/state of the art/groundbreaking/ landmark studies	10.3
General internal medicine information	9.2
Broad coverage	6.9
Landmark clinical trial/research	6.9
Relevance	5.7
Miscellaneous#	3.3

* Raw data grouped were into frequently recurring categories. Multiple responses, percentages do not add to 100. For details, please see the following page. # Miscellaneous – Case reports, Guidelines, and Peer review.

Results

Question: What makes the above publications (NEJM) "essential" for you? (continued)

Table 3b
(n = 75 NEJM Readers)

Verbatim List of Reasons for NEJM

All essential trials are published there.
All important studies in lymphoma are published here.
Best in general medicine
Best research published here
Broad medicine topics
Case reports
Clinical advances
Clinical impact
Clinical trials
Current information and reliable
Most-read medical journal
Current internal medicine information
Essential for my field & updated knowledge
General medical knowledge
Gold standard in peer review
Good general medicine
Good quality evidence
Groundbreaking new research
Guidelines helping in Waldenstrom management
High clinical yield
High impact
High impact
High-impact general medicine journal
High level of evidence
High quality articles
High quality research and interpretation
High quality, cutting-edge research
Highest impact articles
Hot topics
Important publication
Key journal, medical information
Landmark oncology trial results
Landmark studies
Latest, important information on variety of subjects
Latest, landmark trial reports
Leader in medicine
Learning about changes and breakthroughs in therapies
Maintain knowledge in internal medicine
Major oncology advancements
Major updates across medicine
Most authentic/relevant/reputable
Most important cancer trials get published here.
Most important studies
Most notable oncology trials are published here.
Most practice-changing studies
Most well-rounded internal medicine reports
New data
New data and trials
Offer data relevant to my practice
Oncology trials data
Overall internal medicine
Pivotal studies are published here.
Pivotal trials
Practice- changing clinical trials
Practice-changing information
Practice-changing results
Practice-changing trials and data
Practice-changing
Practice-changing trials
Practice-changing papers
Practice-changing publication
Provides important updates on general medicine
The quality of content
Relevant and important clinical trials
Scientific leader
Stimulating science and humanities blend
Top medical research
Treatment changing trials published here
Up to date and broad coverage of medicine
Up to date evidence for treatment
Up to date information
Up to date practice-changing results
Wide spectrum of issues covered here

Results

Question: **How strongly do you trust the publications for meeting each of the following three needs?***

Table 4

Publication	n	Percent			Rating	
		Above Average (%)	Average and Below (%)	Total (%)	Average	Impact Score@
Influencing My Clinical Decisions						
The New England Journal of Medicine	**76**	**96.1**	**3.9**	**100.0**	**4.61**	**4.12**
Journal of Clinical Oncology	67	97.0	3.0	100.0	4.55	3.59
The Lancet Oncology	28	92.9	7.1	100.0	4.39	1.45
Learning about Changes and Breakthroughs in Therapies						
The New England Journal of Medicine	**76**	**97.4**	**2.6**	**100.0**	**4.72**	**4.22**
Journal of Clinical Oncology	67	98.5	1.5	100.0	4.61	3.64
The Lancet Oncology	28	89.3	10.7	100.0	4.36	1.44
Preparing to Discuss Treatment Pathways with Peers						
The New England Journal of Medicine	**76**	**93.4**	**6.6**	**100.0**	**4.50**	**4.02**
Journal of Clinical Oncology	67	91.0	9.0	100.0	4.45	3.51
The Lancet Oncology	28	82.1	17.9	100.0	4.21	1.39

* Rating: 5 = Trust Completely to 1 = Don't Trust At All.
Rating of 5 or 4 was recoded as Above Average and others as Average or Below.
@ Impact score = Average Rating x (n / 85). Total sample = 85 respondents

Results

Question: **How informative are product ads in your Essential publications?**

Table 5
(n = 85)

How Informative	Percent
Very	5.9
Somewhat	17.6
A little	30.6
Not at all	45.9
Total	100.0

Results

Question: **How frequently do you use the following sources to keep informed about pharmaceutical products?***

Table 6
(n = 85)

	Often (%)	Sometimes (%)	Rarely/ Never (%)	Total (%)
Medical journals	**65.9**	**17.6**	**16.5**	**100.0**
Association-sponsored meetings	54.1	34.1	11.8	100.0
CME courses (sponsored and non-sponsored)	50.6	44.7	4.7	100.0
Colleagues	43.5	47.1	9.4	100.0
Pharmaceutical representatives	30.6	54.1	15.3	100.0
Formulary reports from hospitals/provinces	29.4	44.7	25.9	100.0
Drug information websites (other than pharmaceutical)	28.2	38.8	33.0	100.0
Pharmaceutical websites	7.1	32.9	60.0	100.0

* Scale: 5 = Very Frequently to 0 = Never; Often = 5 or 4; Sometimes = 3, 2; Rarely/Never = 1, 0.

Results

Question: **Which sources of pharmaceutical product information do you view as most credible?**

Table 7
(n = 85)

Most Credible Source	Percent*
Medical journals	**57.6**
Association-sponsored meetings	38.8
CME courses (sponsored and non-sponsored)	35.3
Drug information websites (other than pharmaceutical)	34.1
Colleagues	28.2
Formulary reports from hospitals/provinces	22.4
Pharmaceutical representatives	20.0
Monographs	9.4
Pharmaceutical websites	5.9
Miscellaneous@	7.1

* Multiple responses, percentages do not add to 100.
@ Miscellaneous = Hospital pharmacists, guidelines, regulatory data, trial protocols, conference proceedings, and product ads.

Results

Question: **Do you use a smartphone or tablet computer to access medical information?**

Table 8
(n = 85)

Device Used	Percent*
Smartphone	74.1
Tablet computer	23.5
Use them but don't use for this purpose	14.1
Don't own either device	3.5

* Multiple responses, percentages do not add to 100.

Question: **If yes, how often do you use them each month?**

Table 9

Device Access Frequency	Smartphone (%)	Tablet (%)
n	63	20
Multiple times per day	79.4	60.0
Once per day	7.9	20.0
Several times per week but not daily	9.5	15.0
Once a week	1.6	5.0
A few times a month but not weekly	1.6	0.0
Once a month	0.0	0.0
Less than once a month	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Results

Question: **Which medical websites do you visit most regularly for professional purposes?**

Table 10
(n = 85)

Top Ten Medical Websites	Percent*
UpToDate	56.5
ASCO	22.4
British Columbia Cancer Agency	18.8
Clinical Care Options	16.5
The New England Journal of Medicine	**15.3**
National Comprehensive Cancer Network	15.3
Pubmed	15.3
Journal of Clinical Oncology	9.4
Lexicomp	8.2
Medscape	7.1

* Multiple responses, percentages do not add to 100.

Question: **Do you meet with pharmaceutical detail representatives or medical science liaisons?@**

Table 11
(n = 85)

	Detail Representatives (%)	Medical Science Liaisons (%)	Both (%)	Neither (%)
Meet?	75.3	71.8	58.8	11.8

@ Multiple responses, percentages do not add to 100.