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## A valuable string of PURLs

Since *JFP*'s launch of the PURL department in November of 2007, 122 PURLs—Priority Updates from the Research Literature—have been published. *The Journal of Family Practice* is the exclusive publication venue for these items. Because they have stood the test of time and are one of the more popular columns in *JFP*, I thought it would be worthwhile to describe the rigorous evaluation they undergo before they are published.

**Many studies, but few PURLs.** Each year, approximately 200,000 new human medical research studies are indexed on PubMed. Very few of these studies are pertinent to family medicine, however, and even fewer provide new patient-oriented evidence for primary care clinicians.

In 2005, the leaders of the Family Physician Inquiries Network (FPIN), which produces another popular *JFP* column, Clinical Inquiries, set about identifying high-priority research findings relevant to family medicine. A group of family physicians and librarians began combing the research literature monthly to find those rare randomized trials or high-quality observational studies that pertained to our specialty. To qualify as a PURL, a study had to meet 6 criteria. It had to be scientifically valid, relevant to family medicine, applicable in a medical care setting, immediately implementable, clinically meaningful, and practice changing. These criteria still stand today.

**Making the cut.** When a study is identified as a potential PURL, it is submitted to one of FPIN's PURL review groups for a critical appraisal and rigorous peer review. If the group cannot convince the PURLs editors that the original research meets all 6 criteria, the study falls by the wayside. Most potential PURLs do not make the cut. I was one of the early PURL "divers," and I was amazed at how few PURLs existed. Given the emphasis of research on subspecialties and the dearth of primary care research funding in the United States, I probably shouldn't have been surprised.

**Holding their value.** I reviewed all 122 PURLs this week and am proud to say that nearly all still provide highly pertinent, practice-changing information for family physicians and other primary care clinicians. For a quick review of our string of PURLs, go to [www.jfponline.com](http://www.jfponline.com), select "Articles" in the banner, and then "PURLs," and read the short practice changer box for each one. I guarantee it will be time well spent!

If you would like to become part of the PURLs process, either by nominating or reviewing a PURL, please contact the PURLs Project Manager at [purls@fpin.org](mailto:purls@fpin.org).

**Interested in  
research that is  
clinically meaningful  
and practice  
changing for family  
physicians? Then  
check out our PURLs  
column.**

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