Podcasts: Making the most of your ride home

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Introduction
Listening to medical podcasts is a welcomed break from traditional methods of study. Podcasts offer the opportunity to pull your eyes away from the screen but to still remain productive. Medical students may be familiar with previously reviewed podcasts like IMreasoning. In this article I review five others. Each of these offer their own unique teaching style and objectives allowing students to tailor their learning to their needs.

1. Sharp Scratch
Sharp Scratch is a series of podcasts from the United Kingdom (UK) run by medical students, for medical students. It is sponsored by the British Medical Journal (BMJ) and takes us behind the scenes and into the relatable minds of five enthusiastic characters whose experiences range from medical student to Foundation Year Two (F2; equivalent to New Zealand’s postgraduate year two or PGY2) doctor. This podcast aims to address the fears, expectations, and questions that we may have entering life on the wards and the scary world of employment. The episodes cover topics that vary from the very heavy (e.g. death, dying, and mistakes) to the lighter and more practical side of being a junior (e.g. sick and holiday leave, and dating). If you have an appetite for some non-medical advice about being a medic then this is the podcast for you. From across the ocean, Sharp Scratch creates a sense of community by reminding us that we are all in this together. Listen to the episode about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) if you want to hear about how other medical students are coping with the disruption and the shared feelings of uncertainty. Although this podcast does not provide any specific biomedical education, it aims to address the hidden curriculum and practicalities of employment by asking the questions you might not have thought to ask or were too afraid to ask. The similarities between the UK and New Zealand (NZ) curriculum and model of healthcare makes this podcast still relevant to NZ-based medical students.

When to listen: When you have burning questions about what it’s like to be a junior doctor.

2. Ward Calls
Ever wondered what you might do if you were holding the pager and it went off? Having nightmares about your first ward call? Worry no more. Auckland-based doctors, Dr Vani Chandran and Dr Sam Holdford, talk us through common ward call presentations, what to do, and what is expected of us as house officers. Every time I listen to an episode I feel like I am inching closer to being a competent and confident doctor. These podcasts are not for the detail-orientated photographic memory student in you. Stepwise approaches, basic investigations, and when to call for help are all advocated here as they aim to turn you into a great junior doctor. The podcast also has an associated website which provides a summary of each episode and acts as a great reference if you want a quick go-to guide for study purposes. The great benefits of this podcast lie in the fact that it is New Zealand-based so you can be assured that the information you are receiving is relevant in a New Zealand context.

When to listen: You would like some practical tips on what to do in common ward call presentations.

3. MedConversations
The words “interstitial lung disease” or “glomerulonephritis” are enough to give any medical student the heebie-jeebies as you try to rack your brain to link up the information you have rolling around up there. Well, thanks to MedConversations this no longer needs to be a concern. MedConversations is an Australian-based podcast offered by advanced trainees who package a variety of disease presentations into neat little systems of information that are easy to understand and learn, arming medical students with just the right level of knowledge to impress even the scariest of consultants. No longer should you feel like you need to spend your time forming disease scripts; these guys have done it for you with a healthy dose of humour sprinkled in between. Car rides no longer need to be wasted, as listening to these podcasts on your way home is just as good as reading any textbook. Occasionally the information can be a little overwhelming but have a second listen to the podcast and you’ll be feeling like an expert. They’ve even gone the extra mile to create flashcards too so that you can solidify your knowledge. Go you, smart kid!

When to listen: This podcast is a great adjunct to studying when you’ve grown tired of reading as your sole study tool.

4. Goodfellow Podcast
If you’re looking for a podcast series that covers just about any disease presentation with a strong focus on the New Zealand context and cultural competency, look no further than the Goodfellow series. Goodfellow Podcast interview experts in their field, covering a diverse range of topics. If you are curious about something, they probably have a podcast about it. Some of the podcasts focus on the psychosocial aspects of medicine which provides much needed insight into this area and shifts focus from solely relying on applied medical science. The podcasts even vary in length from about five minutes to sixty minutes offering something for every attention span. To add greater value these podcasts are often paired with courses that you receive a certificate for when you complete them. The courses do
not take long and if you’re a certificate kind of person then this is a
great motivator.

When to listen: Another great adjunctive study tool.

5. The Clinical Problem Solvers
The Clinical Problem Solvers podcast\(^5\) is an internal medicine podcast
that aims to improve clinical reasoning through articulating the think-
ing process that helps doctors in improving their differential diagnoses.
They take complex concepts and present them in ways that are easy
to understand, focusing on approaches rather than explicit informa-
tion. This is a great podcast to help young doctors come to grips
with working through clinical scenarios and differentials. This pod-
cast takes real life cases presented to doctors who are blinded to
the outcome and allows the audience to work towards the diagnosis
with them. The schema that emerge from the cases are discussed
in detail and summarised on their website, allowing the audience to
remain engaged through following along with each case. This is a great
podcast for those wanting to learn how to think like a doctor. The
podcast does a great job of keeping the audience involved and the
occasional antedotal stories about errors in the workplace do a lot
for encouraging transparency in medicine. This is an American-based
podcast but their focus on how we learn and think is still applicable in
the New Zealand context.

When to listen: When you would like to take your learning to the
next level through case based analysis.

References
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About the author
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