PRODUCT REVIEW / CRITIQUE

Read by QxMD

Product: Read by QxMD.

Purpose: A mobile and web application (app) designed to bring personalized content to your device, making it easier to keep up to date with the latest medical research in your field.

URL: https://www.readbyqxmd.com.

Platform: Android, iPhone, iPad, web.

Intended audience: Healthcare professionals, residents, students.

Product description: Read by QxMD (Read) is a free app and web service that functions like a personalized current awareness service, used to quickly discover and access new research. Content personalization happens on two levels. Firstly, Read is interfaced with PubMed; new research is filtered based on selected keywords or journals, and is then "pushed" to the user in what looks like a personalized digital journal. Secondly, featured articles identified by algorithms are brought to your attention. Read aims to improve practice by providing healthcare professionals with a personalized experience connecting them to the latest medical literature as quickly as possible, while reducing information overload.

Cost and subscription: Read is free to download. You can create an account or sign in with Facebook. To access full text articles, you enter information for proxy access to your institutional library. An institutional premium edition is available for medical libraries and health organizations [1].

Main features

Follow journals

Read lets you select journals you want to follow. When following a journal, you are notified as soon as new content is added. New journals are integrated into Read regularly and journal preferences can be edited at any time.

Follow keywords

You can add simple terms or build more complex queries using Boolean operators, parentheses, phrase searching with quotes, truncation, or combining all of the above. You are notified when new articles containing the search terms become available.

Follow article collections

For each collection, you can view authors, number of papers, and how many followers each collection has. Collections are put together by QxMD and by individual users. Collection examples include: Essential Surgical Knowledge, Choosing Wisely, etc. You are able to view collection creators' profiles, professions, specialties, and institutions. You can also access other collections by the same creator or read their comments. Following collections can help discover content outside your usual sources.

Discover featured papers

Featured Papers is the key automatically personalized content option offered by Read. Articles are selected using algorithms with the claim "we think we can pick what people want to read" [2].

Be notified

Be notified by email or push notification alerts when new content becomes available (in print or digitally ahead of print). Notifications settings can be edited at any time.

Access full text articles

This is a feature Read is very proud of—being able to get full text articles with one tap via institutional subscriptions, or for free for open access articles. View all abstracts from subscription-based and open access journals, even if you do not have institutional access.

Annotate and collect your favourite articles

Full text articles can be annotated; you can highlight, underline, and take notes. Once annotated, the articles are saved to your list of favourites (the annotations are saved on your device). You can organize favourites in collections (Figure 1). Personal collections can be "published" to share with the Read community.

Read offline

Full text articles marked as favourites are saved on your device and are accessible for reading offline. In terms of storage space, an article of average length with colour figures will take up approximately 20MB.

Search PubMed

Read allows you to search MEDLINE via PubMed (Figure 2). Search results are personalized and can be sorted by relevance or by date.

Share

Articles can be shared on email, twitter, or Facebook.

Integration

Automatic one-tap access to full text PDFs is available for many universities and hospitals.

Privacy Policy

QxMD uses the personal information you provide when signing-up to personalize the delivered content. This information is also used to target advertising from third parties or for research purposes. Generally, advertisers will not have access to personally identifiable information. QxMD reserves the right to change its Privacy Policy at any time.

Fig. 1. Read offers an easy way to organize and save your personal collections.

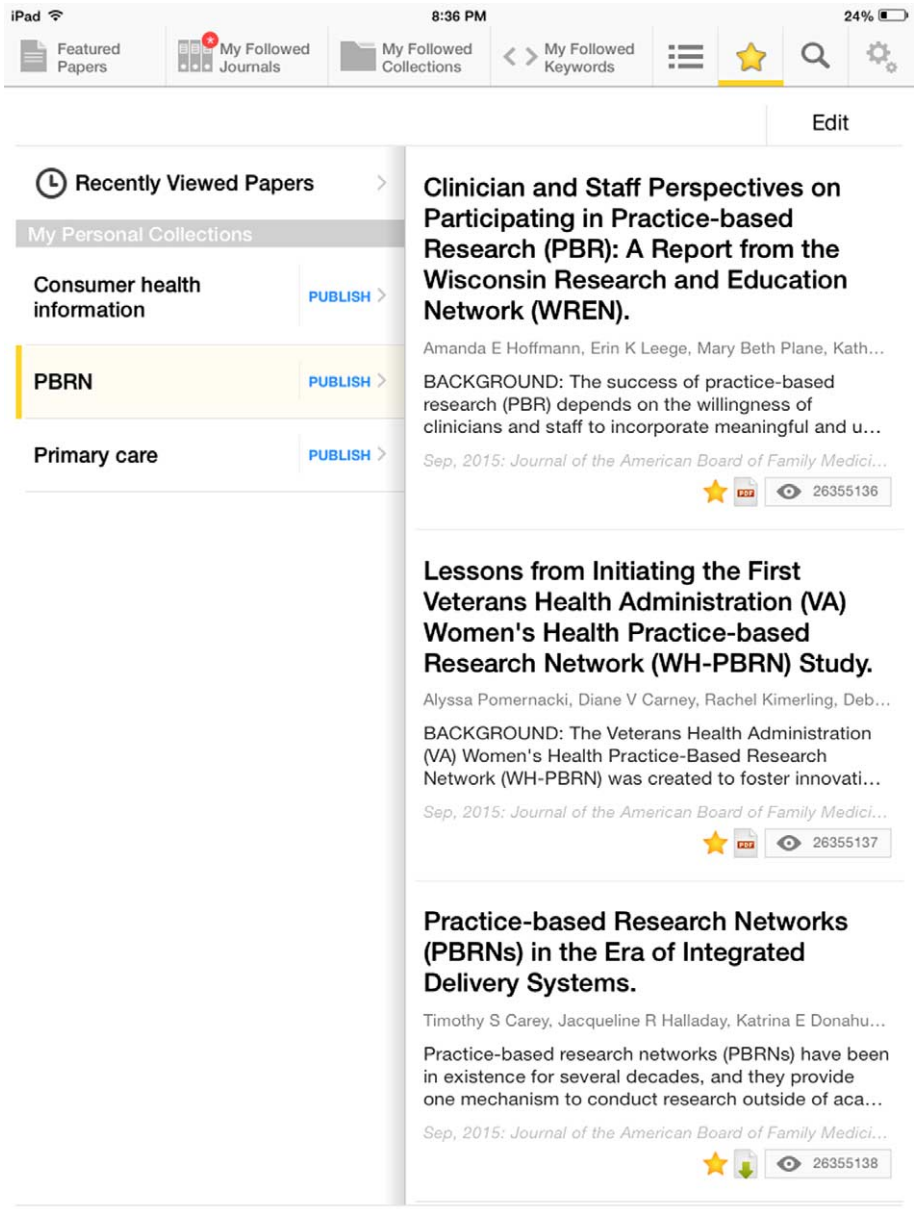


Fig. 2. Read's simple search box promising personalized results.

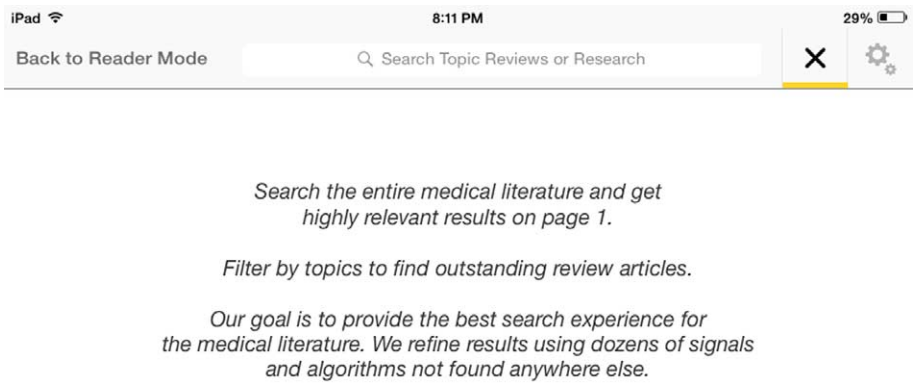
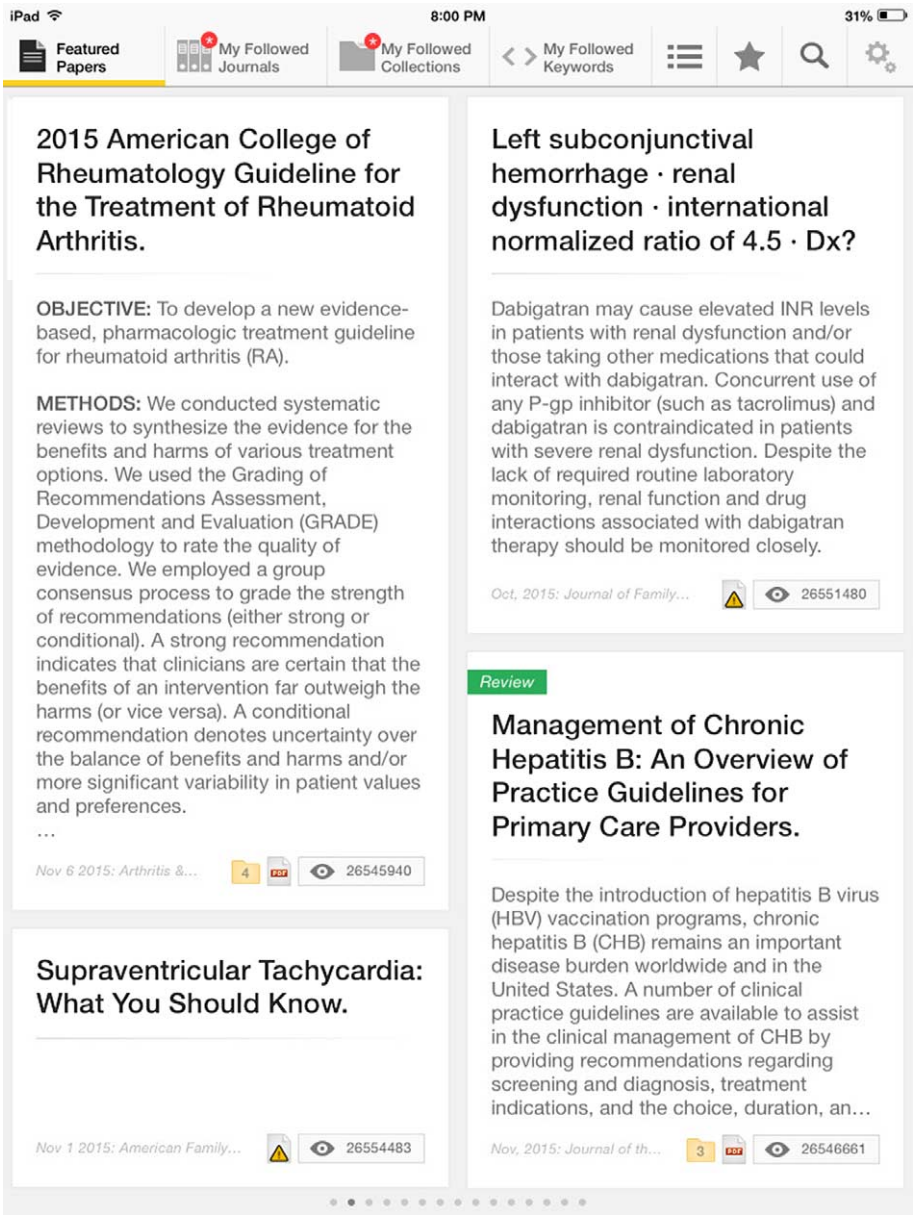


Fig. 3. Read's interface providing a personalized digital journal experience.



Strengths

Read's interface is clean and intuitive (Figure 3). You can quickly go through articles by scanning titles, authors, abstracts, journals, and publication dates. In addition, articles have labels such as reviews, editorials, RCTs. Read offers an easy way to follow journals, keywords, or collections, helping you to avoid missing relevant publications.

One tap is enough to access full text downloads via institutional proxy.

You can annotate PDFs and save collections of articles on your device for offline reading.

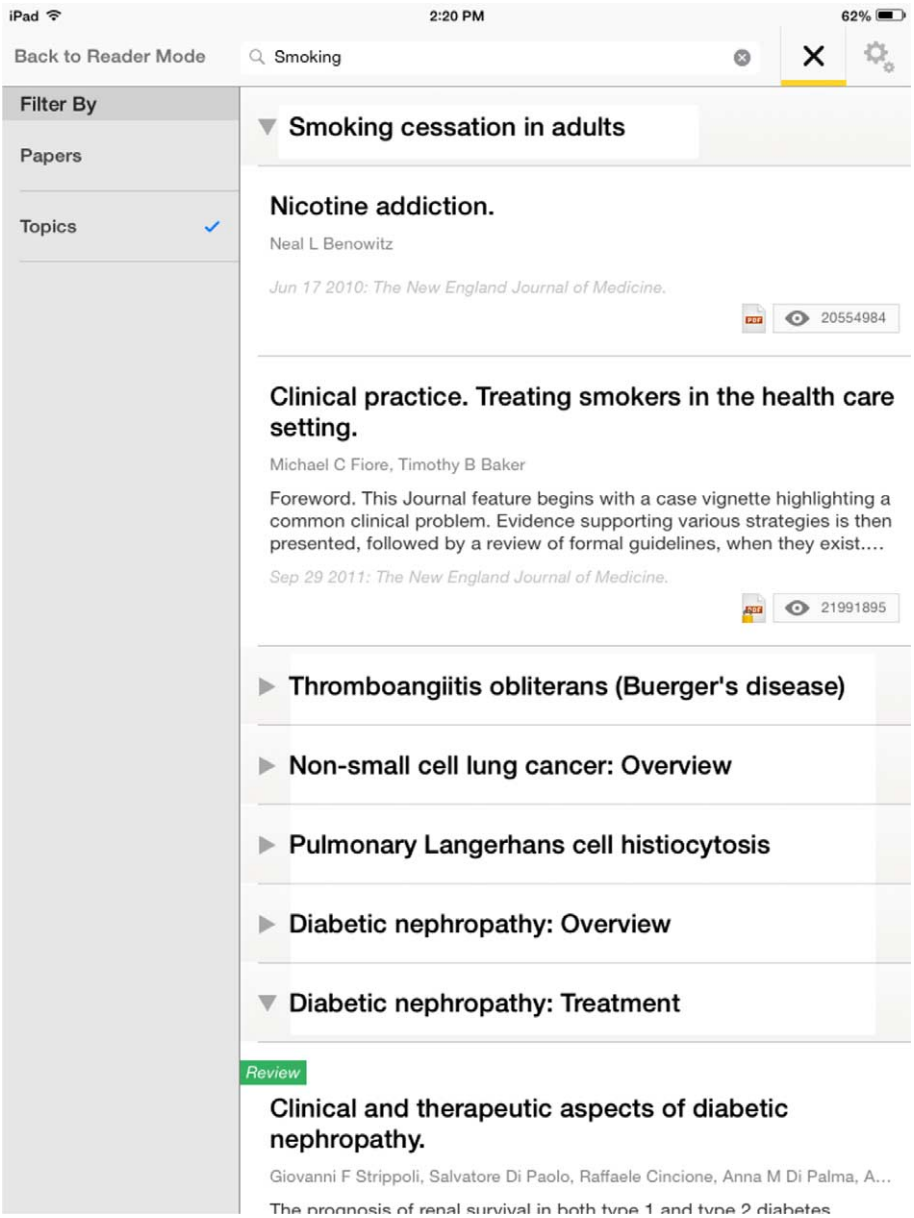
Read values social presence, making it possible to share and see what others are reading and saying about articles.

Weakneses

Although Read claims to be better than PubMed in terms of personalization, the search engine retrieves variable results (Figure 4). Owing to the personalization of search results, you may miss relevant articles.

Annotations are not synced with your account and are saved only on the device on which you made them. At the time of this review, annotation tools were not available on iPhone or on the web.

Fig. 4. Search results personalized by an algorithm.



This is meant to be a point-of-care tool for practicing health professionals. However, the volume of articles to scan remains high.

Conclusions

Read is a great app for browsing articles and following research trends. It provides one centralized place to discover abstracts with the possibility to annotate and save relevant papers in collections. It is easy to move between collections and open the desired paper with one tap. The collections are available across your devices, but the full text or annotations are not. Read does not always function consistently on iPad, iPhone, and the web. The app's best performance is on the tablet. Read is not a great searching tool; search results are not always reliable across devices and you may not want search results personalized by an algorithm. Finally, the volume of articles to scan is still high, and the evidence is not synthesized or pre-appraised, begging the question as to whether research articles are the best format to improve practice at the bedside.

Comparable apps

Similar medical apps designed to facilitate staying up to date with the latest literature are Docphin (https://www.docphin.com), Browzine (http://thirdiron.com), and DocNews (http://docnewsapp.com). Information on how Read compares with them is available at http://www.imedicalapps.com/2015/02/best-medical-apps-literature [3].

References

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3. Von Isenburg M. The best medical apps for keeping up with new literature. iMedicalApps [Internet]. 2015 [cited 15 Nov 2015]. Available from: http://www.imedicalapps.com/2015/02/best-medical-apps-literature

Vera Granikov
Department of Family Medicine
McGill University
5858 Côte-des-neiges, Suite 300
Montréal, QC H3S 1Z1, Canada
Tel: 514-318-6978
Email: veragranikov@gmail.com