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Pod Save the Queen

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We live in a world where information about any topic can be available to us in a heartbeat – how to grow the perfect tomato plant, re-wire your own house and even perform an operation.

There is a lot competing for our attention, and with many of us on the move for so much of the day, the more traditional methods of learning, keeping up-to-date and being entertained, are not always possible. But what if there was a way to have all of this at the click of a button? Enter the podcast.

In 2020, over 155 million people worldwide listen to a podcast each week. But what is a podcast, does it have a role in medicine and could the (humble) surgeon start one?

In typical fashion, urologists have not let this innovative medium escape us. Arjun Nambiar, a urology trainee and Professor Declan Murphy, Consultant Urologist, have both created successful podcasts: “Legends of Urology” and “GU Cast”. They share their unique insights and tips.

[H1] What is a podcast and why might someone launch one?

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Arjun: A podcast is an audio file that is made available on the internet, typically as a series around a broader theme, with each episode exploring different facets of this topic.

[H1] What inspired you to launch your podcast?

Declan: I watched with interest the huge growth in podcast popularity and realised that urology is not well represented. There are some “audiocasts”, which are sound files embedded on websites, but these are rather clunky to access. Our plans for a podcast were in place before COVID, but the pandemic gave us the time to get started! We launched in March 2020, which coincided with a big trial we had just published in *The Lancet*, so we somewhat selfishly featured that in Episode 1.

[H1] This all sounds rather fun. I’ve got an idea in mind, so how could I make this dream a reality?

Arjun: The most important question to ask before embarking on your own podcast is “what is this going to be about”?

Declan: It is important to have a clear vision and a strategy for how you will get there. Secondly, people are keen to get involved. Every guest we have approached has made themselves available, and many others have approached us.

[H1] Do I need a recording studio and lots of expensive equipment to get this going?!

Declan: It’s not that difficult!

Arjun: Agreed - It’s only complicated if you chose to make it so!

There are plenty of resources out there to help you get going. There are some essentials to get right so we will break them down, ABCDE-style:

[H2] The Audio:

Arjun:

- The sound quality has to be a priority. If this is of a poor quality, it will deter listeners even if the content is engaging.
- Although you could record with your smartphone, a slight step up in gear can give you big returns. A reasonable quality USB microphone or lavalier mic works well, but even a budget cardioid type hand microphone can be had for around £30–40. An audio interface provides a greater level of control (e.g. Focusrite scarlet 2i2 or the Zoom H4n). If you are interviewing guests, this is more important as more than one microphone is needed (Fig. 2).
- Popular options, as they have both XLR and USB outputs, are the Samson Q2U or Audio Technica ATR2100. These mics, along with Zencast and Audacity, would make a good starting point for a new remote podcast without breaking the bank (current price for the Samson is about £60).
- You could spend hundreds, even thousands of pounds in an endless upgrade cycle, but at the end of the day, the content is most important!

[H2] The Buddy

Declan: Have a co-host(s)! My fantastic colleague Dr Renu Eapen (Fig. 2), a Consultant Urologist at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and I host together. Renu did her Fellowship training in the USA and is (a lot) younger than me so she brings a different perspective. She also has great connections to the USA and to other great women in urology (we are big feminists on GU Cast!)

[H2] The Carrier

Arjun: To make podcasts available to a wider audience, they need to be *hosted* online. The popular distribution services (e.g. Itunes, Spotify etc) do not actually host podcasts, and you cannot upload audio files to their platforms. Podbean, Buzzsprout and Captivate are popular hosting sites that require paid subscriptions, but some of them do have (limited) free plans. Basic subscriptions run from between £7 to £20 per month.

Declan: They also provide invaluable data, such as how many downloads you are getting, where your listeners are and how they access your podcast. 57% of our listeners are located outside Australia, 47% of listeners use Apple and 32% use Spotify to listen to GU Cast, and 81% use mobile devices/mirroring to listen.

[H2] Do your homework

Declan: There are some great resources to assist with practical and technical aspects of setting up a podcast. [Podcastinsights](#) is terrific. From this I learned a lot about essential stuff such as hosting, podcast art (I used [Fiverr](#)), royalty-free music for jingles (I used [PremiumBeat](#)), equipment plus great tips on putting together your podcast. There are a number of YouTube videos on podcasting for almost every budget. One I would recommend is the series by [Buzzsprout](#) that goes through every step in detail.

[H2] The Environment and Execution

Arjun: In the current climate, remote interviews are far more common, so recording audio over the internet is becoming necessary. Zencast is a good platform to do this, and provides you with downloadable mp3 files to sync later in software. This service is free, and if you upgrade to the paid version it will even process the audio files for you automatically!

Declan: Social media is mandatory. There is no point posting your podcast if nobody knows about it! Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn are all essential to help raise the profile of your podcast; podcasting is an extension of social media and you must use social to drive the reach of your podcast.

[H1] Any take home messages?

Arjun: Be clear on what your podcast is about and record the best quality audio your budget will allow.

Declan: Reach out to; the podcasting and urology worlds are very collegiate, and others will be happy to help with you. We have partnered very well with established urology giants such as EAU, ASCO, BAUS, and of course the *BJUI*, as well as professional media platforms such as UroToday who have huge reach and are really keen to collaborate.

Thanks to Arjun and Declan for busting some myths and being true legends.

Happy listening and if you fancy a challenge – podcasting!

To listen to our podcasters, search “**Legends of Urology Podcast**” and “**GU Cast**” on your favourite podcast app. The *BJUI* also hosts “Resident’s Podcasts”, which are summaries of recent papers and events, which can be found at <https://www.bjuinternational.com/podcasts/>

Twitter handles: @LegendsUrology @gu_onc

Figure legends

Fig. 1 GU Cast Studio Kit.

Fig. 2 Prof Declan Murphy and Dr Renu Eapen.