Writing a Conference Abstract: Tips for Success

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Target Audience

This professional development module is intended for any nurse who is interested in learning how to develop an abstract for a professional meeting.

***Note for information specific to IACRN abstract submission process please see IACRN website.

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Objectives

- Describe an abstract

- Discuss types of abstracts for professional meetings/conferences

- Describe the key elements of an abstract

- List steps in developing and preparing an abstract

- Identify resources for abstract development

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What is an Abstract?

- Overview of facts
- Summary of ideas
- Brief overview of work
- Short summary of a project
- Self contained statement
- Glimpse of the author's work
- Often written last

Why should I know how to write Abstracts?

So you will know how to:

- Present complex information in a clear, concise manner

- Read abstracts more effectively

- Strengthen participation in research

- Prepare abstracts for meetings

- Condense information for a report

What are the <u>qualities</u> of an Effective Abstract?

- One or more well developed paragraphs, which are unified, coherent, concise and able to stand alone.

- Uses an introduction-body-conclusion structure in which the parts of the report are discussed in order: Purpose research questions; method, finding, conclusion, recommendation.

- Follows the chronology of the report.

- Adds no new information – merely summarizes the report.

- Contains stand alone qualities – the abstract can be understood without reading the paper.

- Is intelligible to a wide audience.

What Do You <u>Include</u>?

- What you did
- Why you did it
- How you did it
- When and where you did it
- What you learned
- What it means

Types of Abstracts

- Clinical
- Research
- Evidence Based
- Quality Improvement
- Creative Solutions

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Key Abstract Elements

- Introduction
  - Background/purpose, rationale, scope, objectives
- Methods
  - How was the problem studied/addressed
- Results
  - Principle findings, what indicates success or suggests need to rethink/revise methods (metrics)
- Significance/Implications
  - What does the data mean
- Discussion
  - Conclusion
- References-optional, this is not required for every abstract

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Venues to Submit Abstracts

- Presentations
  - Podium
  - Poster
  - Symposium
- Publications
  - Peer reviewed
  - Journal
- Grants
  - Funding
  - Final Report

Example Format - Research Track

- Research reports or evidence-based translation projects
- Abstracts include
  - Purpose/objectives
    - Significance
  - Design and methods
  - Findings
  - Conclusions
    - Implications for practice

Example Format-Evidence Based

- Moving evidence to practice, synthesis of research evidence, development of evidence-based practice guidelines, toolkits, protocols and guidelines
- Abstracts must include
  - Problem (Problem and change Needed)
  - Evidence (Appraise the supporting evidence)
  - Strategy (Linking the change to the evidence)
  - Practice Change (Specific change or practice evaluated)
  - Evaluation (Design and Indicators/outcomes measured)
  - Results (Did it work?)
  - Recommendations (Further adoption suggestions)
  - Lessons Learned

Example Format-
Quality Improvement

- Innovation for quality and safety, report of quality project
- Abstracts must include
  - Problem (Problem and Change needed)
  - Evidence (Appraise the supporting evidence)
  - Strategy (Linking the change to the evidence)
  - Practice Change (Specific change or practice evaluated)
  - Evaluation (Design and Indicators/outcomes measured)
  - Results (Did it work?)
  - Recommendations (Further adoption suggestions)
  - Lesson Learned

Specific Instructions

- Review the guidelines carefully
- Pay close attention to the technical aspects including:
  - deadlines,
  - suggested format,
  - number of words and
  - font type and size.
- If abstract examples are provided, be sure to review them.

Sample abstract guidelines

Formatting Your Abstract

Abstracts should be no more than 1,950 characters; not including title, authors, and spaces. Characters within a table are counted towards the character limit. Figures, title, and authors do not count against the 1950 character limit. Use simple fonts.

Italics, underline, **bold**, superscript and subscript formatting, Greek characters (both upper and lowercase), scientific characters, charts, tables, and graphs are accepted.

Always include the abstract title, authors, affiliations, and text.

You may upload a file or copy and paste the text of your abstract from a word processing document or a clipboard directly into the online abstract box.

Figures are accepted and they do not count towards character limit. You are limited to three images in one abstract. There isn't a maximum allowed resolution for figures. The maximum size for an abstract is 5120 KB including images. If you choose to include images, you must upload the abstract in html format, images can be in any file type. Color images are allowed.

All fields must contain the requested information or the submission will not be complete.
Do not send multiple submissions of the same abstract. Duplicate abstracts will be rejected. Be sure to combine all new information into one abstract.

Always keep an original copy of your submitted abstract.
Always proofread your abstract. Accepted abstracts will be published exactly as submitted. If English is not your first language, please have a fluent English speaker review your abstract.

No Specific Instructions?
Use Generic Outline

- Some venues do not provide specific instructions, always fall back on this generic outline:
    - Purpose (background)
    - Description (method)
    - Evaluation (results)
    - Outcomes (discussion)

Things to Think About..

- The abstract should be a self-contained summary of work COMPLETED.
- The abstract should convey the significance of the work done.
- The abstract is important on attracting attendees to your poster or oral presentation, it provides the first impression of your work.

To Prepare…

- Identify a conference where you want to present or an abstract that needs to be written.
- Identify key team members and invite to meeting.
  - If you are new to this, find a mentor.
  - Group Brainstorm
    - Innovations
    - Evidence Based Practice Groups
    - Specialty Areas
    - Outcomes
    - Unit Projects

To Prepare (Con't)

- If you have an idea of your topic, come prepared with an abstract draft
- Provide constructive feedback
- 3 Reviews
- Abstracts take several drafts to perfect

Drafting an Abstract

- Determine First Author
  - Primary contributor
  - Co-authors/other contributors
    - List alphabetically or by preferred standard
  - Write the answers to the following questions:
    - Why did you start this project?
    - What did you do?
    - What did you find?
    - What does it mean?

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Title Selection

- Your title should:
  - Accurately describe your story
  - Include key elements describing the content
  - Commands attention from attendees
  - If it is a research abstract it is helpful to include an indication of the design of the study
- The title is a deciding factor on whether someone will read your abstract
- KEEP IT SIMPLE!

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Sample titles

Brief	Complete
Blue Wavelength Light-blocking Glasses in ADHD-Insomnia	Evening Use of Polarized Glasses Designed to Filter Out Blue Light in Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder - Delayed Circadian Rhythm Disorder Patients
Safety and Efficacy Trial for Alpha-Beta Depleted T-Cell Infusions Post Haplo Transplant (ABD)	Phase I/II Study of Post-transplant Alpha-beta Depleted T-cell Infusion Following Haploidentical Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplantation Using Post-Transplant Cyclophosphamide
Therapy for Locally Advanced Breast Cancer Using Doxil, Paclitaxel, and Cyclophosphamide With Avastin	Phase II Trial of Primary Systemic Therapy for Locally Advanced Breast Cancer Using Sequential Doxil, Paclitaxel, and Cyclophosphamide With Concurrent Avastin
Abraxane With or Without Tigatuzumab in Patients With Metastatic, Triple Negative Breast Cancer	An Open Label, Randomized, Phase II Trial of Abraxane (Paclitaxel Albumin-Bound Particles for Injectable Suspension), With or Without Tigatuzumab (a Humanized Monoclonal Antibody Targeting Death Receptor 5) in Patients With Metastatic, Triple Negative (ER, PR, and HER-2 Negative) Breast Cancer
Comparing Letrozole Given Alone to Letrozole Given With Avastin in Post-Menopausal Women Breast Cancer	A Phase II, Randomized, Open Label Trial of Pre-operative (Neoadjuvant)Letrozole (Femara) vs. Letrozole in Combination With Avastin in Post Menopausal Women With Newly Diagnosed Operable Breast Cancer
Staples Versus Suture for Cesarean Wound Closure (SVS)	Surgical Staples vs. Absorbable Subcuticular Suture for Wound Closure of Cesarean Deliveries
Pilot Study of Raltegravir/Truvada Versus Efavirenz/Truvada for Adults With Acute IV-1 Infection	Pilot Study of Raltegravir/Tenofovir/Emtricitabine Versus Efavirenz/Tenofovir/Emtricitabine for Adults With Acute HIV-1 Infection: Exploring the Role of Integrase Inhibition in Early HIV Pathogenesis
Safety and Effectiveness Study of the Live Zoster Vaccine in Anti-TNF Users (VERVE)	A PILOT STUDY OF THE SAFETY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE LIVE ZOSTER VACCINE IN ANTI-TNF USERS

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Writing Tips

- Avoid passive voice
- Always use the full term before you refer to it by acronym
- Write only one thought per sentence
- Eliminate unnecessary words
- Ensure that verb tenses are consistent and correct
- Be sure to check for spelling and grammatical mistakes

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Purpose/ Objective

- What is this project about?
- Why is this project *interesting*?
- Why is it important?
- What are the outcome measures?

What is it important?

- Describe the general topic
- The introductory sentence sets the stage for the project
- This sentence is the rationale for the study
  "Why is this even important?"

Background/Description

- How was this project done?
- What methods or procedures were done?
- Briefly describe the approach
- Pertinent information without providing details [NO RESULTS HERE]
- Summarize current research

Outcome:
specific measurable results

- Results
- Pertinent Findings
- Descriptive statistics
- Significance
- Emerging ideas
- Metrics

Discussion/Conclusion

- What does your work mean?
- What do the numbers mean?
- What is the take home message?
- What can be concluded?

Rule of Thumb:
Four C's of Abstract Writing

- **Complete:** Covers the major parts of the project.
- **Concise:** Contains no excess wordiness of unnecessary information.
- **Clear:** Readable, well organized, and not too jargon-laden.
- **Cohesive:** It flows smoothly between the parts.

Revising the Abstract

- Read your abstract all the way through:
  - add transition words to tie ideas together,
  - eliminate unnecessary content and add in things that are missing,
  - correct errors in mechanics, and
  - proofread.

Submitting a Winning Abstract

- Follow the instructions the first time!!!
- Include headings exactly as stated in the instructions/template.
- Use short, clear sentences, one idea per sentence.
- Limit your abstract to the word count/character count requirement.
- Edit, edit, edit.
- Check grammar, syntax and punctuation.
- Review instructions about including brand names of products, when in doubt use general descriptions for products.
- It may be helpful to ask another person not involved in the abstract writing to review final draft for errors, flow, and understandability.

Sample abstract

Penelope M. Jester, Jill Griffin, Susan Branscum, Edward Acosta, David Kimberlin, Richard Whitley; Departments of Pediatrics and Pharmacology; The University of Alabama at Birmingham. Birmingham, AL

Conducting clinical research during an influenza pandemic presents unique challenges, including the need for rapid development of clinical trials within weeks rather than the more typical 6 to 12 months. This report describes a case study of one such successful effort that occurred during the 2009 H1N1 pandemic.

In June 2009, 32 premature infants in a neonatal intensive care unit were exposed to 2009 H1N1 influenza by an infected respiratory therapist. Since there was no approved prophylactic treatment of influenza for children under 1 year of age, the neonatologist contacted the regulatory authorities for clinical dosing recommendations. In order to determine if the clinical recommendation was correct, a research sampling study was expeditiously prepared by the NIAID Collaborative Antiviral Study Group within 48 hours. CRFs were developed; regulatory documents were collected from the participating site; and essential education of the site staff was conducted within 72 hours. Approval from 2 different IRBs was obtained within the same 48 hour window. Consent was obtained from parents/guardians of 20 the premature babies followed by collecting all required subject data within 6 days.

The ability to successfully accomplish all of these tasks simultaneously required that all involved regulatory entities understand the urgency of the protocol, that a commitment and well organized clinical research management group efficiently and effectively implement the study, and that a strong commitment to support the clinical site conducting the study was present.

Timely evaluation of new drugs for emerging infections is critical to securing the public's health. Importantly, the findings were accepted for publication within six months to help guide public health policy. The importance of the need for such data underscores the importance of rapidly implementing clinical protocols.

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If doing a poster:

- Write out the abstract first.
- Use the topical sections to create the poster.
- When presenting the poster, engage your audience.
- Request 'audience' criticism and comments.
- Stand by your poster when presenting.
- Make eye contact but let people first read your poster.
- Do not have too much information on the poster: no one will read.

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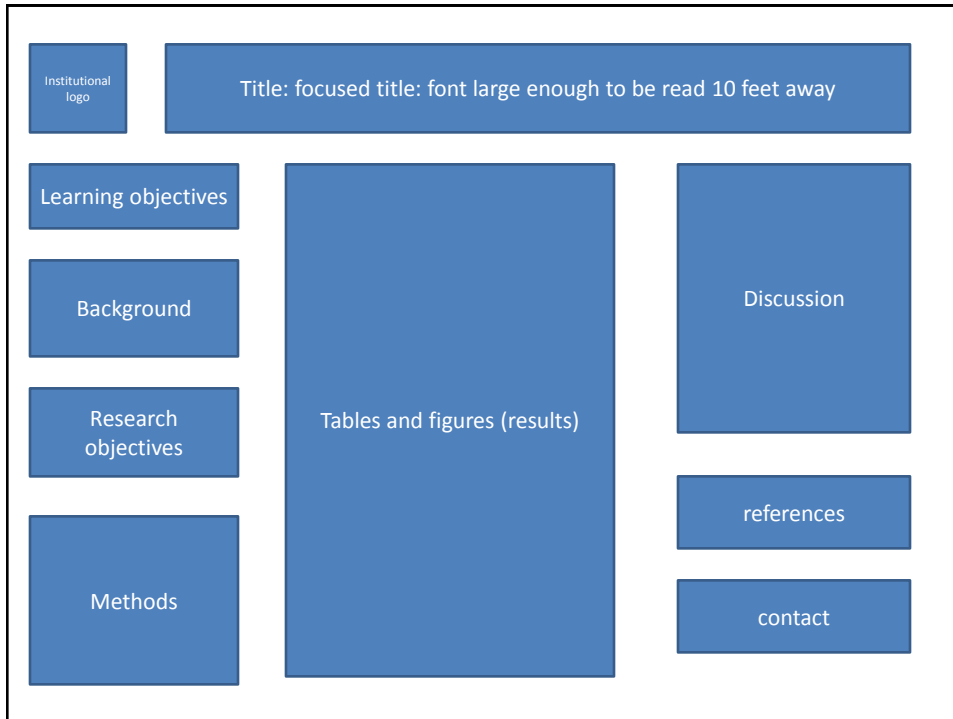
Qualities of an Effective Abstract

- Uses one or more well-developed paragraphs, which are unified, coherent, concise, and able to stand alone (200-300 words).
- Uses an introduction-body-conclusion structure in which the parts of the report are discussed in order: purpose, research questions, methods, findings, conclusions, recommendations.
- Follows strictly the chronology of the report.
- Adds no new information - merely summarizes report.
- Contains stand-alone qualities - the abstract can be understood without reading the paper.
- Is intelligible to a wide audience.

References

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Questions??????????

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Thank you to

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Conference Abstract & Development