Journal Manuscript Writing

Module 10 Topic 4

Types of Manuscripts

Types of Journals:

- General or Specialty Clinical, Basic Science, Lay Press; Peer-reviewed or Paid-invited contributor; Academic, Society, Conference, or Industry-sponsored;

Types of Manuscript submissions:

- General: original research, letters to the editor, short communication, editorials, reviews, case reports.
- Special: technical briefs, methodological papers, application of information technology, research letters, blogs, poetry, cartoons, photographs.

Types of Studies in Manuscripts

Primary Research:

- Experiments
- Clinical trials
- Surveys
- Qualitative studies

Secondary or Derivative:

- Overviews: reviews, systematic reviews, meta-analysis
- Guidelines
- Decision analyses
- Economic analyses

Structure of Research Papers

Introduction:

- High level problem statement
- mid-level problem statement
- "research gap"
- goal of this study

Methods:

- setting, population, procedures/statistical analyses, etc.
- reproducible

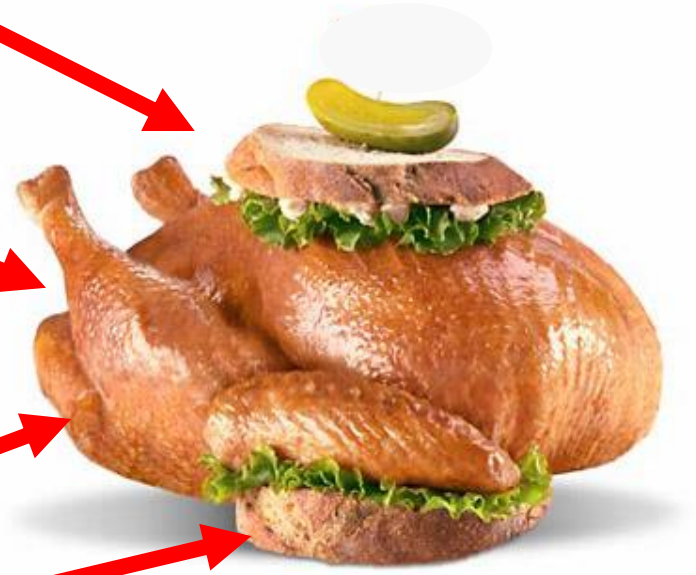
Results:

- Data (without interpretation)

Discussion:

- Interpretation of data
- put in context with existing research
- limitations
- summary statement

"Sandwich technology"



IMRaD

- Introduction--Why did I do it?
- Methods--What did I do?
- Results--What did I find?
- Discussion-- What might it mean? *What is our overall finding? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the study in relation to other studies? Why might we have got different results? What might the study mean, particularly for clinicians or policy makers? What questions remain unanswered and what next?*

IMRAD: Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion

- Title
- Author information
- Acknowledgments
- Abstract
- References (what, how many, self-citation, journal self-citation; in-press, in-print; forthcoming; theses, personal comm.)
- Tables

IMRAD: Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion (contd)

- Figures
- Legends
- Word count
- Keywords
- Author contribution (what qualifies, ghost authors, honorary authors)
- Conflict of interest (sponsors, agency information)
- Trials registration, statements such as the CONSORT
- Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals: Writing and Editing for Biomedical Publication
- http://www.icmje.org/

IMRaD (Introduction)

- Why did we start?
- What has gone before - ? A systematic review
- Why was this study needed?
- Be sure that readers understand the importance of the study-but don’t overdo it
- Don’t try to show readers that you have read everything

Methods

- Like a recipe
- For informed readers this is the most important section
- Describe how subjects were selected and excluded
- Don’t describe standard methods in detail - use references
- Statistics
- Ethics
- Remember that you can put more detailed methods on the web--for example, questionnaire

Results

- Stick to what is relevant
- Be sure to include basic descriptive data
- The text should tell the story
- The tables give the evidence
- The figures illustrate the highlights
- Don’t include just percentages or p values
- Include confidence intervals
- Think about absolute risk, number needed to treat, etc
- Avoid beginning to discuss the implications or strengths and weaknesses of your study

Discussion

- Statement of principal findings
- Strengths and weaknesses of the study
- Strengths and weaknesses in relation to other studies, discussing particularly any differences in results
- Meaning of the study: possible mechanisms and implications for clinicians or policymakers
- Unanswered questions and future research
- Go easy on the last two

Topping and tailing

- Title: Include design; Don’t try to be clever
- Abstract: Must be structured; Include some numbers, not all
- References: Keep to the essentials
- Covering letter: Something very crisp
- Authorship, acknowledgements, competing interests

Title

- The title is the part of a paper that is read the most;
- It is usually read first and most often, it is the only thing that is read
- Electronic indexing services rely heavily on the accuracy of the title to allow users to find papers that are relevant to their research
- Day (1983) defines a good title “as the fewest possible words that adequately describe the contents of the paper”
- When the title is too long, it usually contains too many waste words such as ‘Investigations on’ at the beginning
- On the other hand, titles that are too short often use words which are too general

Abstract

- An abstract comprises a one-paragraph summary of the whole paper
- Abstracts have become increasingly important, as electronic publication databases are the primary means of finding research reports in a certain subject area today (Koopman, 1997)
- Hence, everything of relevance to potential readers should be in the abstract, everything else not

Additional manuscript structure related considerations:

- Acknowledgments
- Trials registration, statements such as CONSORT
- Sponsorship
- Disclosure of (non)Conflicts of Interest
- Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals: Writing and Editing for Biomedical Publication
- http://www.icmje.org/
- Electronic publication ⇔ in-print
- Pre-publication – allowed or not?
- Paper ⇔ Conference proceedings

Criteria for authorship of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE)

- Authorship should be based only on a substantial contribution to:
- Conception and design or analysis and interpretation of data *and*
- Drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content *and*
- Final approval of the version to be published

Competing interest
What is conflict of interest?

- A person has a conflict of interest when he or she has an attribute that is invisible to the reader or editor but which may affect his or her judgement
- Once visible to the reader there will be a perception that a person's judgement may be affected--whether it is or not
- The best policy on competing interest
- Always declare a conflict of interest, particularly one that would embarrass you if it came out afterwards

Redundant publication

- Happens commonly--perhaps 20% of studies
- Negative studies are often not published; positive studies are more likely be published more than once and distorts the evidence
- There is lots of room for arguing over the degree of overlap and what's legitimate but disclosure is the key
- Always send copies of overlapping papers and reference them
- The problem is not the publication but the lack of disclosure