The Art & Science of Writing A Good Paper

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Why do we Write Papers?

- Advance the field of sexual medicine
- Develop new therapies of disease.
- Establish independence
- Collaboration
- Insight into own research via critique
- Advance our career
- Proof of competence by reviewers
- Proof of proper spending of funding
Authorship

- Number of authors – check journal policy
- First author criteria
- Joint first authors
- Corresponding author
- Promotion considerations
- Middle author listing
Criteria for an Author?

- What type of contribution justifies authorship?
- Concept, Content, Critique substantial and direct
- Substantial commitment: physical or intellectual
- All authors must approve in writing
Types of Manuscripts

- Original Research
- Review
- Meta-analysis
- Invited commentary
- Case Report
- Letter to the Editor
Sections of a Paper

- Title
- Abstract
- Introduction
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion
- References
- Figures/Tables
Title

- Identifies the topic or message
- Grab the reader
- Length
- Accurate
- Specific
- Style: indicative vs informative vs question
Abstract

◆ Skimming & dipping
◆ Important – often only thing read – indexed in Pubmed
◆ Must make sense as stand alone piece
◆ Be specific but selective with information
◆ Structured abstract required by most journals
◆ Sentence structure: short
◆ Word choice: simple
◆ Make it clear and concise
Introduction

- The beginning of story – foundation for your question
- Keep short – setting the stage
- Brief review of background
- Brief review of deficiencies of current data
- Finish with clear statement of aim/objectives

Tips

- Do not answer the question
- Do not include results
- Do not include too much information
- Try not to speculate
Introduction: Common Criticisms

◆ Too long
◆ Insufficient statement of problem
◆ Study question not original
◆ Incomplete, inaccurate, outdated review of literature
◆ Includes results
Methods

- Study design, experimental design or protocol
  - State independent, dependent variables and controls
- State, condition, or intervention studied
  - Disease, physiologic state
  - Drug treatment or therapy
- Subjects
  - Patients, normal persons, animals
  - Criteria and methods for selecting subjects
- Detailed methods for interventions and treatments
- Techniques, measurements and assays
- Data analysis (Statistics)
Methods: The Dos

- **DO**: structure with subsections
- **DO**: ensure reader can reproduce study
- **DO**: use past tense
- **DO**: use ‘we’
- **DO**: include technical references
- **DO**: include detailed statistical analysis section
- **DO**: avoid including results
Methods: Common Criticisms

- Poorly structured
- Section did not allow authors to test their hypothesis
- Inappropriate study/experimental design
- Incomplete methods description
- Sample population issues: power analysis
- Inappropriate statistical analysis
Results

- Answering your question
- Clearly state the data
- Structure the section
- Text and graphics need to complement each other
- Number of graphics: strike a balance
- Correct numbering and call-outs for graphics
- The data is the data: do not be selective
- Avoid result interpretation here
Discussion

- State the answer to the question
- Support it with your evidence
- Present tense
- Cite relevant literature – accurately
- Go to the source data
- Critique the literature
- Compare and contrast your data to others’
- Interpret your data: postulate
- Clinical implications
- Strengths and limitations
Conclusion

- Take home message
- Brief
- Focused
- Implications
Getting Started: Planning

◆ Do I have something to say?
◆ Is the paper worth writing?
◆ Have others already published such a paper?
◆ What is the correct format?
◆ Who is the best audience for this message?
◆ What is the right journal for the paper?

Adapted from Huth, 2nd ed. 1990
Is this publishable?

◆ Innovative?
◆ Controversial?
◆ Methodologically sound?
◆ Does it add to the field of sexual medicine?
◆ Does it complement existing literature?
◆ Incremental data
◆ The “so what” factor?
Choosing a Journal

- Aim high, but be realistic
- Choose the best audience
- Impact factor
- Know your journals
  - Editorial process
  - Turnaround time
  - Stature
  - Readership
  - Society journals
- Instructions to authors
  - Word length
  - Abstract format
  - Reference format
Strategy for Writing

- Paper outline
- Numerous drafts
- Make sure you use spell check
- Grammar
- English language editor
- Co-author input – sign-off
- Stop trying to write the perfect paper
Emphasis Techniques

- Condensing or omitting less important information
- Subordinating less important information
- Placing important information in a power position
- Labeling important information
- Repeating important information
- Stating rather than implying important information
NO NOs in Publishing

- There is nothing more valuable in academics that your reputation

- Minimum unit fit for publication
- Plagiarism
- Double publishing
- Failure to acknowledge a contributor
- Failure to acknowledge source of funding
- Failure to disclose conflicts of interest
Getting Better

- Write, write, write!
- Find a writing mentor
- Liaise with peers
- Mock reviews
- Do not take reviewer critiques personally

Q&A