The art of writing an attractive abstract

Alan W. Shindel, MD, MAS
Editor in Chief
Sexual Medicine

Associate Professor in Residence
Department of Urology, University of California Davis
The essential nature of abstracts

- At a meeting...
  - Makes others aware of the work you are doing
    - Sets stage for collaboration and advice
    - Career advancement
- In a paper...
  - All that most readers see
    - Must be a truthful representation of the research findings
  - Essential for engaging further reading
    - Conciseness and interest is key
Abstract Fundamentals

- The abstract should convey the scientific method
ISSM Standard for abstracts

- Introduction
- Aims
- Methods
- Main Outcome Measure
- Results
- Conclusions
Introduction

- Articulates background information
- Why is this an interesting scientific question?
  - Understudied problem?
  - Unique population?
  - Applicability to clinical practice?
  - New paradigm?
Aims

• Also known as hypothesis
  • A testable hypothesis or hypotheses should be stated in every manuscript and abstract
    • Hypothesis is the cornerstone of science
      • Frames everything that follows
      • Minimizes potential for spurious findings
      • Focuses reader’s attention
    • Secondary hypotheses may be explicitly stated
Methods

• This is the section for “nuts and bolts” information and is essential for determining validity
  • Internal Validity
    • Were appropriate metrics utilized?
    • Was there assessment for confounding variables?
  • External Validity
    • How were participants/data collected?
    • How stringent were the inclusion criteria?
  • Statistical Validity
    • What statistical tests will be used?
    • Is the study adequately powered?
Main Outcome Measure (MOM)

- AKA the dependent variable
  - Is the MOM the best proxy for the hypothesis?
  - Is the MOM a validated instrument?
  - What independent variables should be included?
Results

- What did the study reveal?
  - Should be concise and clear
  - Address the primary hypothesis
    - Limit extraneous detail
    - Limit numeric data
    - Avoid speculation here
  - If space permits may address secondary hypotheses
Conclusions

• Sums up the study
  • Must be concise and accurate
  • Editorializing is permissible here
    • Sweeping conclusions should not be made unless data are supportive
    • Suggesting future directions is a means to be grandiose without making inappropriate statements
Formatting to draw attention

- A viewer/reader should be able to pick up key points within the first 15 seconds of viewing
  - Highlight the **main outcome measure**, **key methods**, and **conclusions**
  - There is a fine line between drawing attention and confusing and/or annoying the reader
How not to present an abstract...

Muslim communities or it is just something needed in the non-Muslim ones?

Yes, we do! But a culturally and Islamically tailored SE. While we may believe that Islamic societies are not as exposed to sexualization as the Western societies, they are not immune. We do know that while we do our best to resist this sexualization, it is happening (internet, movies...). However, SE is constructed and organised way basically doesn’t exist in Muslim societies. Why? Why??

Study it but there! (Illumination in SE)

1. The belief that it harvests the individuals of sexual activity in young people. Some believe that a “sexualization” is often interpreted as a “sexualization” which often advocates “compliance” and “sex”.
2. The role of the media and the way it views women.
3. How is it viewed, what’s the way things are taken?

What to do? Recommendations

To researchers:

Please study the Muslim Community and listen to them!
Study both Muslim parents and youth.

To the Muslim community and Muslim parents:

Dear brothers and sisters! It is a big deal! Seek professional help from experts!

To Muslim scholars:

We need your support! Get involved please!

Policy makers, health providers and SE programme developers:

Please take young people’s views, interests and lived experiences into consideration!
Please get to know some stuff about Islam!

To schools:

Be realistic
Read about Islam
Read about Islamic values and the way it views girls
Educate parents first and strengthen the home-school collaboration.

Be simple! Be healthy!
Additional Examples...

**Description:**
The above stated situation urged Chann Development Association (CDA) a youth lead NGO working to empower young people in Pakistan, to launch an innovative program titled “Interactive Theatre for Sexuality and reproductive Health Education to Learn and Practice (IT-HELP).” The main objective of the project was Equipping young activist with the skill of Interactive Theatre (Theatre of the Oppressed) so that they can utilize this skill effectively to educate and sensitize their communities in general and young people in particular regarding sexuality and reproductive health issues of youth people and can reduce the stigma related to sexuality of youth.

**Learning Through Building Capacity on Innovative and**
The importance of color selection

This is light text on dark background

All colors stand out well
The importance of color selection

This is dark text on light background

Colors don’t all stand out
Minor Issues

- Use simple language
- Consider consultation with a native speaker of the language in which you are writing
- Grammar matters
  - Appropriate punctuation
  - Avoid run on or complex sentences
- Images?
  - Use discretion
Presenting an abstract

- There is minimal time for presentation
  - Talk about the research
    - Assume the audience knows background
  - Focus on the main outcome measure
  - Leave plenty of time for questions
Conclusions

- An attractive and informative abstract is...
  - the most important means of disseminating and promoting your research
  - a key to networking for collaboration
  - essential to the advancement of science and patient care
Questions?