



TIPS FOR AUTHORS

Writing the Clinical Research Report

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Overview. The Clinical Research Report describes research involving human subjects, based on a formal experimental design. The study usually involves testing a hypothesis about the efficacy of a method or approach to patient care. The format for the Clinical Research Report is the same as for the Basic Science Research report. The report is divided into five sections: Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results, Discussion, and a brief Conclusion. The report is preceded by an Abstract and followed by a List of References. The following paragraphs discuss some issues that the author of a Clinical Research Report should keep in mind as the report is prepared.

Using clear language. Think of your reader as a single individual. Remember that you are describing your project to that individual. Your reader's goal is to understand what you did, why, and what you learned. Keep that individual in mind as you write. Use clear language and simple sentences.

Getting the tense right. Remember to use the correct tense for each section of the report. Here is a list of rules for selecting the correct tense.

1. The **Introduction** will include both the present tense (describing the problem to be addressed "Many implant systems **are** available...") and, in the literature review, the past tense ("Smith **reported** a study in which ...").
2. **Materials and Methods** are described in the past tense ("Twelve implant patients **were** selected ...").
3. **Results**, the findings from your study, will be stated in the past tense ("Implant system B **was associated** with the greatest degree of osseointegration ...").
4. In the **Conclusions** section, the author may briefly summarize results in a present tense statement, "The results of this study **demonstrate** that ..." or past tense, "More rapid osseointegration **was achieved** with Implant System A."

Using correct syntax and optimal sentence structure. Not everyone writes easily and even the best manuscripts can benefit from a critical reading by another colleague. For authors whose first language is not English, help with sentence structure and word choice may be crucial to achieving acceptance for publication. A colleague or a professional editor who will critique your manuscript and suggest revisions can mean the difference between acceptance and rejection, speedy publication or lengthy delays.

Using the best visuals. Photographs are often critically important to the effective presentation of a Clinical Research Report. Photos supplement verbal description, help the reader grasp the methodology of a particular technique, and support understanding of the reported outcomes. Because they are a central element in the report, the photos must be of the best possible quality. Poor-quality images will detract from the report and may delay publication of an otherwise valuable study. Images should be properly centered, with details sharp, and irrelevant elements eliminated or minimized. Nonclinical images should be photographed on a neutral, nontextured background.

The photographic quality of an image may be enhanced with the use of software programs but the author must not change the basic image in a way that misrepresents the subject of the photo, and makes an outcome appear more favorable than it actually was. Cropping, centering, highlighting, and increasing contrast are acceptable. Using software to make changes such as eliminating visible cement lines, closure of interproximal contacts, or changes in the fit of castings on radiographs are not acceptable.

Clinical research and the publication of clinical research studies are important elements in providing high-quality patient care and ensuring the continued advance of the specialty of prosthodontics. Making sure the report is well organized and clearly written enhances the standing of the authors and represents an important contribution to the discipline.

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