

GUIDELINES TO CONTRIBUTORS

Preparing a Manuscript for Submission to a Biomedical Journal

Editors and reviewers spend many hours reading manuscripts, and therefore appreciate receiving with manuscripts that are easy to read and edit. These guidelines provide general background and rationale for preparing manuscripts for SAARC Journal of Anaesthesia.

General Principles

The text of observational and experimental articles is usually divided into sections with the headings Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion (IMRAD). Long articles may need subheadings within some sections (especially the Results and Discussion sections) to clarify their content. Other types of articles, such as case reports, reviews, and editorials, are likely to need other formats.

Double spacing of all portions of the manuscript—including the title page, abstract, text, acknowledgments, references, individual tables, and legends—and generous margins are mandatory. If manuscripts are submitted electronically, the files should be double spaced.

Authors should number all of the pages of the manuscript consecutively, beginning with the title page.

Title Page

The title page should carry the following information:

1. The title of the article. Concise titles are easier to read than long, convoluted ones. Authors should include all information in the title that will make electronic retrieval of the article both sensitive and specific.
2. Authors' names, highest qualifications and institutional affiliations are to be mentioned.
3. Disclaimers, if any.
4. Corresponding authors. The name, mailing address, and e-mail address of the author responsible for correspondence about the manuscript is to be mentioned
5. Source(s) of support in the form of grants, equipment, drugs, or all of these.
6. A running head or a short title of no more than 40 characters (count letters and spaces) is to be necessarily given.

Conflict of Interest Notification Page

To prevent the information on potential conflict of interest for authors from being overlooked or misplaced, it is necessary for that information to be part of the manuscript. It should therefore also be included on a separate page or pages immediately following the title page.

Abstract and Key Words

An abstract (not exceeding 150-200 words) should follow the title page. The abstract should provide the context or background for the study and should state the study's purposes, basic procedures (selection of study subjects or laboratory animals, observational and analytical methods), main findings (giving specific effect sizes and their statistical significance, if possible), and principal conclusions. It should emphasize new and important aspects of the study or observations.

Because abstracts are the only substantive portion of the article indexed in many electronic databases, and the only portion many readers read, authors need to be careful that abstracts reflect the content of the article accurately.

Following the abstract, authors should provide, and identify as such, 3 to 10 key words or short phrases that capture the main topics of the article. Terms from the Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) list of Index Medicus should be used; if suitable MeSH terms are not yet available for recently introduced terms, present terms may be used.

Introduction

A context or background for the study (i.e., the nature of the problem and its significance has to be provided). The specific purpose or research objective of, or hypothesis tested by, the study has to be stated; the research objective is often more sharply focused when stated as a question. Both the primary and secondary objectives should be made clear, and any pre-specified subgroup analyses should be described. Only strictly pertinent references should be quoted and any data or conclusions from the work should not be included.

Methods

The Methods section should include only information that was available at the time the plan or protocol for the study was written; all information obtained

during the conduct of the study belongs in the Results section.

Selection and Description of Participants

The selection of the observational or experimental participants (patients or laboratory animals, including controls) should be described clearly, including eligibility and exclusion criteria and a description of the source population. Because the relevance of such variables as age and sex to the object of research is not always clear, authors should explain their use when they are included in a study report; for example, authors should explain why only subjects of certain ages were included or why women were excluded. The guiding principle should be clarity about how and why a study was done in a particular way. When authors use variables such as race or ethnicity, they should define how they measured the variables and justify their relevance.

Technical information

Identify the methods, apparatus (give the manufacturer's name and address in parentheses), and procedures in sufficient detail to allow other workers to reproduce the results. Give references to established methods, including statistical methods (see below); provide references and brief descriptions for methods that have been published but are not well known; describe new or substantially modified methods, give reasons for using them, and evaluate their limitations. Identify precisely all drugs and chemicals used, including generic name(s), dose(s), and route(s) of administration.

Authors submitting review manuscripts should include a section describing the methods used for locating, selecting, extracting, and synthesizing data. These methods should also be summarized in the abstract.

Statistics

Describe statistical methods with enough detail to enable a knowledgeable reader with access to the original data to verify the reported results. When possible, quantify findings and present them with appropriate indicators of measurement error or uncertainty (such as confidence intervals). Avoid relying solely on statistical hypothesis testing, such as the use of P values, which fails to convey important information about effect size. References for the design of the study and statistical methods should be to standard works when possible (with pages stated). Define statistical terms, abbreviations, and most symbols. Specify the computer software used.

Results

Present your results in logical sequence in the text, tables, and illustrations, giving the main or most important findings first. Do not repeat in the text all the data in the

tables or illustrations; emphasize or summarize only important observations. Extra or supplementary materials and technical detail can be placed in an appendix where it will be accessible but will not interrupt the flow of the text; alternatively, it can be published only in the electronic version of the journal.

When data are summarized in the Results section, give numeric results not only as derivatives (for example, percentages) but also as the absolute numbers from which the derivatives were calculated, and specify the statistical methods used to analyze them. Restrict tables and figures to those needed to explain the argument of the paper and to assess its support. Use graphs as an alternative to tables with many entries; do not duplicate data in graphs and tables. Avoid non-technical uses of technical terms in statistics, such as "random" (which implies a randomizing device), "normal," "significant," "correlations," and "sample."

Where scientifically appropriate, analyses of the data by variables such as age and sex should be included.

Discussion

Emphasize the new and important aspects of the study and the conclusions that follow from them. Do not repeat in detail data or other material given in the Introduction or the Results section. For experimental studies it is useful to begin the discussion by summarizing briefly the main findings, then explore possible mechanisms or explanations for these findings, compare and contrast the results with other relevant studies, state the limitations of the study, and explore the implications of the findings for future research and for clinical practice.

Link the conclusions with the goals of the study but avoid unqualified statements and conclusions not adequately supported by the data. In particular, authors should avoid making statements on economic benefits and costs unless their manuscript includes the appropriate economic data and analyses. Avoid claiming priority and alluding to work that has not been completed. State new hypotheses when warranted, but clearly label them as such.

References

General Considerations Related to References

Although references to review articles can be an efficient way of guiding readers to a body of literature, review articles do not always reflect original work accurately. Readers should therefore be provided with direct references to original research sources whenever possible. On the other hand, extensive lists of references

to original work on a topic can use excessive space on the printed page. Small numbers of references to key original papers will often serve as well as more exhaustive lists, particularly since references can now be added to the electronic version of published papers, and since electronic literature searching allows readers to retrieve published literature efficiently.

Avoid using abstracts as references. References to papers accepted but not yet published should be designated as "in press" or "forthcoming"; authors should obtain written permission to cite such papers as well as verification that they have been accepted for publication. Information from manuscripts submitted but not accepted should be cited in the text as "unpublished observations" with written permission from the source.

Avoid citing a "personal communication" unless it provides essential information not available from a public source, in which case the name of the person and date of communication should be cited in parentheses in the text. For scientific articles, authors should obtain written permission and confirmation of accuracy from the source of a personal communication.

SAARC Journal of Anaesthesia checks the accuracy of all reference citations; authors should therefore verify references against the original documents. Authors are responsible for checking that none of the references cite retracted articles except in the context of referring to the retraction. For articles published in journals indexed in MEDLINE, this journal considers PubMed the authoritative source for information about retractions. Authors can identify retracted articles in MEDLINE by using the following search term, where pt in square brackets stands for publication type: Retracted publication [pt] in pubmed.

Reference Style and Format

The Uniform Requirements style is based largely on an ANSI standard style adapted by the National Library of Medicine (NLM) for its databases. (7) For samples of reference citation formats, authors should consult National Library of Medicine web site.

References including electronic ones should be numbered consecutively in the order in which they are first mentioned in the text. Identify references in text, tables, and legends by Arabic numerals in parentheses. References cited only in tables or figure legends should be numbered in accordance with the sequence established by the first identification in the text of the particular table or figure. The titles of journals should be abbreviated according to the style used in Index Medicus or the one adopted by the journal

Tables

Tables capture information concisely, and display it efficiently; they also provide information at any desired level of detail and precision. Including data in tables rather than text frequently makes it possible to reduce the length of the text.

Type or print each table with double spacing on a separate sheet of paper. Number tables consecutively in the order of their first citation in the text and supply a brief title for each. Do not use internal horizontal or vertical lines. Give each column a short or abbreviated heading. Authors should place explanatory matter in footnotes, not in the heading. Explain in footnotes all nonstandard abbreviations making use of commonly used symbols like asterix, etc.

Identify statistical measures of variations, such as standard deviation and standard error of the mean.

Be sure that each table is cited in the text.

If you use data from another published or unpublished source, obtain permission and acknowledge them fully.

Illustrations (Figures)

Figures should be either professionally drawn and photographed, or submitted as photographic quality digital prints or in a electronic file of figures in a format (eg JPEG)

For x-ray films, scans, and other diagnostic images, as well as pictures of pathology specimens or photomicrographs, send sharp, glossy, black-and-white or color photographic prints, usually 127 x 173 mm (5 x 7 inches). Letters, numbers, and symbols on Figures should be clear and even throughout, and of sufficient size that when reduced for publication each item will still be legible. Figures should be made as self-explanatory as possible, since many will be used directly in slide presentations. Titles and detailed explanations belong in the legends, however, not on the illustrations themselves.

Photomicrographs should have internal scale markers. Symbols, arrows, or letters used in photomicrographs should contrast with the background.

If photographs of people are used, either the subjects must not be identifiable or their pictures must be accompanied by written permission to use the photograph. Whenever possible permission for publication should be obtained.

Figures should be numbered consecutively according to the order in which they have been first cited

in the text. If a figure has been published, acknowledge the original source and submit written permission from the copyright holder to reproduce the material. Permission is required irrespective of authorship or publisher except for documents in the public domain.

Authors should consult the journal about requirements for figures submitted in electronic formats.

Legends for Illustrations (Figures)

Type or print out legends for illustrations using double spacing, starting on a separate page, with Arabic numerals corresponding to the illustrations. When symbols, arrows, numbers, or letters are used to identify parts of the illustrations, identify and explain each one clearly in the legend. Explain the internal scale and identify the method of staining in photomicrographs.

Units of Measurement

Measurements of length, height, weight, and volume should be reported in metric units (meter, kilogram, or liter) or their decimal multiples.

Temperatures should be in degrees Celsius. Blood pressures should be in millimeters of mercury.

Drug concentrations may be reported in either SI or mass units, but the alternative should be provided in parentheses where appropriate.

Abbreviations and Symbols

Use only standard abbreviations; the use of non-standard abbreviations can be extremely confusing to readers. Avoid abbreviations in the title. The full term for which an abbreviation stands should precede its first use in the text unless it is a standard unit of measurement.

Sending the Manuscript to the Journal

Manuscripts must be accompanied by a cover letter, which should include the following information.

- A full statement to the editor about all submissions and previous reports that might be regarded as redundant publication of the same or very similar work. Any such work should be referred to specifically, and referenced in the new paper. Copies of such material should be included with the submitted paper, to help the editor decide how to handle the matter.

- A statement of financial or other relationships that might lead to a conflict of interest, if that information is not included in the manuscript itself or in an authors' form
- A statement that the manuscript has been read and approved by all the authors, that the requirements for authorship as stated earlier in this document have been met, and that each author believes that the manuscript represents honest work, if that information is not provided in another form (see below); and
- The name, address, and telephone number of the corresponding author, who is responsible for communicating with the other authors about revisions and final approval of the proofs, if that information is not included on the manuscript itself.

If the manuscript has been submitted previously to another journal, it is helpful to include the previous editor's and reviewers' comments with the submitted manuscript, along with the authors' responses to those comments. Editors encourage authors to submit these previous communications and doing so may expedite the review process.

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Sources of Information Related to Biomedical Journals

International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) www.icmje.org

World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) www.WAME.org

Council of Science Editors (CSE) www.councilscienceeditors.org

European Association of Science Editors (EASE) www.ease.org.uk

Cochrane Collaboration www.cochrane.org

The Mulford Library, Medical College of Ohio www.mco.edu/lib/instr/libinsta.html



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