Disseminating Professional Projects: 
Key Components of Abstract Development and Poster Presentations
April 7, 2011

Abstract Preparation Tips

Abstract Purpose
The purpose of an abstract is to convey the ideas of your project or research succinctly and with enough energy to warrant an invitation to present your work as either a podium presentation or poster presentation at a professional meeting.

Basic Groundrules
Read the call for abstracts. Call for abstracts usually include critical information, such as deadline date and time, word/character count, how/where to submit, mandated headings/categories, special foci and emphases. Abstracts are often rejected for not adhering to the guidelines.

Logistics
Be sure your team members know your plan for abstract submission with a sufficient time period for review. Will you need their biographical data? Is there a conflict of interest form to submit? Some meetings now require a fee for abstract submission. Have you arranged payment details? Have you determined the order of authorship?

Tips
Your sections should all hang together tightly, and not leave the uninformed, but interested reader scratching their head. Start with your findings (often called the results section). This may seem counterintuitive. By examining all your findings carefully, you can decide the clearest story to tell your abstract reviewer (the target audience). If you examined three outcomes, which outcome is most important or has the most intriguing findings? Use past tense.

Next, focus on your methods or approach. Because you have now focused your findings to the most salient story, you can focus the methods section to those that clearly explain how you obtained your results. Write the methods section in past tense. Include IRB approval, if relevant.

Your conclusions or implications should be in present tense. They should help the reader interpret the findings of the project for applicability elsewhere. While the conclusion should link to the results, it is okay to speculate or propose new ideas here. Finally, use the introduction as a way to set up the abstract. Use a few sentences to demonstrate you know the literature or the context, and that you have identified the knowledge gaps or persistent problems. Again, usually present tense.

Finally, pick a catchy title that links directly to the sections described above. Try to be succinct whenever possible.

Style
Whenever possible, prefer the active to the passive voice. Instead of “serum samples were obtained and analyzed,” consider “research assistants performed phlebotomy and analyzed specimens.”

Keep sentences short. Whenever possible, avoid acronyms and abbreviations, as they distract readers. If you use them, spell the term out completely first. Report statistical or numerical data consistently across the abstract (always 2 decimal points, etc.).
Things I look for when I review abstracts
1. Rules: Did they follow the format?
2. Impact: Is the study topic interesting? Will meeting attendees want to see/hear these data? Is this new and important work? Is it a big enough problem, or provocative enough?
3. Logic: Do the study results flow logically from the methods?
4. Clarity: Do I understand clearly the methods or approach they used? Can I visualize the flow in my head?
5. Homework Done? If quantitative: are the data reported correctly and clearly? “Satisfaction was higher for participants.” Vs. “Scores for participants differed significantly from non-participants (4.3 versus 3.9, respectively, p < .01).”
6. Tangent? Is the discussion relevant to the findings? Did they go off on a tangent?

Strategies for Success
- Always shoot for podium presentation (more time, more prominence).
- Identify if there are any special topics or themes of the conference. Try and incorporate those themes into your abstract text.
- Review abstracts from prior meetings to get a sense of the preferred style and flow.
- Join an abstract review committee. It’s the best way to see common pitfalls and successful strategies
- Spell check. Read your text aloud to identify awkward phrases.
- Keep a copy of your submitted abstract in a word document for easy retrieval.
- Aim to move your abstract submission to a peer-reviewed manuscript. You’ve done the work; it’s time to celebrate your success and share it with your community.

For more information and tips:
http://www.med.umich.edu/nursing/research/howTo.htm

Poster Printing Resources (not official endorsements)

Biochemistry: Large format poster printing is available to faculty and students of the School of Medicine at 2919 Taubman Library. Posters must be printed through BioChem office personnel. Individuals do not have access to directly connect their computers to the large format printer. Posters may be ordered through our ticketing service, or by bringing your file on a flash drive to our office. Poster charges may be paid by check (made out to "Department of Biological Chemistry"), or department shortcode. We request 24 hours lead time for printing under most circumstances; however, we often print on the same day, but cannot guarantee it. High volume printing jobs such as seminars require special scheduling, please email Wesley Tanner (wbtanner@umich.edu), or call him at 734.936.1142 for arrangements. Posters may be dropped off between 8 and 4 pm, Monday through Friday, although for faster service please use the ticketing service. Website: http://www.biochem.med.umich.edu/?q=posters

University of Michigan Cell and Developmental Biology Department
Website: http://www.med.umich.edu/cdb/poster-printing.html

Adobe Illustrator is a more robust package than Powerpoint, and relatively easy to use. A good handout can be found at: http://help.pop.psu.edu/help-by-software-package/adobe-illustrator/handout-illus.pdf/view
Poster Preparation Tips

Purpose of Posters
To communicate complex information concisely and visually.

Challenge
To convert project information into ESSENTIAL points, quickly grasped by reader; 3 minutes is average poster viewing time.

Information to Include
Project and research posters usually follow this format (next page describes each element):
- Title
- Background/Purpose
- Methods
- Results
- Conclusions
- References

Layout & Organization
- Most English speakers read left to right and top to bottom.
- Title: Center at the top of the poster;
- Authors' names, credentials, and affiliations: Under title
- Background/Purpose: top left corner
- Most important information: in center (e.g. methods or results)
- Conclusion: bottom right corner
- References: can include in bottom right corner or provide a separate handout depending on conference requirements and size of reference list

Display:
- ≤ 5 bullet points/header
- Short phrases, active voice
- Always use graphics or photos to display information about methods or results (breaks up text, catches viewers attention)
- Use color for interest (but no more than 3 colors; black is a color)
- No more than two font styles

Production:
- Create large format posters in MS PowerPoint or Adobe Illustrator. Use templates for easy design.
- Print large format posters at campus or commercial sites. Prices & requirements vary!
- More information on NRP website: www.med.umich.edu/NURSING/research/howTo.htm
  ALSO www.guides.lib.umich.edu (type “posters” in search box)

Remember:
- You have three minutes to convey essential information.
- Ask a colleague to view draft of poster (before printing final). Can colleague grasp the essential points? Is anything unclear? Does organization make sense?
- View others’ examples (see NRP website for previous poster sessions)

Questions?
Contact NRP at: www.med.umich.edu/NURSING/research/index.htm (Click on “Ask for Help” on left side index)
## Disseminating Professional Projects (UMHHS NRP Presentation 4/7/2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSTER CONTENT</th>
<th>Evidence Based Practice Project/Clinical Innovation</th>
<th>Research Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poster Sections</strong></td>
<td>What Goes Here? (Section Headings)</td>
<td>What Goes Here? (Section Headings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title &amp; Authors:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Project Title &amp; Project Leaders Names, Titles</strong></td>
<td><strong>Research Project Title &amp; Investigators Names &amp; Titles</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Purpose:** | 1. Concisely state purpose of the study  
2. Give background (Where was project conducted? What kind of patients or setting?) List significance of problem (why is it important?)  
3. State problem concisely (in PICO format: P=problem, I=intervention, C=comparison intervention (optional), O=outcome) | **Introduction and background**  
(Sometimes abstract goes here too)  
1. Concisely state purpose of the study  
2. State significance of research problem (What does it add to nursing knowledge? How does it build on gaps in previous research?)  
3. Give framework for research (if any)  
4. List hypotheses/objectives/research questions |
| **Methods:** | **Evidence Synthesis**  
1. Summarize the relevant evidence (including major findings, benefits, risks)—Best approach is summary of themes  
2. List strengths & limitations of available evidence (overall quality of evidence, quantity of evidence). (NOTE: This section will be brief for clinical innovation posters) | **Methods**  
1. State study design (e.g. descriptive, quasi-experimental, experimental, etc)  
2. List setting (e.g. inpatient unit, community clinic, etc.)  
3. Describe sampling (inclusion/exclusion criteria, sampling method)  
4. If testing an intervention, describe intervention & the outcome variables and how they were measured; If a descriptive study list variables and how they were measured  
5. Describe data analysis--What statistical methods were used to analyze data |
| **Practice Change** | **Implementation**  
Outline changes or recommendations to be made (based on the evidence); include specific steps or components of practice recommendation—This is a good place to display photos, new policy, protocol, documentation forms, etc. | **Evaluation**  
Show evaluation data—were desired results attained?  
Or…Show plan for collecting measurable data about results |
| **Results:** | **Implementation**  
Describe how practice recommendation was carried out (for example, how was change communicated & rolled out, what training was involved, what other activities were involved?)—Bullet points work well here | **Results**  
Present a summary of findings organized according to research questions or hypotheses; Data displays are helpful here |
| **Conclusions:** | **Significance**  
1. State significance or meaning of project for patients/staff/institution  
2. Briefly summarize implications of making change & recommendations for future practice | **Conclusions**  
1. State significance or meaning of project for patients/staff/institution  
2. Briefly summarize implications of making change & recommendations for future practice |
| **References/citations** | Selected Citations | Selected Citations |