

# FRAMEWORK FOR WRITING A CLINICAL CASE REPORT

Dr. Matthew Greenway · Research Rounds - May 2014

## **GENERAL:**

Is your case “interesting”?

- Pubmed search for similar case-studies (note name of journal and get a copy)
- Well written cases of limited interest are usually ranked “low priority” and hard to get published

Identify your audience

- Regional vs. national vs. international
- Clinician vs. scientist
- Generalist vs. specialist

Choose your journal

- Clinically-orientated preferred over basic science journals (e.g. Neurology vs Annals of Neurology)
- Look at previous examples of case-studies

Choose correct format

- Use “information for authors” from journal website
- Use correct format for writing case study (e.g. number of words, tables, figures etc)

## **A GOOD CASE STUDY WILL INCLUDE:**

### **1. DESCRIPTIVE/CONCISE TITLE**

- a. Usually done last
- b. Needs to give a description (e.g. “Presentation and outcome of sarcoidosis” ) and context (e.g. “in a First Nations kindred in Southern Ontario”)

### **2. ABSTRACT**

- a. Hardest part to write/limited number of words
- b. Usually done after writing main body of article/don’t write this first
- c. In general one sentence for:
  - i. Background
  - ii. Methods
  - iii. Results
  - iv. Conclusion

### **3. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

- a. General clinical description of the disease (e.g. “Sarcoidosis is a ..... characterized by.....”)
- b. Short description of known pathogenesis (e.g. “Sarcoidosis is caused by.....”.)
- c. Reason for case-study (e.g. “Evidence of clinical heterogeneity in First Nation families with sarcoidosis is limited therefore we.....”)

### **4. METHODS**

- a. Brief description of what and how you gathered your information
  - i. Interview patient/chart review
  - ii. Information gathered (diagnostic tests/treatments)
  - iii. Ethics approval/consents

### **5. RESULTS**

- a. Description of case
- b. Language is most important in this section. Read examples of similar case-studies to ensure correct terminology. Short sentences; try to remove all unnecessary words. Correct use of context “we” vs “I” etc.

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## 6. DISCUSSION

Most heavily criticized by reviewers. Don't make overreaching statements. Give a balanced critique of your work. Important points to cover:

- a. Context of your study (e.g. "Sarcoidosis is an uncommon condition and has been studied before in two First Nation's families....")
- b. Brief summary (usually one sentence) on existing knowledge (e.g. "Previous studies have identified ..... as a prominent feature of sarcoidosis in .....")
- c. How your data adds or challenges existing data (e.g. "In contrast to previous reports our family did not exhibit..... as a prominent feature. Instead we identified 3 family members who.....")
- d. Additional/less important findings of your study
- e. Integrated summary/future work (e.g. "Given the increasing incidence of sarcoidosis in First Nation's families it is important to characterize clinical heterogeneity in order to..... Our study has identified ..... as an important feature of sarcoidosis in First Nation kindreds. Future work will involve.....")

## 7. REFERENCES

- a. Usually a small number (12 or less) are allowed
- b. Reference yourself **or** your institution **or** the journal you are submitting to if possible

## 8. TABLES/FIGURES

- a. Usually allowed one of each
- b. Clear legend is important (many readers/reviewers will look at abstract/tables first)

## DON'T FORGET:

### 1. AUTHORSHIPS

Go to those who contribute to:

- Design or conceptualization of the study
- **OR** analysis or interpretation of the data
- **OR** drafting or revising the manuscript for intellectual content

Order (usually)

- Senior (supervisor) is usually last
- You are usually first
- Contributors usually (2<sup>nd</sup> last, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> last, 3<sup>rd</sup> etc)

### 2. AFFILIATIONS

- a. Make sure you get your institution details correct

### 3. CORRESPONDENCE

- a. Choose corresponding author carefully and choose an email address that will not change

### 4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Opportunity to thank patients/families
- Opportunity to thank individuals who helped but do not meet authorship criteria
- Acknowledge all funding sources (for any of the authors)