WRITING AN ABSTRACT: TIPS FOR SUCCESS AND HOW TO AVOID COMMON PITFALLS

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Disclosures

- The presenter has no financial disclosures to make in relation to the content presented.
- The presentation will not discuss any off-label use.
- Participation in this webinar does not guarantee acceptance of any submitted abstract.
Session Objectives

■ Describe abstract development for different types of presentations
■ Identify key content to be included in each component of the abstract
■ Apply strategies for writing a well-composed abstract

What is an abstract?

A short document summarizing a larger work

■ Introduction for a publication
  – Included as part of the submitted work
■ Submission for presentation
  – Education session – pre-conference or concurrent session
  – Poster or podium presentation at a professional meeting
■ Summary for scientific proceedings
What can be included as an educational session?

- Pre-conference session
  - 3.25-hour session
- Concurrent session
  - 50-minute session
- Disease-specific
- Treatment-specific
- Supportive care
- Family-related issues
- Professional practice issues

What can be included as a paper or poster presentation?

- Research study
- Clinical practice project
- Educational project
- Theoretical paper
- Review of the literature / systematic review
  - Not previously presented vs. previously presented
  - Not previously published vs. previously published
Writing a Successful Abstract

■ Read the directions

■ Believe the directions

■ Follow the directions


Directions for Writing an Abstract

■ Education Session Components
  - Description of presentation content
  - How proposed content adds to current knowledge
  - 300-word limit for education abstracts

■ Paper/Poster Components
  - Basis of inquiry
  - Purpose/objectives
  - Methods
  - Findings or Outcomes
  - 500-word limit for paper/poster abstracts
Let’s start writing …

Parts of an Abstract

■ Title
  – Provides the first impression
  – An “abstract of the abstract”
    – (Waller & Ropka, 1993)
  – Should include:
    ■ Important variables
    ■ Target population
    ■ Context
Parts of an Education Abstract

■ Body of the abstract
  – Description of the session content
  – Significance of the content to pediatric hematology/oncology nursing
  – How the content advances the field and leads to improvements in practice
  – 300-word limit

Parts of an Education Abstract

■ Learner engagement strategies
  – How will the learners process and retain information?
  – Discussion - Case study
  – Presentation/lecture - Small group activities
  – Video - Simulation
  – Role-play - Reflective activity
Parts of an Education Abstract

■ Summary of Evidence
  – List of references relative to the proposed content area
  – Demonstrate breadth and depth of the proposed content
  – Reflect current state of the science in relation to proposed content

Parts of a Scientific Abstract

■ Basis of inquiry
  – Nature and importance of the problem prompting the study or project
  – Rationale/conceptual basis for the study or project

■ Purpose/objectives
  – Overarching purpose of the project or study
  – Goals of the program
  – Research questions or hypotheses driving the study

500-word limit for APHON Paper and Poster Abstracts
Parts of a Scientific Abstract

Methods: Research
- Design
- Study sample and setting
- Data collection methods
- Study variables
- Analytic plan

Methods: Project
- Approach
- Project setting
- Target population
- Outcome variables of interest
- Processes used
- Evaluation plan

Results/Outcomes
- If in progress …
  ■ Status of the project – e.g., participants accrued, duration of project implementation
  ■ Any preliminary analyses
- If completed …
  ■ Summary of completed analyses
  ■ Emphasize major results
- Regardless of project/study status …
  ■ Implications for practice/directions for future research
  ■ Overall summary of the significance of the project/study
Two Additional Sections for All Abstracts

- **Conference Learning Gaps**
  - What will learners be able to do as a result of attending your presentation to address the identified conference learning gaps?

- **Learning Outcome**
  - What observable and measurable outcome will learners be able to do as a result of attending your presentation?

[http://aphon.org/UPLOADS/Meetings/Sample_Abstracts_1.pdf](http://aphon.org/UPLOADS/Meetings/Sample_Abstracts_1.pdf)
[http://aphon.org/UPLOADS/Meetings/Sample_Abstracts_2.pdf](http://aphon.org/UPLOADS/Meetings/Sample_Abstracts_2.pdf)

General Principles when Writing

- Keep the focus on the content area, study, or project
- Address each required area
- Describe methods and outcomes clearly
- Use active voice whenever possible
Pitfalls to Avoid when Writing

■ Copying and pasting an abstract from another source
  – DNP project or dissertation abstracts
  – Previously presented abstract
■ Repetition within the abstract
■ “Wordiness” and excessive use of modifiers
■ Not allowing sufficient time for feedback and refining the abstract prior to submission

Common Pitfalls in Writing an Abstract

■ Unfocused title
  – Demystifying a leukemia protocol
  – Children’s cancer symptoms: What do we know?
Common Pitfalls in Writing an Abstract

■ Excessive description of the project’s background
  - *Unrelieved symptoms result in suffering and decreased quality of life for children receiving treatment for cancer and even following completion of therapy.* The purpose of this review of the literature was to evaluate existing measures of physical symptoms in children and adolescents with cancer. The ability to measure symptoms accurately is essential to relieve the suffering that children experience as a result of their disease and its related treatment. Nurses play a vital role in identifying and relieving children’s symptom burden. A review of major databases was conducted. Results of this review showed that relatively few measures exist for measuring children’s symptoms.

Common Pitfalls in Writing an Abstract

■ Study findings or project outcomes not clearly presented
  - *Study findings indicated that pediatric oncology nurses experience many stressors during their first year of hire.* The learning curve for the specialty is challenging and nurses also experience psychological stressors.
Common Pitfalls in Writing an Abstract

■ Repetition, “wordiness,” and excessive modifiers
  – Acute lymphoblastic leukemia accounts for nearly one third of the numerous types of childhood cancer. Advances in the treatment of this most frequently occurring childhood cancer have led to ongoing refinement and complexity in protocols guiding the treatment of this disease. Pediatric oncology nurses have a significant responsibility to acquire a working understanding of these protocols as they work with children with leukemia on a day-to-day basis.

Before submitting your abstract …

■ Re-read the instructions

■ Peer review
  – Proofreading support
  – Clarity of presentation
  – Attention to objectives
General Presentation Ethics

■ Do not submit two identical abstracts simultaneously
■ Do not submit an abstract if an article addressing the results has been published or is under review
■ Do not resubmit a previously presented abstract to another national or international call for abstracts
  – Unless otherwise stated in the call for abstracts

What happens to my abstract after it is submitted?

■ Education abstracts
  – Peer review by the conference planning committee
■ Scientific abstracts:
  – Peer review for scientific/scholarly merit
    ■ At least 3 reviewers
    ■ Quantitative and qualitative review
■ Scores and reviewers’ comments reviewed
■ Selections made
■ Authors notified
Example reviewer comments …

- Although project is not complete, initial parts are complete and outcomes are available
- Great work- incredibly well organized project
- Informative abstract on an innovative study
- Nice evaluation of a program we expect to help but that in this case we actually assessed this

Example reviewer comments …

- The purpose/objectives are not written in measurable terms
- The abstract is quite vague. Project does not seem to have started
- Project is not completed. Not certain if there is enough data/information to present in poster
- No findings reported. It is not clear what they will be measuring
- Interesting topic. The authors fail to provide a synthesis of the evidence sources they reviewed. They also fail to provide a detailed methods section addressing search terms, inclusion criteria, and articles included.
- This could be a paper presentation next year. I’m unsure about its form as a poster this year.
What happens if my abstract is accepted?

- Educational sessions
  - Date and time assigned

- Paper session
  - 15-minute slide presentation
  - Grouped with two other similar presentations

- Poster presentation
  - Poster available to attendees throughout the conference
  - Authors present at designated times

Presentation Reminders

- Upload materials by designated deadlines
- Institutional templates for slides or posters
- Permissions for use of photographs
- Avoid inadvertent disclosure of protected health information
What if my abstract isn’t accepted?

- Ok to be disappointed – but don’t be devastated!
- Request feedback
- Work with a trusted mentor
- Revise and resubmit!

Additional Resources

- APHON Call for Abstracts: http://aphon.org/meetings/annual-conference/call-for-abstracts
- Education Session Abstract Examples: http://aphon.org/UPLOADS/Meetings/Sample_Abstracts_1.pdf
- Paper/Poster Abstract Examples: http://aphon.org/UPLOADS/Meetings/Sample_Abstracts_2.pdf
ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

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