



5 tips on HOW TO WRITE PAPER:

As young ophthalmologist, research is one of the areas that we need to get involved in as soon as possible to improve our clinical practice. The researching process helps to make our ideas and results public, and this is why it's important to know how to write a paper. In this issue, Radka Toms, bring us an interview of three astonishing clinicians and researchers in Ophthalmology who give us their 5 tips for writing a paper: Prof. Martin Filipec; Keith Barton-Editorial Board Member, BJO; and Donald Stone-Editorial Board member, Ophthalmology.

Prof. Martin Filipec

1. Be simple

It happens often and I know it from my personal experience that you start to think about one topic and step by step you are adding more and more parameters and more data you want to analyse as it seems it would make more sense and with these additional information's the study will be much more complex and much better. What might happen is that you will never finish the study and/or your article.

2. Formulate precisely the aim of the study/article

Formulate precisely the aim of the study, hypothesis you are testing. Sometime happens you e.g. got a new machine to examine cornea or retina and you are examining the patients in spite to get as much data as possible and than see what it will bring. It might work but usually it brings a lot of data and you end up to be lost in the middle of them unable to draw any conclusion.

3. Be quick

If you have an idea and you decide to write an article do study quickly and write it quickly. Very often the exactly same idea has somebody else in the world and then you feel betrayed that somebody has stolen your ingenious idea.

4. Be clear and consequent

When you plan prospective study think already about the article you are going to write. The construction must be clear from the aim throughout the methods, results and conclusions and each category in the article must be well defined and constructed as they must logically correspond to each other. Often people are mixing methods with results, results with conclusions and conclusions dont correspond to the aim of the study and results. Make sure there is logical clarity from the beginning to the end.

5. Be sure you have a data

It concerns mainly retrospective studies. As you are young and everybody including yourself expect you to present and publish regularly but often you don't have any prospective study ready and you are assigned or you decide to retrieve retrospective data and analyse them. What happens very often is you find out, of course usually in the



middle of your work some important data are missing. Now you are in front of decision you never want to be: to say you can not finish the work and "fail" or invent some data and fail. Try to avoid this situation by checking well availability of the retrospective data, do rather prospective studies and if you got trapped into this situation choose first option.

Keith Barton - Editorial Board Member, BJO

1. Adhere to the instructions to authors carefully. eg. Keep to the word count - don't write long-winded sentences. No matter how important you think the point is that you want to make, keep it succinct.
2. The introduction should be focussed on the problem. eg. if you are writing a glaucoma article, don't spend the first two paragraphs explaining what glaucoma is. Likewise don't try and discuss the problem at length in the introduction, keep it for the discussion.
3. Write the methodology session in a structured fashion. Describe the aim of the study, patient eligibility, exclusion criteria and recruitment methods clearly. Try and avoid mixing results eg. number of patients recruited with methodology, i.e. who was eligible for recruitment. Clearly define endpoints in the methodology section and report the results according to those endpoints. Likewise try and use commonly used endpoints so your results are comparable with others
4. Keep results and discussion separate. i.e. Report results without discussing their significance in the results section. Discuss their significance in the discussion without repeating the results. Keep the discussion free of speculation. Discuss only the significance of the results and limitations of the study reported.
5. Report raw data as well as means etc. eg. in a surgical trial show a scatterplot. In graphs, always show error bars.

Donald Stone - Editorial Board member, Ophthalmology

1. Know where you are, where you are going, and how you want to get there. Before you even begin a research endeavour, you should clearly define what question you would like to answer and how to best answer it. Obtain the input of a biostatistician to help design the study and allow for appropriate statistical analysis of the results. Many creative research ideas and important study questions have failed to be published, victims of poor study design or failure to determine the needed sample size.
2. Be honest and objective about the novelty and importance of your findings; in the discussion portion of your manuscript, this will help you avoid the temptation of grand tangents. This perspective will also help guide you to an appropriate journal for submission. It is quite possible that your study on "Underwater Pterygium Surgery As It Pertains to the Falkland Newt" will not be of interest to a top-tier, broadly read journal. It is admirable to aim high, but utilise journals that have historically published similar articles.

3. Choose a topic you are passionate about. The process of planning and implementing a project, writing a manuscript, accepting the suggestions of reviewers, and even facing the rejection from one... or two... or more journals takes perseverance. Being a published author is its own satisfying reward, but it is easier to persist when you are pursuing a topic that excites you.

4. Start slowly. A case report is an excellent way to gain an introduction into the world of publishing. As many journals are becoming less enthusiastic about accepting case reports, consider the journal of a local ophthalmological or medical society, and submit a case that would be of interest to the readers. The lessons learned in manuscript preparation and editing will translate well to more ambitious efforts.

5. Style isn't just for the cover of Vogue. Reviewers are volunteers, and are not likely to invest time and effort trudging through an article that is difficult to read due to poor writing. The scientific merit can be overshadowed by an awkward translation; if you are writing in a second language, seek the help of a friend or professional medical editor. This allows the idea and execution of your research to shine through, and hopefully the editor, reviewers, and readers will enjoy the fruits of your labor.