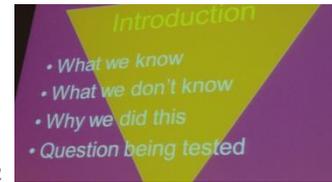


## How to write a paper and get it published in a good medical journal

by Praveen Veerabhadrapa, NIC member

I am thrilled that **Dr Stuart Spencer, Executive Editor of The Lancet**, has allowed me to script his special guest lecture on ‘How to write a research paper and get it published in a good quality medical journal’ presented during our September 2012 New Investigators’ Symposium in Sydney. *I would like to share this with you.*



*Notes from the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Investigator Symposium special guest lecture:*

*‘How to write a paper and get it published in a good medical journal’- a talk from*

*The Executive Editor of The Lancet, Dr Stuart Spencer (with permission).*



**Title:** Should begin with a keyword from the main theme of the paper. Try to keep it short and simple. Avoid abbreviations.

**Abstract:** Structure a short (~250 words) abstract. Most people end at the abstract so it is important to spend time on this.

**Introduction:** Start with what is already known. Identify what is unknown? *Why* was the study conducted in the first place? *What* is the question (hypothesis) being tested?

*Do Not-* include textbook material; review the entire field of research or give away the results.

End the introduction with a clear statement of the primary research question- for e.g., “We aimed to assess the benefit of...[intervention] on [outcome] in...[setting]”.

**Methods:** *Whom - Where - When - Why - What & How*

Important questions to be answered are- Is the study reproducible based on the details provided? Are the study measurements in the logical order? Are new techniques explained in detail, with the rationale?

**Results:** Must be enthusiastic, and sound. Provide numbers and variability.

*Do Not-* exaggerate, duplicate text, figures and tables.

**Discussion:** Begin by stating what the answer was, to the question previously stated in the Introduction.

*1<sup>st</sup> Paragraph:* What did this study show?

*2<sup>nd</sup> Paragraph:* Strengths and weaknesses of the methods.

*3<sup>rd</sup> Paragraph:* Discuss as to how the results support or refute the current knowledge

*Final Paragraph:* Provide insight on Future directions 'so what?' & 'where next?'. What is the impact on current thinking or practice?

**References:** Journal specific formatting is crucial; else, the editor will sense the previous submission (and the outcome). Carefully select the authors used and chose seminal references. Cite 1 or 2 references for each point being made.

*Do Not-* over self-cite.

**Figures & Tables:** 'A picture is worth a thousand words'. Emphasize on the trends, patterns and relationships. Predict future values. Figure must illustrate the data too complex for a table representation. Use discretion.

**Covering Letter:** Address the Editor by Name. State the importance of the question. State the importance of the findings. Justify as to why this specific journal was chosen?

*Remember:* Editors *want to* publish papers, but must maintain standards. Our job is to *persuade* the editors that the paper is worthy. Be humble (as it is sensed in the paper)!

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