

# How to prepare a winning abstract



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# Aims of the session

- To consider the stages of the research process in relation to abstract writing
- To enable you to prepare a conference abstract and to consider the fundamental principles of good abstract writing
- To share examples of different abstracts for critique
- To reflect on what you've learned at the end of the session

# Why write an abstract



- To share your work with colleagues and peers to get feedback
- To present preliminary findings of research
- To capture the interest of a potential reader
- It is the start of writing up your work for publication

# Stages of the research process

- In small groups take 5 mins to make a list of the stages in the research process
- Which bits of this would you include in a conference abstract?

# Types of abstracts

- Informative abstracts
- Descriptive abstracts

# Research process

- Background
- Aim- RQ
- Literature Review
- Design
- Methodology
- Methods: Recruitment, sample, data collection, (tools, process) data analysis, results, ethics, rigour,
- Results, limitations, discussion
- conclusion, implications for practice

## **Aims**

To explore how nursing students account for decisions to report or not report poor care witnessed on placement, and to examine the implications of findings for educators.

## **Background**

Concern has been raised about the extent to which cases of poor care go unreported.

## **Methods**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with thirteen undergraduate students at a UK University during 2013. Data were transcribed verbatim and categorised according to whether or not students reported concerns. Cases were analysed using Potter and Wetherall's (1987) version of discourse analysis to identify strategies used to account for decisions to report or not report poor practice.

## **Results**

Participants presented themselves in the best possible light regardless of whether or not they had reported an episode of concern. Those who had tended to attribute their actions to internal factors such as moral strength and a commitment to a professional code. Those who had not, reported concerns accounted for their actions by referring to external influences which prevented them from doing so, or made reporting pointless.

## **Conclusion**

The study provides information about how students account for their actions and omissions in relation to the reporting of poor care and has implications for educators.

Person-centredness and person-centred practice is now a common discourse in nursing and health care generally. Significant developments have occurred in Scotland, across the UK and internationally in the development of person-centred nursing and healthcare services. However, a similar pace of development has not been evident in nursing education programmes. It remains the case that there are few person-centred nursing curricula and at best most have 'the person-centred module' as a part of the curriculum. O'Donnell et al (in progress) have demonstrated in a systematic review, that this situation is challenging to the way that new nurses are prepared for the realities of working in a person-centred way in practice. The curriculum is more than the particular programme itself and inclusive notions of curricula pay attention to the total learning and academic milieu within which staff and students interact. This is an issue that we at The Division of Nursing have been addressing over the past 18 months. A key part of this work has been creating an academic environment that 'lives' person-centred values in all aspects of our work. This paper will present the results of this 18-month collaborative research project that has focused on generating a person-centred academic environment in nursing. It will illustrate the processes used and outcomes achieved thus far. The challenges of establishing the framework and embedding it in practice will be highlighted. The ongoing programme of work will be outlined, so that all aspects of the curriculum culture are truly 'lived' rather than 'espoused' (Schein 2004)



# Abstract:Structure

- Title
- Authors and place of work
- Introduction / background
- Aims and objectives
- Methods
- Results
- Conclusions/Implications for practice



# Title

- It should be accurate and capture attention
- It should explain the context of the study
- It should be easy to understand
- It should not use jargon or abbreviations
- Does it reflect the conference theme?
- What did you do?
- What was learned?

# Examples

- **Podcasting for assessment guidance and feedback: undergraduate students' perspectives**
- **THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK!**
- **Reflections on the development of a collaborative online programme informed by the community of inquiry framework**

# Authors

- Who carried out the study
- Who conceived the study
- Who designed the study
- Who collected the data
- Who carried out the analysis
- Who wrote the abstract
- Every listed author should read and approve the abstract before submission

# Introduction / background

- Summarise the current knowledge or state of the art in relation to the work you are presenting
- Try and get this into as short a space as possible – one sentence!

# Class examples?

- What's the issue?
- How can you describe it in one sentence?

# Example

- Practice in end of life cf care is variable.
- Little is known about the practice and use of anti depressants in people with CF
- Non Tuberculosis Mycobacterium is an emerging problem in CF.

# Aims and objectives

- Aim of the work you are presenting – what you hope to achieve, the reasons for presenting
- If you are presenting research try to include the hypothesis



# Example

'This report presents our 7 year experience (1979 – 1986) with bereavement visits to 11 CF families'

*Aim, what you hope to achieve, the reasons for presenting*

# Methods

- The design of the study (*questionnaire, audit QI project*)
- The context in which the study was carried out (*where it took place*)
- The types of patients included (eg: *all males with CF under 10 years*)
- The types of measures used (*a validated questionnaire - authors*)
- Be concise

# Example

'The semi structured interviews were carried out by the nurse coordinator at home within 6 weeks after the death of a person with CF.'

*Design, context, types of patients, types of measures used, concise*

# Results

- Do not talk about data that you anticipate
- Give the main results of the study
- You may have to be selective – you can't present everything
- Do not be subjective – you must present real data
- Present the data upon which you will base your conclusions
- Do not include tables or graphs unless it is essential

# Example

'Parents, siblings and extended family members exhibited, to varying degrees, a variety of bereavement reactions. Some members of the CF team had feelings of anxiety and helplessness. Treatment intervention was given to the families as needed.'

*Present main results, do not be subjective, present real data, present the data upon which you will base your conclusions*

# Conclusions

- Your conclusions must support your results
- If your work was limited to a particular patient group or therapy then your conclusions should be restricted to that group/therapy
- Why are your findings important, what are their implications?
- Be concise and consistent in tenses

# Example

'The findings have provided useful insights to the CF team and have helped to enhance their support of bereaved families and the CF community at large. Thus CF centres may wish to consider bereavement visits as a formal part of their comprehensive healthcare programme'.

*Support your results, if work was limited to a particular patient group then your conclusions should be restricted to that group, why are your findings important, what are their implications*

# Do's and don'ts

- **DO:** follow the instructions
- Read the guidelines
- Stay within word counts
- KISS
- Know your audience
- Get a stranger/lay person to read it
- Ensure it conveys a clear message
- **Don't:** use extra words, "it was felt that"
- Use abbreviations or jargon



# General Advice

- Submit on or before the due date
- Ensure you include your name, the other authors names spelt correctly and all the authors organisations
- Finally, remember that your abstract serves two purposes:
  - to interest and intrigue the committee so they will select it
  - to introduce/outline your topic for the conference handbook – so it needs to stand alone as a record of your presentation

# The four Cs

- Complete –covers major parts of project
- Concise- no unnecessary information
- Clear- does it make sense to a lay person?
- Cohesive- does it flow between all sections?

# What do editors look for

- They scan
- Key words, interest, relevance, clarity, attention-grabbing, a quick easy read
- Does it fit the conference theme?
- Common issues: too short, too long, not clear what message is, too much background, no data, boring
- Debate re “teasers”

# Questions for you

- Should you use references?
- How should you write numbers?
- How do you avoid empty phrases?
- How do you avoid extra words

# References

- Gaw A 2011, *Abstract Expressions: A quick guide to writing effective abstracts for papers and conferences*. Glasgow: SA Press

# Activity

- In your groups put forward some ideas of projects that you might turn into an abstract (250 words)
- Decide on 1 and using the headings from the powerpoint construct an abstract
- Swap it with another group, is it clear? What questions do you have? what changes would you make. Amend accordingly
- Have a look at some of the sample abstracts, critique them based on the powerpoint
- Feedback to another group