

Book review

Publishing and Presenting Clinical Research

Warren S Browner

Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins,
Baltimore, USA, 1999

In this book, Dr Browner provides novice authors with a comprehensive guide to writing successfully, either for publication or presentation at scientific meetings. Assistance is also provided for more experienced authors who may have difficulty getting their manuscripts accepted for publication. There are 14 chapters spread over approximately 200 pages that contain many useful examples to explain the relevant points the author wishes to make. Most of the chapters conclude with a useful checklist of items that the potential authors should include in their manuscript.

The importance of the manuscript title and abstract is emphasised in one chapter, including examples of how to increase the impact of a title to provide a good first impression to journal reviewers. This chapter describes in detail the features that must be mentioned in the abstract, in particular the inclusion of the results or outcome of the research.

The chapter on the methods section of a paper is particularly well described. The author has provided a clear and concise guide to research designs in the form of an algorithm. This is of benefit to budding authors who are attempting to consolidate their learning of statistics and its application to research. The potential author is reminded to present this section in a form that will enable the reader to reproduce the research.

Dr Browner considers the results section of a study to be the "major scientific contribution to your manuscript". Subsequently, the very comprehensive chapter on results covers all the important points that the author must consider. These include such things as the difference between data and information, descriptive and analytical results, dichotomous,

categorical and continuous variables and basic statistics including P values, confidence intervals and multivariable techniques.

The role of tables and figures is extensively described in two separate chapters. The book describes how both of these tools serve to draw the reader's attention to facts that are concisely and neatly set out and how imperative it is that these tools are clearly labelled so that the reader can quickly identify the information contained within them. These two chapters contain many useful examples of table and figure layout and design to assist the author.

The book contains further chapters on the discussion section, references and authorship and acknowledgment of manuscripts. Dr Browner states that the discussion section should be the least stressful part of writing an article as this is where the authors summarise their findings and make recommendations regarding the outcomes of their research. Suggestions are provided for linking paragraphs and putting all the ideas together in a succinct but informative summary.

The chapter on referencing is both practical and informative, reminding the author to check the reference requirements of the journal to which they are submitting. Similarly the chapter on authorship clearly describes who qualifies to be included as an author and who should be acknowledged. The book also includes a useful section covering the preparation of posters and oral presentations for conferences. At the back of the book, the author has provided a useful list of additional reading about style and presentation.

The only restrictive aspect of this book is that it only describes the preparation of formal research and not other forms of publication such as case studies, clinical findings, surveillance outcomes or reviews of books or articles. These latter items are important inclusions in journals.

In summary, however, this book is an excellent reference tool and is highly recommended for both novice and experienced authors. It would be particularly useful for those who are planning to submit their articles for publication in medical, nursing or scientific journals.

Gabby Robathan RN BSc(Nsg)

Clinical Nurse Consultant, Infection Control

Princess Margaret Hospital, Perth, Western Australia.