

## **THE ESSENTIALS OF ORAL ABSTRACT PRESENTATION**

### **What is an abstract?**

An abstract is a short (usually 250 words) synopsis of a research study.

- A written abstract is printed on the first page of nearly all research publications and allows the reader to discern the reason for, methods, results and conclusions of a study without having to read the entire manuscript.
- Researchers can also submit a written abstract of their study to be considered for presentation at a national meeting prior to the actual completion or publication of the work. Doing so is an important opportunity for scientists to get their research recognized on a national/international scale, to network with other researchers, and stay on the cutting edge of research findings. These written abstracts are chosen, based on merit, and the investigator is invited (or not) to present the research findings at the meeting. This presentation can either be a short oral power-point presentation of the research or a poster.

### **How is the written abstract formatted?**

The written abstract is formatted according to specifications set forth by the meeting and these instructions are usually posted on the meetings' website. All abstracts must contain the following elements:

- 1) Statement of Purpose
- 2) Hypothesis or Objectives
- 3) Materials and Methods
- 4) Results
- 5) Conclusion/Relevance

Care should be taken to writing a concise, powerful and grammatically correct abstract as acceptance of your work will be based on the written abstract alone.

### **How is the written abstract submitted?**

The abstract is submitted (usually online) for consideration as an oral presentation or poster. You can indicate your preference for oral or poster, but this is usually up to the reviewers.

- Often requires a submission fee (usually around \$60)
- Abstract peer-reviewed
- Abstract rejected or accepted as an oral presentation or poster
  - Oral presentation slots are generally given to only the best abstracts; if asking for an oral presentation, it is generally best to also indicate that you are willing to give a poster if needed.
  - At some meetings you will be asked to give both an oral and poster abstract!

### **When is it appropriate to submit an abstract?**

Philosophy varies with the investigator....

- A. Only present data that are complete and ready to submit for publication
  - May be worried that data could be "scooped" by others at the meeting
  - May consider the possibility that conclusions may turn out incorrect is unacceptable
- B. Present data that are in progress that you feel comfortable with the results of

Note – abstracts are not really considered "peer-reviewed", often contain frankly incorrect data that never makes it to publication, and (in general) should not be cited as a definitive study. In general a sign of a productive scientist is one that advances nearly all of their abstract presentations to a final publication (this quality can be ascertained by looking at the # abstracts –vs- # publications on their curriculum vitae).

J Vet Med Educ. 2006 Spring;33(1):145-8.

**Delay in final publication following abstract presentation: American College of Veterinary Anesthesiologists annual meeting.**

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**Abstract**

**RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY:** A review of abstracts presented at nine annual meetings of the American College of Veterinary Anesthesiologists was undertaken to determine the average time to publication and the differences found between conference abstracts and final publications. Concerns about and advantages of using such abstracts in our teaching are considered. **METHODOLOGY:** Conference proceedings during the years 1990 through 1999 were considered. Key word and author searches using two common search engines were carried out to find whether abstracts presented had been published. The original article or its abstract was reviewed for consistency with the conference abstract. **RESULTS:** Of 283 abstracts examined, 73.5% were published in journals as full articles. The overall delay (+/-SD) in publication was 24.3 +/- 21.0 months. Common reasons for not publishing included too little time, more interest in carrying out the work than in writing it up, and other more demanding tasks. Authors indicated the intention of completing a submission on approximately 10% of the unpublished abstracts. The final articles reviewed showed major differences in key aspects from the abstract presented in 7% of the cases. In half of these cases, clinical action could have been affected by a change in emphasis of the conclusions. **CONCLUSIONS:** Because of the delay in publication of research, peer review of standardized abstracts should be encouraged. This material can be used to introduce students to new drugs, techniques, and results that may not otherwise become available until after their graduation. However, caution must be exercised in using this information, both because significant differences were noted in final publications and because unpublished research may be poorly interpreted at the time of presentation. This study emphasizes the value of critical review and lifelong learning in our careers.

## How is the oral abstract formatted?

### Format of Presentation

- 1) **Title slide** (1 slide)
  - Title of the manuscript – be specific and positive
  - Authors of the manuscript and their affiliations – order of authors is important
    - The “corresponding author” is considered to be the brain-trust/principal investigator/grant-bearer of the work
      - In basic research this is usually the last author
      - In veterinary research this is often the second author
    - The first author is considered the one who did most of the work and writing and is usually in training (residency, Ph.D. etc)
  - Conflict of interest disclosure ( $\pm$  may be presented as slide #2 after the title slide)
  
- 2) **Background/Introduction** (3-4 slides)
  - Assume audience doesn't know about your interest area
  - Teach only as much as is needed to understand why you did the study
  - Why did you do the study? What information was lacking that prompted the study? Why is this study the best idea ever?
  - Sources of key facts and figures should be referenced (small font)
  
- 3) **Hypothesis and Specific Aims** (1 slide)
- 4) **Materials and Methods** (3-4 slides)
  - Be organized – order the methods in a manner that facilitates understanding of what you did
  - Break into segments if multiple techniques performed
  - A picture can be worth a thousand words
  - Make sure to include statistical means for data analysis
  
- 5) **Results** (3-6 slides)
  - Tell a story!!
  - Give one-sentence rationale for why you did each experiment and how it led to the next
  - Know what your next slide is going to be and anticipate the transition (practice!)
  - Show data in graph form if possible; always orient audience to pictorial/graphical data before explaining
  - Use the pointer only when needed to influence where you want the audience to look
  
- 6) **Conclusions/significance** (1-2 slides)
  - Bullet statements
  - Limitations/Future directions (may be a separate slide)
    - Point out only the limitations that are significant
  
- 7) **Acknowledgements** (1 slide)
  - Source(s) of funding
  - Personal acknowledgements are uncommonly included in abstract presentations – not enough time for this
  - Author contact information

If there is data that you don't have time to include and you think it is likely that someone may ask about, you can have a backup slide of this just in case.

### **General PowerPoint Tips**

- Practice, practice, practice
- Speak clearly and not too fast (give the audience time to understand what you are saying)
- Avoid saying “um” – pauses are perfectly acceptable
- Look at the audience and not your slides
- Hold the pointer with 2 hands and use judiciously
- Always repeat the question if not asked using a microphone
- If asked a question you don’t know an answer to do not bull#\$%&. Speculate or say how good the question is and that you don’t know the answer. Always acknowledge the usefulness of any recommendations.
- Keep visuals CLEAR and SIMPLE. Abbreviate your message.
- Make sure your font style and size is consistent on all slides.
- Don’t apologize for mistakes (typos etc) found during presentation (it only makes it worse)
- Simple graphs, charts and diagrams are much more meaningful to an audience than complex, cluttered ones. Don’t include data on your slides that you are not going to talk about.
- If the pictures are not yours, include a small citation at the bottom of them or indicate the web site.
- Avoid the overuse of too many colors, bullets, patterns, graphics, or animation in one frame (carnival effect).

### **Avoid stress by planning ahead**

- 1) What are the time requirements? Speaking (range 6–20-min)–vs- questions (2–10-min)? Will there be a timer and what will be its settings?
- 2) Where do you need to be and when?
- 3) What should be the format/version of your presentation (slides, ppt, video etc)? Does the presentation need to be uploaded in advance of the session? Always bring a back-up copy of your presentation to the meeting (hard drive, thumb drive, CD).
- 4) Familiarize yourself with the room; podium, microphone (stationary or lavalier), computer, slide advancement controls, pointer system (do you need to bring your own?).
- 5) Practice the abstract in the same room if possible.
- 6) Dress like a professional

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### Library Resources

The [Veterinary Medicine Library Staff](#) is happy to help you prepare to present or publish. We support you in reviewing the literature, tracking down materials, managing references, identifying meetings or journals through which to disseminate your work, and providing resources for creating effective presentations and publications.

#### Preparing to Publish

- [The Essentials of Manuscript Preparation](#) (Power Point Presentation) - Thierry Olivry, DrVet, PhD, NCSU College of Veterinary Medicine, given June 1, 2011
- [Bibliographic Management Software](#): The Library provides the web-based [RefWorks](#) program. We can also help with [EndNote](#) and [EndNoteWeb](#) or [Zotero](#).
- [Finding Impact Factors: Journal Citation Reports](#)
- [Manage Your Intellectual Property As An Author](#) - NCSU Libraries Copyright & Digital Scholarship Center

#### Preparing to Present

- [Essentials of Presenting an Oral Abstract](#) (pdf) - Jody Gookin, DVM, PhD, NCSU College of Veterinary Medicine, given June 9, 2010

#### Poster Design, Production, and Presentation

- [Creating Effective Poster Presentations](#) - NCSU. A site "intended to help poster presenters avoid common problems that will obscure their messages."
- [Advice on Designing Scientific Posters](#) - An informative and entertaining guide from Swarthmore College. Includes advice on poster design and content, as well as tips for presenters.
- [Poster Layout](#) (Word document). Tutorial by Herman Berkhoff, Technology Support Specialist at the NCSU Libraries. Uses full color examples to teach the viewer how to analyze the effectiveness of a poster's design and layout. Also includes some basic poster production tips.
- A Digital Media Lab and large-format plotter printing are available in the Learning Commons at NCSU's D.H. Hill Library.
- [Logos and official colors](#) - Download [print-quality NC State general logos](#). Review [official colors](#) and other general NCSU images. For College of Veterinary Medicine logos, visit [Graphic Assistance from Educational Media & Design](#) at NCSU CVM.

#### Writing and Speaking

- [Writing and Speaking Tutorial Services](#) - NCSU

Visit the VML's [CVM Instruction Support](#) page for other educational materials.

Contact [Veterinary Medicine Library Staff](#) for support with exploring any of the resources mentioned above, or other questions you might have.

## POSTER ABSTRACT PRESENTATION

### Technical Issues

Where and when is the poster to be displayed?

- You are responsible for hanging your poster and removing it at the end of the session (bring your own push pins).
- Typically, posters are put up at 8:00 am and removed at 5:00 pm.
- There will be a time designated that you must be present at your poster to answer questions from meeting attendees that are interested in your research. This varies from 1-2 hours.

Options for making the poster?

- 1) Pay someone to compose the poster for you, using data that you provide to them, and pay someone to print it
- 2) Compose the poster yourself using Photoshop or Powerpoint and pay someone to print it  
For Powerpoint; create a poster on a single slide with the following page setup:
  - Slides sized for “custom”
  - Use “landscape” orientation
  - Width = 54 inches
  - Height = 36 inches
- 3) Print individual sections of your “poster” (abstract, introduction, results etc) on sheets of paper and glue to construction paper

Note – always ask for a “proof” of your poster before having it printed and finding out that you dislike the colors, have spelling errors, or that the formatting is off.

Submit your poster for printing well ahead of your travel date.

How to get the poster to the meeting?

- Protective cardboard or plastic tube – do not check with your baggage

### General Guidelines

- The poster should be able to be read from a distance of 4 feet or more
- Be concise and present text as bullet statements when possible
- Clearly state objectives and conclusions
- Color is an effective method for separating sections and adding graphic impact. Try to avoid color combinations that are difficult to read.

1) **Heading:** The heading indicates the title of the paper, author(s), institution and their location.

2) **Introduction:** Your poster should include three to five brief sentences outlining information necessary to understand the study, and why it was done. The question(s) to be asked or the hypotheses to be tested should be clearly and succinctly stated.

3) **Methods:** Outline your methods briefly, providing only details for new methods, or modifications of older methods.

4) **Graphics:** Results presented in the form of a graph or chart are always more effective than blocks of text. Provide a legend for symbols and other details, and interpretation of results below each panel.

5) **Conclusion:** State the conclusion succinctly in large type. (Many viewers read this first, hence, it should be easily understandable.)

6) **References:** Not usually provided unless of particular significance to supporting your work.

- Wear comfortable shoes. Dress professionally.
- Be sure to eat breakfast and lunch.
- Carry a notebook to take down attendees' questions, suggestions and criticisms.
- Introduce yourself to each attendee who stops at your poster.
- Offer to walk the attendee through your poster data, focusing on its highlights and importance (*you should practice this before the meeting*).
- If the attendee does not wish a summary of your data, but prefers to look at it for themselves, tell them that you would be happy to answer any questions about the data or methodology.
- Prepare answers to expected questions and possible methodological or study design issues.
- Write down any possible future collaborations with attendees. Ask for e-mail addresses or business cards and be prepared to give your own. Do not be afraid to question attendees as to whether they are working in the same field. They may be a fountain of information.
- Always be pleasant, even if negative comments are made about your data.
- View the poster session as one continuous question and answer period where you will educate others and learn from your audience.