Writing a Conference Abstract: Tips for Success

This educational presentation has been reviewed and endorsed by IACRN Education Committee on June 1st, 2013.
Target Audience

This professional development module is intended for any nurse who is interested in learning how to develop an abstract for a professional nursing meeting.

***Note for information specific to IACRN abstract submission process please see IACRN website.
Objectives

• Discuss types of abstracts for professional meetings/conferences
• Describe the key elements of an abstract
• List steps in developing and preparing an abstract
• Identify resources for abstract development
What is an Abstract?

• Overview of facts
• Summary of ideas
• Brief overview of work
• Short summary of a project
• Self contained statement
• Glimpse of the author’s work
• Often written last
What Do You Include?

- What you did?
- Why you did it?
- How you did it?
- When and where you did it?
- What you found?
- What it means?
Types of Abstracts

- Clinical
- Research
- Evidence Based
- Quality Improvement
- Creative Solutions
Key Abstract Elements

• Introduction
  – Background/purpose, rationale, scope
• Methods
  – How was the problem studied/addressed
• Results
  – Principle findings, what indicates success or suggests need to rethink/revise methods
• Significance/Implications
  – What does it mean
• Discussion
• Conclusion
• References-optional, this is not required for every abstract
Venues to Submit Abstracts

• Presentations
  – Podium
  – Poster
  – Symposium

• Publications
  – Peer reviewed
  – Journal

• Grants
  – Funding
  – Final Report
Example Format - Research Track

• Research reports or evidence-based translation projects

• Abstracts include
  – Purpose/objectives
  – Significance
  – Design
  – Methods
  – Findings
  – Conclusions
  – Implications for practice
Example Format—Evidence Based

• Moving evidence to practice, synthesis of research evidence, development of evidence-based practice guidelines, toolkits, protocols and guidelines

• Abstracts must include
  – Problem (Problem and change Needed)
  – Evidence (Appraise the supporting evidence)
  – Strategy (Linking the change to the evidence)
  – Practice Change (Specific change or practice evaluated)
  – Evaluation (Design and Indicators/outcomes measured)
  – Results (Did it work?)
  – Recommendations (Further adoption suggestions)
  – Lessons Learned
Example Format- Quality Improvement

• Innovation for quality and safety, report of quality project
• Abstracts must include
  – Problem (Problem and Change needed)
  – Evidence (Appraise the supporting evidence)
  – Strategy (Linking the change to the evidence)
  – Practice Change (Specific change or practice evaluated)
  – Evaluation (Design and Indicators/outcomes measured)
  – Results (Did it work?)
  – Recommendations (Further adoption suggestions)
  – Lesson Learned
No Specific Instructions—Use Generic Outline

• Some venues do not provide specific instructions, always fall back on this generic outline:
  – Purpose
  – Description
  – Evaluation
  – Outcomes
Specific Instructions

• Review the guidelines carefully
• Pay close attention to the technical aspects including: deadlines, suggested format, number of words and font type and size
• If abstract examples are provided, be sure to review them
Things to Think About..

• The abstract should be a self-contained summary of work COMPLETED
• The abstract should convey the significance of the work done
• The abstract is important on attracting attendees to your poster or oral presentation, it provides the first impression of your work
To Prepare...

• Identify a conference where you want to present.
• Identify key team members and invite to meeting.
  – If you are new to this, find a mentor.
• Group Brainstorm
  – Innovations
  – EBP Groups
  – Specialty Areas
  – Outcomes
  – Unit Projects
To Prepare...

• If you have an idea of your topic, come prepared with an abstract draft
• Provide constructive feedback
• Schedule at least 3 meetings
• Abstracts take several drafts to perfect
Drafting an Abstract

• Determine First Author
  – Primary contributor
  – Co-authors/other contributors
    • List alphabetically
    • Write the answers to the following questions down:
      – Why did you start this project?
      – What did you do?
      – What did you find?
      – What does it mean?
Title Selection

• Your title should:
  – Accurately describe your story
  – Include key elements describing the content
  – Commands attention from attendees
  – If it’s a research abstract it is helpful to include an indication of the design of the study

• The title is a deciding factor on whether someone will read your abstract

• KEEP IT SIMPLE!
Writing Tips

• Avoid passive voice
• Always use the full term before you refer to it by acronym
• Write only one thought per sentence
• Eliminate unnecessary words
• Ensure that verb tenses are consistent and correct
• Be sure to check for spelling and grammatical mistakes
Purpose/ Objective

• What is this project about?
• Why is this project interesting?
• Why is it important?
Significance

• Describe the general topic
• The introductory sentence sets the stage for the project
• This sentence is the rationale for the study
Background/Description

• How was this project done
• Briefly describe the approach
• Pertinent information without providing details
• Summarize current research
Outcome

- Results
- Pertinent Findings
- Significance
- Emerging Ideas
Conclusion

• What does your work mean?
• What is the take home message?
• What can be concluded?
Rule of Thumb: 
Four C’s of Abstract Writing

• **Complete:** Covers the major parts of the project

• **Concise:** Contains no excess wordiness of unnecessary information

• **Clear:** Readable, well organized, and not too jargon-laden

• **Cohesive:** It flows smoothly between the parts
Edit for Readability

• Use active verbs
• Define abbreviations
• Avoid jargon
• Use third person
• Short sentences
Submitting a Winning Abstract

• Follow the instructions!!!
• Include headings exactly as stated in the instructions/template
• Use short, clear sentences, one idea per sentence
• Limit your abstract to the word count/character requirement
• Edit, edit, edit
• Check grammar, syntax and punctuation
• Review instructions about including brand names of products, when in doubt use general descriptions for products
• It may be helpful to ask another person not involved in the abstract writing to review final draft for errors, flow, and understandability.
References


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Conference Abstract & Development
Certificate of Completion

Awarded to

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for successfully completing the IACRN

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