Writing a Case Report Worth Publishing

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Director of Research
Editor, Spartan Medical Research Journal (SMRJ)

Research Modules Series
https://www.scs.msu.edu/
AGENDA

- Benefits of a case report
- What makes a case report publishable?
- Obtaining a patient consent
- Stages of writing a case report - focus on Abstract elements
- Writing guidelines for case reports
- Tips on submission for publication & resources
Management of Breast Cancer has been described by ancient Egyptians in the “Edwin Smith Papyrus” 2500-3000 BCE.
Identifying an Appropriate Case

“An appropriate case for a case report is a common manifestation of an unusual disorder or an uncommon manifestation of a common disorder.”

-Sr. William Osler

The Father of Modern Medicine
Guidelines for Writing a Case Report?

“The CARE guidelines help increase the completeness, accuracy, and transparency of published case reports”

Brief reports providing scientific observations on:
- unique presentation & clinical diagnosis
- novel management or therapeutic
- unexpected outcome or adverse effects

Main Reasons to Publish a Case Report

- Scholarly project – meeting requirements
- Entry point in research & precursor to larger studies
- Practice research writing skills & documenting the case
- Complex or rare cases of valuable learning points
- Personal satisfaction & enhancing CV
- Altruistic intentions: benefiting the world!
Case Reports Stakeholders

- Patients
- Clinicians
- Researchers
- Hospitals & clinics
- Educators
- Policy makers
- Healthcare industry representatives
Preparation for Writing a Case Report

- Is the case unique?
- Is the case publishable?
- Appropriate journal identification
- Obtainable patient consent
Is this Case Publishable?

- **Unique Case**
  - New disease or syndrome
  - Unexpected association
  - New insight into disease
  - Critical clinical findings

- **New Rx**
  - Rare or novel adverse reaction or side effect
  - Unusual harm or complication from Rx

- **New procedure or RX modality**
  - Unusual prognosis

Oh!! That’s a great case!!! Go for it!
Rule of Thumb for Publishing

- A case that has been reported 4-6 times or less is **appropriate** for publication.

- If case has unique and unusual features, barely found in the literature, then, it is **necessary** to publish.
Obtaining Patient Consent

- Required written consent from competent patient or legal representative
- No coercion, misinformation, or deceit
- Protect identification of patient
- Follow HIPAA guidelines
Obtaining Consent from the Dead

- Get consent from closest kin or legal rep
- If the deceased kin or rep cannot be reached
  - Write case report but de-identify any personal health information (PHI)

- Name
- DOB (no exact age, state age-group instead e.g., “in his 60s”)
- Geographic location & race- avoid mentioning geographic area or hospital affiliation
Preparatory Steps for Writing a Case Report

- Identify a journal
- Review “Instruction for Authors”
- Read several case reports from selected journals to gain insight on structure, composition, detail, etc.
Stages of Writing Case Reports

1. Choose the case
2. Choose a mentor & discuss case
3. Do lit search
4. Collect all data on the case
5. Choose audience before writing
6. Choose journal before writing
7. Check instructions for authors & style
8. Start writing
Content of a Clinical Case Report

- Introduction
- Case Description
- Discussion [Conclusions]
- Literature review
- Summary/conclusion
- References

For Abstracts

Abstract of a clinical vignette
A brief and vivid illustration or snapshot of the case that discloses the condition progressively by using one clinical clue after another
Case Report Abstract = Clinical Vignette

- ~250-350 words
- Introduction: Epi, significance, rationale
- Case Description:
  - Presenting concerns
  - Diagnosis
  - Interventions
  - Outcomes
- Discussion/Conclusion: learning points
“Title” of a Case Report

- Informative, communicate salient points
- Include “searchable” terms, keywords
- Not too declarative or vague, a bit mysterious is ok
- The words “Case Report” should be in title

Terms related to Title:
Unusual or Atypical Presentation (symptoms, causes); Rare, Unusual, Uncommon Case, Manifestation, Finding; Challenging Diagnosis; Complications; Treatment Management.
“Introduction”

- Brief overview of the larger problem addressed by the case
- Epidemiology & significance based on lit.
- Clinical Importance, what is special about the case- the hook!
- Recommended: reviewing introductions of similar Case Reports
“XYZ” is a life-threatening condition characterized by... affecting 1% of “subpopulation.” Despite the absence of a definitive cure for this condition, prompt diagnosis and timely surgical intervention have been correlated with a 36% survival rate. We report/present a case of.... (or this case report shows how using....)
“Case Description”

Description of the patient, presenting condition

Current medical, social & family Hx

Physical exam & relevant test results

Initial Dx, Rx, Clinical course

Expected/actual outcome; prognosis; & F/U plan
“Case Description”

Succinct with only important items

Provide values for unusual lab or imaging tests

Few tables/images if needed or allowed

https://www.cartoonstock.com/cartoon?searchID=CC132110

“You tested positive for being negative.”
“Case Description”
Selecting Relevant Facts

- Not allowed to hide facts that run counter your main conclusion
- Do not emphasize irrelevant facts. Only Pertinent +/- labs & findings
- Differential diagnosis walk
- Include 1-2 images to keep readers engaged - if space allowed (use arrows)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Patient demographics (age, gender, nationality, etc.)</strong></th>
<th>“A 35-year-old man”; “a 1-month-old infant”; “a 12-year-old Somali girl,” etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presenting symptoms</strong></td>
<td>“Demonstrated typical signs and symptoms of Huntington’s Disease”; “presented to the hospital with severe chest pain”; “experienced a burning sensation due to swollen leg muscles”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>History of problems/symptoms</strong></td>
<td>“Reported a long history of asthma”; “had a family history of colon cancer on the maternal side”; “reported that inflammation had begun one year prior”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diagnoses</strong></td>
<td>“Based on the characteristic appearance of the cutaneous lesions, a diagnosis of granuloma annulare was made”; “a clinical diagnosis of chronic respiratory disease was made”; “intestinal lesions were consistent with severe Crohn’s Disease”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Treatment</strong></td>
<td>“The patient was immediately intubated and antitubercular therapy was initiated”; “treatment was initiated with low-dose corticosteroids, anticoagulants, and vasodilators”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Procedures</strong></td>
<td>“Following kidney biopsy, renal cysts were excised laparoscopically”; “the patient underwent three skin grafts”; “an emergency arteriogram showed smooth segmental narrowing and bilateral vasospasm”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complications/challenges</strong></td>
<td>“Additional history revealed that he had been ingesting ergotamine preparations for a number of years to relieve chronic muscle pain”; “laparoscopic access to the duodenum was inhibited by intra-abdominal fat”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcomes</strong></td>
<td>“patient was asymptomatic on subsequent visits,” “although scapular swelling subsided, she continued to report severe back pain for the following month,” “...resulting in significant improvement within 48 hours, resolution of symptoms within 12 hours”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Discussion”

- Most important section
- Significance of case against the literature
  Compare/contrast
- What should colleagues learn?
  Diagnosis, Management, Outcome, Prognosis
  Clinical implications
“Discussion” Section

- Evaluate case for accuracy, validity & uniqueness
- Compare & contrast case with published literature
- Derive new knowledge
- Summarize essential features
- Draw recommendations or clinical implications
“Conclusion”

(1-2 sentences)—Support for your argument from literature

“Take home message” Summarize clinical impact, or implications & suggestions for the clinical practice.

Suggest precautions or interesting topics for future research.
Collaboration With Other Consultants

- Radiologists & Pathologists’ input adds credibility
- Residents/students: Faculty & subspecialists add value

https://gomerblog.com/2016/12/madmmedicine-medical-cartoons-series/
Submission and Publishing

Journal Requirements:

- Formatting
  - Layout of legends & figures
  - Tables, figures, illustrations, imaging
- Cover letter
Writing the Draft...

01 Write first draft, check for spelling & grammar

02 Allow co-authors & others to proof-read

03 Make final version for submission
"You should spend the next week typing down names of all co-authors on your paper."

Authorship: only those who contributed to writing; main authors & consultants discuss authorship early on.

Abbreviations: Define first

References: ~12; style

Check for Plagiarism
Publishing in Leading Medical Journals?

- Prefer prospective & methodologically-sound studies
- Majority accepts high-quality case reports

https://www.cartoonstock.com/search?type=images&keyword=publish+or+perish&page=1
- Try, try again!

- With sufficient persistence, you can publish!
Numerous respected, peer-reviewed medical journals specialize in case reports; many are open access.

Examples: *Journal of Medical Case Reports*, *American Journal of Case Reports*, *Oxford Medical Case Reports*, *BMJ*, *American Journal of Medicine*, *Journal of Internal Medicine*, *Journal of Hospital Medicine*, and *International Journal of Case Reports; Case Reports in...* (Ask medical librarian)
Great website with resources

Journals that explicitly accept case reports

Note: Indexing is listed in the following alphabetical order – MEDLINE, PMC, Scopus (only the first applicable index in this order is listed; the journal may be indexed in other databases as well).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Society or Sponsoring Organization</th>
<th>Indexing (NLM, Scopus)</th>
<th>Impact Factor</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A&amp;A Case Reports</td>
<td>Wolters Kluwer</td>
<td>International Anesthesia and Analgesia Research Society</td>
<td>Scopus</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>AACE Clinical Case Reports</td>
<td>American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists</td>
<td>American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists</td>
<td>PMC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACG Case Reports Journal</td>
<td>Wolters Kluwer</td>
<td>American College of Gastroenterology</td>
<td>PMC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acta Radiologica Open</td>
<td>SAGE</td>
<td></td>
<td>PMC</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHRQ Web Morbidity and Mortality</td>
<td>Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality</td>
<td></td>
<td>MEDLINE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJR Reports</td>
<td>Thieme</td>
<td></td>
<td>PMC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJSP Reviews &amp; Reports</td>
<td>Wolters Kluwer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine</td>
<td>InnoVision Health Media</td>
<td></td>
<td>MEDLINE</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>American Journal of Case Reports</td>
<td>International Scientific Information</td>
<td>MEDLINE</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>American Journal of Ophthalmology Case Reports</td>
<td>Elsevier</td>
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<td>PMC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anais Brasileiros de Dermatologia</td>
<td>Sociedade Brasileira de Dermatologia</td>
<td></td>
<td>MEDLINE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APSP Journal of Case Reports</td>
<td>Association of Paediatric Surgeons of Pakistan</td>
<td>Association of Paediatric Surgeons of Pakistan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autopsy and Case Reports</td>
<td>Hospital Universitário do Estado de São Paulo</td>
<td></td>
<td>PMC</td>
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<td>BJIR Case Reports</td>
<td>British Institute of Radiology</td>
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<td>BMJ Case Reports</td>
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<td>Case Reports in Anesthesiology</td>
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<td>Case Reports in Cardiology</td>
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<td>Case Reports in Clinical Medicine</td>
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<td>Case Reports in Critical Care</td>
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<td>Case Reports in Dermatology</td>
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<td>Case Reports in Emergency Medicine</td>
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<td>Case Reports in Endocrinology</td>
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<td>Case Reports in Gastroenterology</td>
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Check their complete list:
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d9a8d505d066103652cf8b760358658d5c5456125260e53/1614120536974/Journals+that+Accept+Case+Reports.pdf
Great list for all Journals accepting case reports

Reference

Table 1: Case report journals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal title</th>
<th>Publisher/Society</th>
<th>Year launched</th>
<th>Open access</th>
<th>Questionable publishing practices</th>
<th>PubMed indexed</th>
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<tr>
<td>A&amp;A Case Reports</td>
<td>Wolters Kluwer Health/International Anesthesia Research Society</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>AACE Clinical Case Reports</td>
<td>American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists</td>
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<td>ACG Case Reports Journal</td>
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<td>AJCP Reports</td>
<td>Thieme Medical Publishers</td>
<td>2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Journal of Cancer Case Reports</td>
<td>Ivy Union Publishing</td>
<td>2013</td>
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<td>American Journal of Case Reports</td>
<td>International Scientific Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Journal of Medical Case Reports</td>
<td>Science and Education Publishing</td>
<td>2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>AperiOnline Journal of Case Reports: Clinical</td>
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<td>2015</td>
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<td>APSP Journal of Case Reports</td>
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<td>Austin Cardio &amp; Cardiovascular Case Reports</td>
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<td>Austin Gynecology Case Reports</td>
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<td>Austin Oncology Case Reports</td>
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<td>2015</td>
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<td>Autopsy and Case Reports</td>
<td>Hospital Universitario of the University of São Paulo</td>
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<td>BJR Case Reports</td>
<td>British Institute of Radiology</td>
<td>2015</td>
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<td>Scientific Research Publishing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case Reports in Clinical Pathology</td>
<td>Soledu Press</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</table>
OPEN ACCESS

GOLD ROUTE
- Published in Open Access Journal
- Author pays Article Processing Charge (APC)
- Immediate open access

GREEN ROUTE
- Published in Subscription-based Journal
- Author self-archives articles in an open repository
- Immediate or delayed access

HYBRID ROUTE
- Some articles are subscription-based and some articles are open to access
- Author pays Article Processing Charge (APC)
- Immediate open access

# Impact Factor of Medical Journals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the journal</th>
<th>Impact factor</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New England Journal of Medicine</td>
<td>72.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lancet</td>
<td>47.83</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal American Medical Association</td>
<td>44.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>40.13</td>
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<td>British Medical Journal</td>
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<td>Annals of Internal Medicine</td>
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<tr>
<td>British Journal of Anaesthesia</td>
<td>6.23</td>
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<td>American Journal of Transplantation</td>
<td>6.16</td>
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<td>British Journal of Surgery</td>
<td>5.89</td>
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<td>American Journal of Surgery</td>
<td>2.61</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal of Nepal Medical Association</td>
<td>0.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal of Nepal Health Research Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kathmandu university Medical Journal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nepal Medical College Journal</td>
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</table>

## Publishing Models

Worldwide, the proportion of subscription-only journals* shrank between 2012 and 2016, giving way to more open-access (OA) and hybrid journals.

### Proportion of journals published 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Subscription only</th>
<th>Delayed OA</th>
<th>Open-access</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Proportion of journals published 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Subscription only</th>
<th>Delayed OA</th>
<th>Open-access</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*From Scopus database. Hybrid journals are subscription titles that allow authors to make individual papers open for a fee.
Be Careful of Predatory Journals!

https://journalsearches.com/predatory-journals.php
F/U After Manuscript Submission

- Most editors will acknowledge receipt of a manuscript, will assign a #

- Remember: you cannot submit to a 2\textsuperscript{nd} Journal while awaiting a decision from the 1\textsuperscript{st} Journal

- Typically, most journals tell you of decision within 6 weeks

- If not contacted in 3 months, contact journal directly

- Most CR will require 1-2 revisions after submission
Resubmission After Rejection

- Read reviewer’s comments carefully (mostly experts in the field)
- Revise manuscript to incorporate reviewer’s comments
- Most Case Reports will get accepted within 3-4 submission attempts
- Apply to lesser well-known journals
Recap - 13 Steps to Publishing a Case Report

1. A patient with an interesting condition
   Consult faculty

2. Why is this case important? Identify a "take-home message"

3. Choose a journal

4. Obtain the journal’s "Authors guidelines" or Instructions for Authors

5. Enlist a medical student, resident, or colleague to divide the workload

6. Perform a literature search

7. Compile all articles in a file & assign them numbers or save them on EndNote

8. Write up the case and discussion (put references in order)

9. When finalizing the article, renumber sources in correct order

10. Submit your manuscript to the journal with cover letter

11. If article gets rejected, obtain reviewers’ comments

12. Revise using reviewers' comments & guidelines for authors of ANOTHER journal

13. Submit article to the second journal - keep your fingers crossed!

More References

- CartoonStock. (n.d.). Publish or Perish. https://www.cartoonstock.com/search?type=images&keyword=publish+or+perish&page=1
Questions?
Dr. Ismail
ismailr1@msu.edu

Currently, NOT accepting case reports

Free
Open Access
PubMed Indexed
Peer-reviewed
https://smrj.scholasticahq.com