Preparing an Abstract

Vanderbilt University School of Medicine
Department of Biostatistics
Mario Davidson, PhD
Outline of Discussion

- Purpose
- Contents of an Abstract
- Procedure and Formats
Purpose of an Abstract

- **Summary of research**
- **Helps find relevant information**
- **Highlights each section**
Different Styles and Requirements

- Basic Format Online
- Journals have different formats and styles.
Contents of an Abstract

- In small groups, discuss what the following terms mean:
  - Background/Problem(s)
  - Objective(s)
  - Methods and Materials
  - Results
  - Conclusion
  - Acknowledgments
  - References
  - Keywords (optional)
The Abstract Should Address the:

- **Background/Problem(s)**
  - What is the motivation behind this research?
  - Why should anyone care?
  - What is the difficulty in conducting this research?
  - If successful, what will be the impact?
  - Keep it brief.

- **Objective(s)**
  - What are the goals of this research?
  - State the exact question(s).
  - There should be mention of the independent and dependent variables when appropriate.
The Abstract Should Address the:

- **Methods and Materials**
  - How were the problem(s) and objective(s) addressed?
  - Simulations? Models? Analysis? Products Developed?
  - How were data collected?
  - Sample size?

- **Results**
  - What is the answer?
    - Limit to ONLY the answer.
  - What are the numbers and/or findings?
  - For continuity, repeat key terms.
  - Use short, simple sentences when possible.
The Abstract Should Address the:

- **Conclusion**
  - What are the implications?
  - Are the results generalizable or specific to a case?
- **Acknowledgments**
- **References**
  - Use Oral Surgery, Oral Medicine, Oral Pathology, Oral Radiology, and Endodontontology style
- **Keywords (optional)
Group Discussion: Contents of an Abstract

Student Course Evaluations: Common Themes across Courses and Years (Sadoski, Sanders, 2007)

Evaluate and discuss the:

• Background/Problem(s)
• Objective(s)
• Methods and Materials
• Results
• Conclusion
Abstract - Student course evaluations were analyzed for common themes across five different basic science, clinical, and innovative courses from the first and third years of medical school. Each course had both unique and common numerically scaled items including an overall quality rating item. A principal components analysis was conducted for each course to determine the items that loaded most heavily on the same component as the overall quality item. Across courses and years, the items that consistently loaded on the same component as the overall quality item were (1) administrative aspects including course organization, (2) clearly communicated goals and objectives, and (3) instructional staff responsiveness. These results concur with recent medical education literature in this area. Faculty interested in increasing student ratings of the overall quality of their courses might best attend primarily to carefully organizing course goals and objectives and clearly communicating them. The limitations of these conclusions are discussed.
Group Discussion: Contents of an Abstract

Student Course Evaluations: Common Themes across Courses and Years

Abstract - Student course evaluations were analyzed for common themes across five different basic science, clinical, and innovative courses from the first and third years of medical school. Each course had both unique and common numerically scaled items including an overall quality rating item. A principal components analysis was conducted for each course to determine the items that loaded most heavily on the same component as the overall quality item. Across courses and years, the items that consistently loaded on the same component as the overall quality item were (1) administrative aspects including course organization, (2) clearly communicated goals and objectives, and (3) instructional staff responsiveness. These results concur with recent medical education literature in this area. Faculty interested in increasing student ratings of the overall quality of their courses might best attend primarily to carefully organizing course goals and objectives and clearly communicating them. The limitations of these conclusions are discussed.
Procedure and Formats

- Submitted via Online February 6th 2009
- Word limit
- Single column
- Multiple Formats – Depends on Area
  - Community Health
  - Law and Policy
  - Medical Education
  - Medical Humanities
Multiple Formats

- Community Health
  - One Sentence Description of Project
  - Objectives
  - Products Developed
  - Conclusion
  - Acknowledgements

- Law and Policy
  - One Sentence Description of Project
  - Narrative Summary
  - Body
  - Acknowledgements
Medical Education Questions

What was the primary question addressed by your project?

How did you conduct your project, emphasizing conceptual development, implementation of project activities, and assessment of activities?

What were the results of your project?

What are the implication of your results?
Multiple Formats (cont.)

- Medical Humanities
  - Narrative summary of the process/method used in your project, including description of major focus and development of ideas/activities related to it.

- Body
  - Brief bibliography (5-10 entries) if mentor agrees.

- Acknowledgements
Procedure and Formatting (cont.)

- **Title**
  - Bold
  - All uppercase
  - 14 Pt. Times
  - 12 Words
  - Center justified
  - Directly under top line
Procedure and Formatting

- **Name and Emphasis Program area**
  - Italicized
  - 12 pt.

- **Body**
  - 12 pt

- **Refer to Emphasis Program website**
  
  https://www.mc.vanderbilt.edu/medschool/emphasis/abstract_format.php
Conclusion

- Check with your area leader or mentor regarding formatting (if necessary)
- Plan accordingly
  - “Your failure to plan is NOT my emergency!”
- Questions