

## Writing a Research Abstract: Hints for a Successful Submission

The purpose of an abstract is to provide reviewers with a window into your research project. If not well composed, reviewers will not have sense of your wonderful work!

The following are suggested headings, along with some associated comments to strengthen your abstract submission.

### *Title*

Make sure your title reflects and concisely describes your research project. For example, if you examined the differences between groups, reflect that in the title; “Decision-making Differences Between Males and Females”. You would not title your project “Variables Affecting Decision-making Among Males and Females”. In addition, don’t be tempted to use trendy language that is only clear to the author. For example you would not want to title the preceding project “Women are from Venus, Men are from Mars.”

- Your title is important; you can lose rating points if it does not reflect your study!

### *Category*

Many times selection committees will ask what category your work comes under. If your work is a research project, then you would select the research category. If your work is a research utilization project, evidence-based practice project or a report on an educational program you designed, you would not select the research category.

- Your choice of category is important; your work can be disqualified!

### *Behavioral Objectives*

These are the objectives you write for your presentation (or poster). Keep them simple and realistic. If you have a 20 minute presentation, you will not accomplish six objectives.

- Rule of thumb – one objective for every 10-15 minute time increment.

## ABSTRACT

### *Background*

In no more than two sentences tell the reviewer why your study is important. What is the problem that you are trying to address with your study? For example, “After numerous studies into human decision-making, limited research has examined health care decision-making differences between males and females”.

- Key! Why is the topic you have selected a problem that needs to be addressed? And, what is missing from the field of study that your study is going to address?

### *Purpose*

Simply describe the purpose of your study. This should be no more than one sentence. For example, “the purpose of this study was to describe health care decision-making differences between males and females”.

- Remember! Link the purpose back to what is missing in the field.

### *Specific Aims* (sometimes referred to research objectives)

These should be taken right from your research proposal. They should be enumerated; no need to get fancy.

- A must! Link these back to your study purpose. For example, The specific aims were to

- 1) describe the demographics of the study participants
- 2) describe the health care decision-making abilities of the participants
- 3) determine if health care decision-making differences exist between males and females

### *Significance*

Now that the reviewer has a clear picture of your study purpose and aims, describe the significance of your study as related to your profession, role, patient population, and/or health care organizations. This answers the “so what?” question every reviewer has about research studies and provides rationale for the study.

### *Methods*

At this point you are now going to tell the reviewer how you went about conducting your study. To save space this section also needs to be brief. Therefore, it is imperative that you use research terminology to describe your methods. For example, “a quasi-experimental survey design was used to address the specific aims”. Or, “a qualitative, phenomenological method using one hour, individual interviews was utilized to address the specific aims”. You must also provide some information about your data analysis plan. At the very least, state that descriptive and inferential statistics were used. For qualitative studies, you must also state what type of data analysis was utilized (ie, constant comparative method).

- Key! Your research methods and data analysis methods must logically link back to your specific aims!

### *Findings*

Begin this section with a brief description of your sample. The findings must be directly linked to the specific aims and problem. For quantitative studies, follow with a few findings generated from your descriptive analyses and then a few findings from your inferential analyses.

- Difficult to do, but a must! This section should be limited to no more than four sentences.

### *Conclusions*

Simply tell the reviewer, in no more than two sentences, what the findings mean.

- Hint: Discuss your finding with colleagues; sometimes they will have insights that you miss because you are so close to your study.

### *Implications*

These should be implications for practice (or your study's target audience). Tell the reviewer how the knowledge generated from your study will help patients, CNSs, nurse leaders, and/or health care organizations.

- Leave the reviewer with the “wow!” of your study: How will your findings impact quality, patient safety, efficiencies, and/or costs?

The headings above may differ from organization to organization, but generally the content represented by the headings above will be relevant for any abstract submission.

Good luck!

Your NACNS Research Committee