

Writing For Publications

Professor Deborah C Saltman AM

Key objectives

- ◆ To improve confidence in writing ability
- ◆ To enhance understanding and enjoyment of the writing process
- ◆ To expand written skills
- ◆ To build on research skills

What is the literature for?

- ◆ Sharing
 - ◆ Understanding of our world
 - ◆ Views and opinions
 - ◆ Practical knowledge and skills
- ◆ Communicating
 - ◆ Important developments
 - ◆ What we are doing
 - ◆ An overview of current work
- ◆ Making sense of what we are seeing and doing through theory building

Writing Style

- ◆ Package the message
- ◆ What papers do you read?
 - ◆ Short
 - ◆ Substantive
 - ◆ Clear

Structural elements

- ◆ Introduction

- ◆ Tell them what you are going to say

- ◆ The Body

- ◆ Tell them

- ◆ The conclusion

- ◆ Tell them what you said

Writing Plan

1. Methods and Materials
2. Results
3. Discussion
4. Introduction
5. Abstract
6. References

Never write the Introduction first!



Materials And / Or Methods

- ◆ Preparation

- ◆ Ethics approval

- ◆ Protocol

- ◆ What is the purpose of each procedure?
- ◆ How does the procedure answer the question?
- ◆ Can subtitles signal topics in subsections?

- ◆ Methods of measurement

- ◆ Independent variable (manipulated variable)
- ◆ Dependent variable (variable that was measured)
- ◆ All controls

- ◆ Methods of analysis of data

- ◆ Computer programs
- ◆ Statistical advice



Results

- ◆ Present representative data
 - ◆ Not repetitive data
- ◆ Show properly
 - ◆ Correct number of significant digits
- ◆ Do not interpret the data here

Figures and Tables

- ◆ Keep simple
- ◆ Make clear points
- ◆ Keep style similar between tables
- ◆ Show main points in figures
- ◆ Don't repeat text



Discussion

- ◆ Discuss and interpret results in a concise way
- ◆ Show the relationships among observed facts
- ◆ Indicate clearly what new information is provided by the present study
- ◆ Outline limitations of the study
- ◆ Suggest further areas for study

Discussion

- ◆ Beginning
 - ◆ answer the question
 - ◆ explain problems
- ◆ Middle
 - ◆ expand the answer
 - ◆ suggest improvements
 - ◆ tie in with other studies
- ◆ End
 - ◆ reinforce the message
 - ◆ state applications, implications or speculations
- ◆ Finally
 - ◆ check for question / answer mismatch



Introduction

- ◆ Progress from known to unknown
- ◆ Explain and repeat key words
- ◆ State the final question
 - ◆ How does the question relate to previous work?
 - ◆ Why is the question important?



References

- ◆ Ensure citations are accurate and complete
- ◆ Avoid too many or too few references
 - ◆ Keep current and pertinent
 - ◆ Don't provide a complete historical bibliography
- ◆ Include references from target journals
 - ◆ Shows that you read the journal not just want to publish in it

Plagiarism

- ◆ What is it?
 - ◆ Passing off another's work as your own
 - ◆ Any facts or ideas that are not yours or not common knowledge

Using the Work of Others

- ◆ Summarise
 - ◆ Reduce the information into a simple list or a general idea
- ◆ Paraphrase
 - ◆ Change the sentence structure
- ◆ Use your own words

OR

- ◆ Quotations
 - ◆ Use the exact words and mark them in quotations

WHATEVER

- ◆ Cite the source

Sources on the Web

- ◆ Cite enough information so it can be found
- ◆ Provide search strategy, URL, date of last change, home source

Acknowledgements

- ◆ List of sources of grants and materials
- ◆ Technical contribution

Abstract

- ◆ Make it thought-provoking
- ◆ Write it after the conclusion
- ◆ Every word should be thought out
- ◆ Every sentence should clearly describe an important aspect of the research
- ◆ Keep to under 250 words

Title

- ◆ Use key words
- ◆ Keep brief
- ◆ Highlight target audience
- ◆ Test with colleagues/friends for appeal

Drafts

- ◆ First draft
 - ◆ Grammar check
- ◆ Second draft
 - ◆ Revision
- ◆ Third draft
 - ◆ Read for sense

Two Models of Clarity

- ◆ The Quintilian model (1 ce)
 - ◆ Clear writing is writing that can be understood
- ◆ The Woodford model (1967)
 - ◆ Clear writing is writing that *cannot* be *misunderstood*



Authorship: Principles 1

"Six people can no more write an article than six people could drive a car"

Aster R. *J.A.M.A.* 1969; 208: 83-7

Authorship: Principles 2

- ◆ Decide WHO before writing
- ◆ Decide order
 - ◆ Alphabetical?
 - ◆ Seniority?
 - ◆ Proportional to work done?

Authorship: Traditional

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THE NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF MEDICINE

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COMPARISON OF A_2 -AGONIST, TERBUTALINE, WITH AN INHALED CORTICOSTEROID, BUDESONIDE, IN NEWLY DETECTED ASTHMA

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Authorship: Extended 1

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551

A CONTROLLED TRIAL COMPARING FOSCARNET WITH VIDARABINE FOR ACYCLOVIR-RESISTANT MUCOCUTANEOUS HERPES SIMPLEX IN THE ACQUIRED IMMUNODEFICIENCY SYNDROME

SHARON SAFRIN, M.D., CLYDE CRUMPACKER, M.D., PAM CHATIS, Ph.D., ROGER DAVIS, ScD., RICHARD NAFNET, M.D., JOANNE RUSH, B.S., HAROLD A. KESSLER, M.D., BERNARD LANDRY, M.PH., JOHN MILLS, M.D., AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE AIDS CLINICAL TRIALS GROUP*

* The following clinicians participated in this study: Ed Murphy, Tim Berger, Roger Phelps, Tom Young, David Cary, and Sandy Charles (University of California, San Francisco); Ronald Nahass, David Cocke, and Grace Ouma (Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, New Brunswick, N.J.); Ann Colier and Doug Arditti (University of Washington, Seattle); Robert Klein, Gayle Kreinik, and Pat Kahl (Einstein-Montesore Medical Centre, Bronx, N.Y.); Pam Urbanski (Rush Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center, Chicago); David Parenti and Susan Laiaceur (George Washington University, Washington, DC); Gail Peristein and Jocelyn Loftus (Beth Israel Hospital, Boston); Nancy Weissbach (University of Rochester, Rochester, N.Y.); Howard Heller, Jack Fuhrer, and Susan Vitale (State University of New York, Stony Brook); and Nadim Salomon (Beth Israel Medical Centre, New York)

Authorship: Extended 2

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LONG-TERM RESPONSE OF RECURRENT RESPIRATORY PAPILLOMATOSIS TO TREATMENT WITH LYMPHOBLASTOID INTERFERON ALFA-N1

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* The surgeons at the 12 collaborative institutions of the Papilloma Study Group were as follows: K. Clark, M.D. (Oklahoma City), S. Cohen, M.D. (Los Angeles), H. Dedo, M.D. (San Francisco), D. Donovan, M.D., (Houston), B. Fearon, M.D. (Toronto), L. Gardiner, M.D. (New Haven, Conn.), H. Goepfert, M.D. (Houston), H.K. Kashima, M.D. (Baltimore), R. Lusk, M.D. (St. Louis), B. F. McCade, M.D. (Iowa City, Iowa), H. Muntz, M.D. (St. Louis), M. Richardson, M.D. (Seattle), G. Singleton, M.D. (Gainesville, Fla), and A. Yonkers, M.D. (Omaha, Nebr).

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By Deborah Saltman*

"And when they're worn, hacked, hewn with constant service, thrown aside, to rust in peace, and rot in hospitals."

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Publications...

British Medical Journal

- ◆ 5,500 articles/year
- ◆ 87% rejection rate
- ◆ 1% masterpieces/disaster pieces
- ◆ 24% unsuitable - not new
- ◆ 75% peer review
 - ◆ original
 - ◆ important
 - ◆ 2/3 weeks at reviewers
 - ◆ reliable
 - ◆ clinically important
- ◆ 50% reviewed as unsuitable
- ◆ 25% acceptable-but only half published
 - ◆ quality of writing

Effective Publication Strategies

- ◆ When preparing papers
 - ◆ Think beyond your topic to your target audience
- ◆ Present one good idea per paper
- ◆ Modify the style of your paper to your target journal
- ◆ Keep up with current literature
 - ◆ Particularly in the target journals
- ◆ Know people in your field of research
 - ◆ Attend conferences and selected paper sessions
 - ◆ Present papers in conferences before submission
- ◆ Cultivate co-authors and collaborations

Editorial Reviewers

- ◆ Positive attitude
- ◆ Impartial
- ◆ Expeditious
- ◆ Should not discuss paper or its author
- ◆ Covering letter to editor
- ◆ Another version for author
- ◆ Help editor distinguish between desired and necessary changes

Rejection

- ◆ Expect a rejection letter or a recommendation to revise extensively
- ◆ Do not accept defeat too quickly
 - ◆ Study reviewers' comments thoroughly
 - ◆ Consider revising and resubmitting the paper
- ◆ Listen to what the editor says
- ◆ Develop a thick skin
 - ◆ Be a good loser



Immediate Rejection Criteria

- ◆ The subject matter is of insufficient interest to the readership to a specific journal
- ◆ Lack of new information
- ◆ The results are trivial, predictable, or duplicative of others

Revision and Resubmission

- ◆ Make an effort to incorporate the referee's suggestions
- ◆ If a "stupid" referee misunderstood your paper, it is your fault
- ◆ Do not attack referees and do not get angry
- ◆ Write a detailed response to individual referees
- ◆ Resubmit the revision within the required timeframe



Grammar...

Grammar Check

- ◆ Verbs must have a subject
- ◆ Words with "ing" must be part of a verb
- ◆ Nouns must have adjectives and corresponding adjectival clauses
- ◆ Verbs must have adverbs and corresponding adverbial clauses
- ◆ Try not to use noun clusters
- ◆ Passive verbs hide the meaning

Language...

Language

- ◆ It is important to use the most easily understood word

Language In Practice

“ To put it bluntly, the medical profession and its suzerain health system can no longer plan and operate as an amorphous farrago of services in splendid isolation from society's imprimatur.”



Language

- ◆ Concrete NOT Abstract
- ◆ Single NOT Circumlocution
- ◆ Short NOT Long
- ◆ Saxon NOT Romance
- ◆ Familiar NOT Far-fetched

Language in Practice

" To put it bluntly, the medical profession and its **suzerain** health system can no longer plan and operate as an **amorphous farrago** of services in splendid isolation from society's **imprimatur**."

- ◆ suzerain = feudal overlord
- ◆ amorphous = vague, ill organised
- ◆ farrago = medley or hotch potch
- ◆ imprimatur = official approval



Language In Practice

"To put it bluntly, the medical profession and its suzerain health system can no longer plan and operate as an amorphous farrago of services in splendid isolation from society's imprimatur."

Into

"To put it bluntly, the medical profession and its *feudal* health system can no longer plan and operate as an *ill organised hotch potch* of services in splendid isolation from society's approval."



Exercises...

Language: Exercise 1

- ◆ Consider the following types of word and write one of each down
- ◆ Concrete word.....
- ◆ Abstract word.....

Language: Exercise 1

- ◆ Consider the following types of word and write one of each down
- ◆ Concrete word ...**wrong**...
- ◆ Abstract word ...**reasonably correct**...



Language: Exercise 2

- ◆ Consider the following types of word and write one of each down
- ◆ Single word.....
- ◆ Circumlocution words.....

Language: Exercise 2

- ◆ Consider the following types of word and write one of each down
- ◆ Single word.....**next**.....
- ◆ Circumlocution words...**in the following position**.....



Language: Exercise 3

- ◆ Consider the following types of word and write one of each down
- ◆ Short word.....
- ◆ Long word.....

Language: Exercise 3

- ◆ Consider the following types of word and write one of each down
- ◆ Short word.....talk.....
- ◆ Long word.....communicate.....



Language: Exercise 4

- ◆ Consider the following types of word and write one of each down
- ◆ Saxon word.....
- ◆ Romance word.....

Language: Exercise 4

- ◆ Consider the following types of word and write one of each down
- ◆ Saxon word.....seize the day.....
- ◆ Romance word.....carpe diem.....



Language: Exercise 5

- ◆ Consider the following types of word and write one of each down
- ◆ Familiar word.....
- ◆ Far-fetched word.....

Language: Exercise 5

- ◆ Consider the following types of word and write one of each down
- ◆ Familiar word.....**formless**.....
- ◆ Far-fetched word.....**amorphous**.....



Saying What You Mean

- ◆ The patient was to have a bowel resection. However, he took a job as a stockbroker instead.
 - appropriately linking two sentences
 - use of verb tense
- ◆ The patient delayed having a bowel resection as he was starting a new job.

Saying What You Mean

- ◆ Patient has two teenage children, but no other abnormalities
- ◆ The patient has no previous history of suicides
- ◆ On the second day the knee was better, on the third day it disappeared
- ◆ Discharge status: alive but without my permission



Word Choice: Exercise 6

- ◆ It is important to choose the correct word for your sentence

Find the mistakes shown in the following sentences:

- ◆ The subjects were exposed to an exercise programme for several hours (3)
- ◆ GPs are finding health prevention strategies more useful (3)

Word Interchange: Exercise 7

- ◆ It is important to use the correct word
Consider the following sentences, which word is correct?
- ◆ Old patients are not affected/ effected by benzodiazepines
- ◆ We used four anti-hypertensive regimes/ regimens/ regiments

Word Interchange:

Exercise 8

- ◆ Define these two words and use each in a different sentence:
 - ◆ Affect
 - ◆ Effect



Word Interchange: Exercise 8

- ◆ Affect (verb)
 - ◆ To act on, or influence
- ◆ Effect (noun)
 - ◆ A resultant condition

Tips For Better Use Of Verbs

- Choose a strong verb (an action verb) over a weak one (a state of being or existence verb, such as 'to be')
- Avoid disguising verbs as nouns
 - Adding '-tion' to a word often creates a 'verbal noun' (produce becomes production)
- Aim to get the verb tense right
 - Think about where in time the action is taking place

Word Interchange:

Exercise 9

- ◆ Define these two words and use each in a different sentence:
 - ◆ Incidence
 - ◆ Prevalence



Word Interchange: Exercise 9

◆ Incidence

- ◆ Number of cases developing per unit population per unit time

◆ Prevalence

- ◆ Number of cases existing per unit population at a given time

Word Interchange:

Exercise 10

- ◆ Define these two words and use each in a different sentence:
 - ◆ Interval
 - ◆ Period



Word Interchange:

Exercise 10

- ◆ Interval
 - ◆ The time between two specified events or states
- ◆ Period
 - ◆ The time during which events or states occur

Word Interchange:

Exercise 11

- ◆ Define these two words and use each in a different sentence:
- ◆ Constant
- ◆ Parameter



Word Interchange:

Exercise 11

◆ Constant

- ◆ A quantity that is fixed or the same wherever it is found

◆ Parameter

- ◆ A quantity that can change, but is fixed for a given system

Tips For Conquering English Grammar

- ◆ Read good writing
- ◆ Revise and proof read your work
- ◆ Read your work out aloud, checking for sense and rhythm
- ◆ Ask a friend if they understand your meaning
- ◆ Be familiar with basic grammatical rules



Exercise 12:

Tables

Exercise 13

Find three problems with this figure

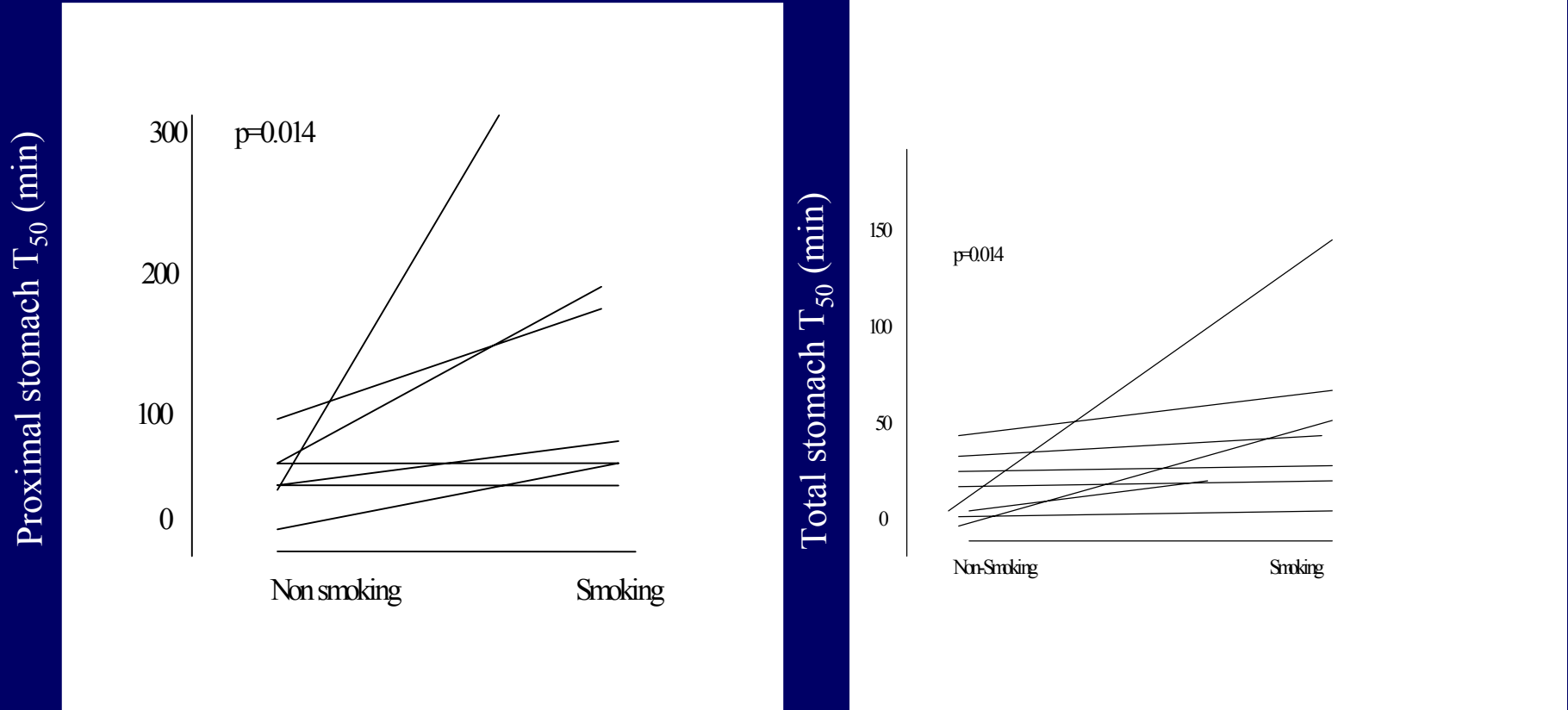


FIG 2 - Individual 50% emptying times (T_{50}) from total stomach and proximal stomach during smoking and non-smoking periods

Practical Paragraphs...



The power in a paragraph

- ◆ A paragraph is the basic unit of composition
- ◆ It is a group of sentences which develop a central idea
- ◆ This idea is usually stated in a topic sentence
- ◆ Every sentence must help develop the topic sentence



Tips for better paragraphs

- ◆ Ensure you have only one topic sentence
 - ◆ Usually the first sentence
 - ◆ Should clearly define what is going to be talked about
- ◆ Enhance interest by mixing up the length and structure of the sentences
- ◆ Link paragraphs so there is a sense of flow
 - ◆ Move from the 'known' to the 'new'



Tips for better writing

- words and punctuation

- ◆ Creating visual images with words
"a person afflicted with a chronic disorder is often engaged in a prolonged struggle to adapt to his or her environment."
- ◆ Using the right word to convey what you mean
"Pericardial effusions are often symptomatic"
- ◆ Punctuation allows you to control the flow and rhythm of the information being delivered.
"Now that you have the main ideas think of examples details or reasons to support them."



Exercise 14

Writing a paragraph

- ◆ Topic: Managing a young adult with diabetes
- ◆ Issues for discussion
 - symptoms
 - parental influence
 - complications
 - pathophysiology

Diabetes

- ◆ Symptoms:

- ◆ *" A thirsty adolescent, who is overweight and has recurrent infections has symptoms of diabetes mellitus."*

- ◆ Parental Influence

- ◆ *" An overweight adolescent with diabetes can be a source of real concern for parents or may indicate an underlying problem with parental control"*

Diabetes

◆ Complications

- ◆ *"The likelihood of complications may influence therapy when managing an acute onset hyperglycaemic episode."*

◆ Management

- ◆ *"In managing diabetes some thought needs to be given to the mechanisms of the disease, prevention and to the common treatment options."*



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