

2nd EMPHNET Conference & 5th TEPHINET Regional Scientific Conference

SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING ABSTRACTS

Background: Address the scientific background and rationale for the study as well as the public health significance of the subject. Do not assume that everyone will be familiar with your research topic. Explain why your study is important and what question(s) it will answer.

- A clearly stated background sets the stage and describes the objective of the study. For example,
 - a) An outbreak of a disease is detected and a study is requested to respond to one or all of the following: identify etiologic agent, determine means of propagation, and establish appropriate control measures.
 - b) Data from a surveillance system suggests the need for a field study or further analysis.
 - c) A survey is conducted to determine risk factors or populations affected by a given public health problem (for example, anemia prevalence survey, tobacco use, access to prevention interventions, prevalence of illness).
 - d) Public or media concern with a specific health problem.
 - e) Previous studies suggested the need for further investigation of health-related problem.

- Public health significance is commonly determined by the following criteria
 - a) Severity of the problem (for example, high mortality rate, case fatality rate, years of potential life lost, disability adjusted life years).
 - b) Frequency (for example, high morbidity rate, high morbidity or risk factor prevalence rates among special populations).
 - c) Epidemic potential (for example, known to be high, or new disease with unknown potential).
 - d) Preventability (for example, whether effective interventions are available or existing ones could be applied to new risk factors or disease).
 - e) New disease, risk factor, or intervention.

Methods: State the scientific rationale and describe the methods selected for the study.

Essential points to be included in this section are

- a) Study design (for example, prevalence survey, case-control, cohort, analysis of surveillance data, ecologic study).
- b) Study setting (for example, community, clinic, hospital).
- c) Study population and means of selection to study (for example, target population, case definitions, sample strategies, inclusion or exclusion criteria if relevant).
- d) Analytic and/or intervention techniques.

Results: Present only the major quantitative and qualitative epidemiologic findings (positive or negative) of the study that are directly related to the study objectives and

conclusions. This section does not include discussion of the results, conclusions or recommendations.

Essential points to be included in this section are

- a) Description (for example, time, person, and place distribution of variables under investigation).
- b) Measures of risk (for example, rates) and measures of association (for example, odds ratios, risk ratios, or measures of population impact such as attributable and prevention fraction).
- c) Include confidence intervals or levels of significance of statistical tests, as appropriate for important measures of association.

Conclusions: Discuss the results of your study and their consistency (or lack thereof) with findings from other studies. Show how your conclusions are directly derived from the discussion of your study results and the scientific basis of your recommendations. Do not restate data included in the results.

To enrich the discussion section of your study you can

- a) Read the scientific literature of your topic, and reports of studies similar to your study.
- b) Copy your report and discuss your study result with subject matter experts.
- c) Make an oral presentation to your peers and experts before preparing and submitting your abstract.

Report on the public health actions that are recommended and/or have been implemented as a consequence of the study, such as

- a) Initiating or enhancing prevention or other public health program activities (for example, increase prenatal care coverage; introduce new vaccine, outreach strategies, food supplementation).
- b) Changes in procedures, policies or public health-related legislation.
- c) Implementing and strengthening public health surveillance systems (for example, increased dissemination of data, improved positive predictive value of case definition, simplified reporting procedures, identification of high risk populations, improved completeness and timeliness of reporting by geographic area).

Highlight the magnitude of the public health impact by reporting on process or outcome indicators.

- a) Number of persons treated by an intervention program.
- b) Amount of increased resources devoted to a prevention activity.
- c) Evidence of improvements in the functioning of a surveillance system.
- d) If applicable, you may wish to describe the ways in which the public health actions were innovative.