

Workshop on Manuscript Writing

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Academic researchers need to develop good writing skills to present their data, observations and experimental work and to share their experiences with others. It is essential to develop good writing skills in the subject that could allow individuals to effectively disseminate their own findings in a language familiar to their colleagues, in the same discipline. Even the extraordinary results achieved through the brilliance may not create the desired impact if not documented in the written form. Writing for scientific medical journals provides opportunity by which research can be critically evaluated, authenticated, and added to the pool of scientific knowledge.

Good medical writing skills are needed to publish in quality journals. Those associated with the profession of health sciences at any level need to develop such skills for the communication of their views and sharing of their findings and experiences. Writing a research manuscript is very different from other forms of writing (such as writing stories or newspaper articles). Key characteristics of scientific writing include the 5 'C's': Coherence, Clarity, Consistency, Conciseness and Conviction. Proper syntax is critical. The purpose, objectives, goals, methods used, conclusions reached and implications of the study must be clearly communicated to the reader. In a research manuscript, there is no room for verbosity or redundancy. All contents other than one's own observations and data must be appropriately referenced and organized in a style acceptable to the specific journal where it is being submitted.

This workshop on manuscript writing was one of the three pre-conference workshops. It was held at Aga Khan University Hospital. Its objective was to refresh and enhance the writing abilities of the participants who intend to contribute to medical journals. An attempt was made to provide instant feedback on write-ups submitted by the participants. In addition to this, guidance on the strategy for medical literature search, and which style and type can be considered appropriate to express views and how to present one's views and findings to select writing manuscript specifically focusing

on the style of each type of manuscript was provided. It would not be an understatement to reiterate the well known phrase that “a badly written manuscript on an exceptionally good research data can spoil the chances of acceptance by a journal while sometimes a well written article of an average work can sail through the hurdles of the review processes”.

The facilitators for this workshop included Prof. Anwar Siddiqui from AKUH who was also the chief coordinator, Dr. Fatema Javad Chief Editor Journal of Pakistan Medical Association who discussed how to write an original article. Dr. Masood Jawaid Assistant Editor Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences discussed and gave a practical online demonstration on literature search. The workshop was originally planned for twenty five participants but in view of the tremendous interest shown by the participants, registration was closed at thirty five. Many participants who turned up at the last minute could not be entertained due to limited facilities and to ensure meaningful interactive discussion.