

# AuthorAID Workshop on Research Writing

Nepal

March 2011

# The Introduction

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# Purposes of the Introduction

- To provide background
  - In order to help readers understand the paper
  - In order to help readers appreciate the importance of the research
- To identify the question(s) the research addressed
  - Sometimes stated as a hypothesis or hypotheses

# Length of Introduction

- Articles in biomedical journals: tend to have short introductions (a few paragraphs or less)
- Articles in some other journals: tend to have long introductions
- What about introductions in your field?

# Gearing the Introduction to the Audience

- Papers in relatively general journals: Introduction must provide basic background information.
- Papers in specialized journals in your field: Introduction can assume that readers have more knowledge about the field.

# Structure of the Introduction

- Introduction typically should be funnel-shaped, moving from general to specific
- A common structure:
  - Information on importance of topic
  - Highlights of relevant previous research
  - Identification of unanswered question(s)
  - Approach you used to seek the answer(s)
  - (In some fields) your main findings

# Example of an Introduction

- From the following short paper:  
Pitkin RM, Burmeister LF. Prodding tardy reviewers: a randomized comparison of telephone, fax, and e-mail. JAMA 2002;287:2794-2795.
- (Note: Often the introduction isn't labeled "Introduction".)

When peer reviewers do not file reviews by the time requested, most journals contact them to urge completion of their review. How should such tardy reviewers be contacted?

This study compared contact by telephone, fax, and e-mail with respect to effectiveness in prompting completion of the review.



# The Introduction: A Suggestion

- Look at introductions of some papers in your target journal.
- Notice items such as the following:
  - Length
  - Types of content
  - Organization
  - Citation of references
- Use these introductions as models.

# When to Write the Introduction

- Often wise to write the introduction last
  - “Until you know what you’re introducing, you can’t introduce it.”
- Sometimes useful to write it first, to help provide focus
- After writing all the sections of the paper, revise the paper as a whole (typically several times).

# Questions to Consider in Revising (A Review)

- Does the manuscript contain everything it should?
- Does it contain anything it shouldn't?
- Is all the information accurate?
- Is the content consistent throughout?
- Is everything logically organized?
- Is everything clearly worded?

# Questions (cont)

- Are points stated briefly, simply, and directly? In other words, is everything concise?
- Are grammar, spelling, punctuation, and word use correct throughout?
- Are all figures and tables well designed?
- Does the manuscript comply with the instructions?

# The Abstract

First to Be Read  
but Last to Revise

# The Abstract

- As noted, briefly summarizes the paper
- Gives editors and peer reviewers their first impression of the paper
- Tends to be widely read
- Should be organized like the paper (for example, in sort of a mini-IMRAD format)
- Some journals have structured abstracts (with standardized headings)

# The Abstract (cont)

- Depending on the kind of paper and the journal, can be informative (summarizing the content of the paper) or just indicative (stating the topics included)
- Should be carefully revised before the paper is submitted
- Be sure the content is consistent with that in the body of the paper

Thank you!



# Small-Group Discussion

- Please discuss this morning's lecture. What are the main points to remember? What questions do you have? How do you plan to use the content?
- If you brought a draft of your paper, note some things good about the introduction and some things you plan to change. If you didn't bring a draft, describe your plans for your introduction. (Please keep the lectures in mind.)
- Please draft or revise the abstract of your paper. Be sure that the format suits the journal to which you hope to submit your paper.