

Nurse Author & Editor

Volume 19 - March 2009, Issue 1

Double Duty: Convert Your Poster Presentations into Papers

Ebtisam Elghblawi

Scientific posters are an effective oral communication tool for demonstration and explanation of research; they serve as a means of verbal presentation combined with a visual aid. Posters are used most commonly in scientific meetings or conferences as an informal and interactive way to present findings from primary or secondary research, program evaluation or clinical reports (Berg, 2005; Miller, 2007). For maximum effect, a poster must have visual impact and convey key information in a visually appealing layout for exhibition. In contrast, writing a paper for publication requires careful attention to other factors such as journal selection, ethical publication practices, structure of the paper, and technical writing ability (Webb, 2008). Savvy researchers can create effective posters and convert them to publishable manuscripts by carefully examining the similarities and differences between these two modes of communication **(See Table 1)**.

Development of a Poster with Impact

Posters are an ideal way to present research findings and clinical innovations (Erren & Bourne, 2007; Halligan, 2008) and professional scientific meetings often include a number of poster presentations to accommodate the increased need for attendees to learn about new and exciting research or technology (Berg, 2005). The key to an effective poster presentation is meticulous, timely, well informed preparation (Hardicre, Devitt, & Coad, 2007). Additionally, "Posters must have visual impact, or the message is not transmitted" (Berg, p. 245). Not only is it important that posters be visually attractive, they must be easy to read and understand within a few minutes, and they need to be viewed from a distance of about 6 feet. The design should help the viewer focus on essential content by using brief statements, bullet points, graphics, and a visual layout that is not overcrowded (Berg). Therefore it is very important to highlight the poster content by design and layout (Miller, 2007). Complicated statistical results should be translated into simplified tables, graphs and figures, accompanied by bulleted text to convey key pieces of information and their relationship to each other (Durbin, 2004; Miller). Well-prepared hand-outs and business cards can enhance your viewers' knowledge about you and your work and increase the potential for valuable networking.

Finally, a clear poster presentation can be a useful mode of interaction to share and exchange the results of your research with peers. Feedback you receive from poster presentations can be valuable to improve your research and prepare a paper for publication in a peer-reviewed journal (Shelledy, 2004; Keely, 2004). Developing an academic paper from a poster is an efficient use of your time and a way to reach a wider audience for presentation of your research. Consider your poster a rough outline of what you will include in your article. The core information in your poster can be further developed based on the addition of a thorough literature review and a more expanded version of the bulleted text (Mayberry, 2007).

The research is already completed, but what you learn from presenting your poster can add a great deal to your discussion in your article.

Development of an Article for Publication

Any scientific paper to be available for reading and dissemination has to be published first. Writing, editing and publishing a paper is the last steps in the research process; accomplishing these tasks involves others such as peer-reviewers, editors, and publishers. A manuscript will describe the entire process from the conception of the research, through data collection, statistical analysis, and the presentation and framing of the results with a thorough discussion (Branson, 2004). This is the way knowledge is built and disseminated in the scholarly community.

The amount of material presented in a paper far exceeds what is presented in a poster; in fact, creating a good poster requires distilling the work without losing the actual meaning of it. There are several additional steps to follow in developing your article and submitting it for publication (Webb, 2008). First select an appropriate journal. Some projects might be considered either too small or local for some journals, while other journals with a more narrow focus would eagerly publish well-designed pilot projects. To improve the chances of acceptance of your paper for publication, be sure that you follow the selected journal's author guidelines closely as you develop your manuscript (Adams & Simonson, 2004; Webb).

Writing can be a daunting task for many; however, it is a skill born from practice. Good writing requires careful attention to details such as logic and flow of the text, grammar and syntax, proper citation and reference format, and the patience to edit and revise until the work is polished. Your first draft should not be the manuscript you finally submit. All this involves a great deal of planning, preparation and time. Set up a timetable for writing and submitting your manuscripts in a timely fashion. Good writing avoids very lengthy and complex words and favours a "reader friendly" style (Webb, 2008). Good writers use simple terms, short sentences, straightforward messages, and frame their reports with a strong discussion (Nahas & Ferreira, 2005; Webb). Show early drafts to colleagues or mentors for their critiques and ask for constructive feedback. When writing for an English language journal when English is not your first language, show your work to a native English speaker and request assistance with editing to improve and rephrase the wording.

Conclusion

A typical poster presentation follows the same format as a scientific paper with some minor variations. The researcher can gain valuable experience presenting research in a poster format and using the experience of that presentation to further enhance a written manuscript. The table included in this article provides valuable advice on how to make use of the work done on a poster presentation in the development of a publishable article.

References

- Adams, AB & Simonson, D. Publication, citations, and impact factors of leading investigators in critical medicine. *Respiratory Care*, 2004; 49(3):276-81
- Berg, J. Creating a professional poster presentation: Focus on nurse practitioners. *Journal of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners*, 2005; 17(7): 245-248.
- Branson, RD. Anatomy of a research paper. *Respiratory Care*, 2004; 49(10):1222-8
- Durbin, CG. Effective use of tables and figures in abstracts, presentations, and papers, *Respiratory Care*, 2004; 49(10):1233-7
- Erren, TC & Bourne, PE. Ten simple rules for a good poster presentation. *Computers in Biology*, 2007; 3(5): e102.
- Halligan, P. poster presentations: valuing all forms of evidence. *Nurse Education and Practice*, 2008; 8 (1):41-5.

- Hardicre, J., Devitt, P., & Coad, J. Ten steps to successful poster presentation. *British Journal of Nursing*, 2007 12-25; 16(7):398-401.
- Hess, DR. How to write an effective discussion. *Respiratory Care*, 2004; 49(10):1238-41.
- Mayberry, JF. The design and application of effective written instructional material; a review of published work. *Postgraduate Medicine*, 2007; 83(983):596-8
- McCabe, BF. [Editorial] How to write a scientific paper. *The Annals of Otolaryngology and Rhinology and Laryngology*, 2004; 113; 7; ProQuest Medical Library.
- Miller, JE, preparing and presenting effective research posters. *Health Services Research*, 2007; 42(1):311-28
- Nahas, FX & Ferreira, LM, [The art of writing a scientific paper], *Acta Cir Bras*. 2005; 20 Suppl 2:17-8.
- Shelledy, DC. How to make an effective poster, *Respiratory Care*, 2004; 49(10):1213-6.
- Keely BR., Planning and creating effective scientific posters. *Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*, 2004; 35(4):182-5
- Wager, E., Field, E., & Grossman, L.. Good publication practice for pharmaceutical companies. *Current Medical Research and Opinion*, 2003; 19(3): 149–154
- Webb, C. (2008). *Writing for Publication*. Oxford, UK; Wiley-Blackwell Publishing.
- Copyright 2008: The Author
- Journal Compilation Copyright 2008: Blackwell Publishing Ltd

AUTHOR: Ebtisam Elghblawi, mBBCh, MS.c, is a Research Fellow at the School of Health and Life Science, Coventry University, Coventry, UK, and a member of the Faculty of Medicine, Al-Fatah University, Tripoli-Libya.

[Print this article](#) [Email it to a friend](#)

[Back to Table of contents](#) | [View all articles in this issue](#)