Writing a Case Report for the Australian Orthoptic Journal

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Why publish Case Reports?

Benefits

- Publication of rare cases compiles a data base
- Provides a context to learn more about the pathophysiology of the condition
- Provides a context/anchor for an extensive literature review to add to the readers’ knowledge
  - Aetiology and characteristics
  - Systemic conditions
  - Diagnosis/differential diagnosis
  - Management
  - Prognosis and outcomes

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A Case Report

- What might make a good case report?
  - A clinical dilemma?
  - A rare case?
  - A point of interest?
  - An unexpected outcome?
  - A common case with ‘a twist’?

- Consider the ethical requirements of the hospital/clinic
  - Patient consent
  - Ethics Committee
  - Declaration of Helsinki
Structure

- **Introduction**
  - Brief outline of topic
  - Introduce the case, its associations and the literature

- **Case report**
  - Present the details of the case
  - Tell a story

- **Discussion**
  - Comparison with other cases
  - Demonstrate a thorough, wide-ranging and comprehensive review
  - A depth of knowledge of the case and any associated aspects

- **Conclusion**
  - Summarise the case, the ‘point of interest’ or ‘clinical lesson’
How to write

- Write the case notes
  - Tell the story
  - In chronological order
  - Generally no analysis, comparison or referencing

- Draft a structure for the article
  - What is the case?
  - What are the associated topics?
  - Are you looking at diagnosis, differential diagnosis, management...?

- Keywords
  - The draft structure will lead you to the keywords

Case report example

- Case:
  - Consecutive XT, DVD, DHD, IO+, high hypermetropia

- Associated topics:
  - Infantile ET
  - Accommodative ET, hypermetropia
  - Consec XT
  - DVD
  - IO+
  - DHD


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Search the literature

- Keyword search for all areas of the case – orthoptic, ophthalmic and systemic diagnosis/management
- PubMed or equivalent database
- Articles in preference to textbooks or websites
- Cite the original reference if possible, rather than secondary sources
  - do not rely on others’ interpretation, it may have been read in a different context
- Use the reference list of good articles as a starter
- Am Orthopt J on Medline/PubMed
- Aust Orthopt J on Google/Google Scholar and AOJ site (search.informit.com.au)
Read the literature

- Read each article, highlight and jot down relevant points
- Look for common threads and contradictions
- This will lead you to summary points to assist in the structure of your discussion
A clinical puzzle

- When searching the literature for a case report all the pieces start linking together from what may initially appear to be unrelated comments by other authors.

- In 1965, Adrienne Rona noted ‘Only those who have been fortunate enough to follow a topic through the literature, through cross references, different opinions, varying aspects, and so on, know the thrill and excitement this can be’ ‘Once upon a time I did play this superb, fascinating trail-following game, and I badly miss it’

  - This was written in the context of lamenting the lack of free access to medical literature at that time.
Writing and drafting: Introduction

- Write the Introduction

  Case report example

  - Introduce the topics
  - Infantile ET
  - High hypermetropia
  - Partially accommodative?
    - What is the incidence of this level of hypermetropia?
    - Accommodative element?
  - IO+, DVD, DHD at this stage?
  - Definition, characteristics, incidence ...
Discussion: comparing your case to the literature

- Look for aetiological links with systemic disorders …
- Describe pathophysiological processes …
- Consider differential diagnosis
- Look for characteristics in common
- Look for characteristics in contrast
- Compare investigation, treatment …

- Interpret/hypothesise
- Cite literature to support your hypotheses
Writing and drafting: Discussion

- Redraft a structure for the Discussion
- Write the draft Discussion
  - Check each of your jotted points as you include them in your draft
  - Combine the different articles to group your citations
  - Look at your points pages again, see if there are any themes/areas that you have missed

Case report example

- Infantile/accommodative ET
  - differential diagnosis
  - treatment (timing, type)
- Consecutive XT
  - incidence, outcome of surgery...
- DVD, IO+
  - age of onset, incidence, surgical management, individual and combined
- DHD
  - definition, characteristics, management ... 
- For each of these
  - characteristics, aetiology, pathophysiology
  - how these group together
- Relate to your case, analysing, comparing, discussing what could have been other options ...
Rereading

- **Reread the literature once you have written the draft**
  - Once you have a deeper understanding you will often find points, particularly in the Discussion sections, that back up some of your thoughts or support your hypotheses in your Discussion...

- Rewrite the Discussion

- **Write your Conclusion**
  - What is the ‘point of interest’, the ‘clinical lesson’, the ‘take home message’?

- Read and rewrite the Introduction
  - Does it lead to your Discussion and Conclusion?
  - Often your paper will end up at a different final point than you first thought with your initial Introduction
Final format and style

- **References**
  - Check that all cited references are listed
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- **Style**
  - Read the Guidelines for Authors
    - Use Endnote or a referencing program
    - Note it is easier to work in Author–Date format until the final version (recognising and recalling the article by author is far easier than by number)

- Write your Acknowledgements
Final process

- Submit to Journal for review

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