

Writing a Case Report for the Australian Orthoptic Journal

Linda Santamaria

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L Santamaria Co-Editor Australian Orthoptic Journal

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

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
- Norris C & Santamaria L. A case study and literature review of coexisting dissociated vertical and horizontal deviations. Aust Orthopt J 2013;45:8-12.

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
 - [Rona A. Preposterous? Aust Orthopt J 1965;7:8-10.](#)

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
- ▶ For assistance, contact me at
 - linda.santamaria@monash.edu or
 - aoj@orthoptics.org.au