

Recommendations for Writing a Case Report

Updated 2/26/19

I. General Considerations

- *What is a case report?* A case report is a scientific narrative that describes a clinical experience in which some aspect is novel or unusual (e.g., the condition's clinical presentation, history, symptoms, physical examination findings, diagnostic modalities utilized, diagnostic test results, therapeutic interventions applied, and/or clinical outcome). A case report can include as many as 3 patients, **but** the novelty of the clinical experience that serves as the basis for the report should be consistent among all patients.
- *Why are case reports important?* Case reports share a unique clinical experience that can enhance clinician awareness or knowledge about an unusual condition, innovative surgical technique, or implant application, a rare complication, or an unexpected finding or outcome. A meaningful case report can enhance patient care by contributing to the clinician's education, awareness, or intellectual curiosity.
- *What are the attributes of an effective case report?* An effective case report must be original, factual, clear, concise, and focused. The manuscript should present the pertinent facts of the case in a well-organized manner without hyperbole.

II. Preparation

- Identify the novelty or educational value of the report. Ideally, the case should have some aspect that is unique, but, if similar cases have been previously reported, the author(s) should clearly establish the rationale for the report.
- Perform an exhaustive literature search to validate the novelty of the case and identify the relevant literature (e.g., cases that may be similar).
- Obtain informed consent or Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval.
- Establish the authors of the manuscript. All authors must make a tangible contribution to the case report, actively participate in manuscript preparation, and assume full responsibility for the work.
- Identify and share all potential conflicts of interest regarding the data presented in the report.

III. Title/Authors

- The title should be provocative and emphasize the unique aspects of the case. All authors should be listed along with their institutional affiliations.

IV. Abstract

- The abstract should provide a succinct synopsis of the relevant aspect(s) of the case, emphasize its unique aspects (e.g. clinical presentation, physical findings, testing/laboratory/imaging findings, therapeutic intervention, or clinical outcome), and highlight the principal educational value of the report. Some readers, especially those who identify the case report only through a computer search,

may only have access to the Abstract, so authors should be sure to concisely include the important details of the case itself in the Abstract.

V. Introduction

- The Introduction should succinctly (1) present the problem with emphasis on the unique aspect of the case, (2) cite prior or similar reports that may be applicable, and (3) state the significance of the report.

VI. Case Report

- The Case Report section should provide a concise, well-organized, chronological summation of the salient aspects of the case (e.g., patient age/sex, principal problem/complaint, relevant history/symptoms, physical findings, diagnostic modalities employed, therapeutic interventions/techniques/implants used, pertinent outcomes, and/or principal complications).
- This section should include all pertinent laboratory data and should provide figures that illustrate any relevant radiographic, clinical, and histological findings. For some cases, a graphic timeline that plots relevant clinical events and test results can be helpful.
- Figures must be submitted in TIFF or EPS format. No more than 12 separate image files may be submitted. Cite all figures, in order, in the text. See [Guidelines for Figures](#) for detailed instructions. Just as radiographic images are an important part of a case report, histological images should also be included when relevant, especially for case reports describing tumors or adverse local tissue reactions. For selected case reports that include histological images, authors may be given the option of inserting a link to a digital, high-resolution Whole Slide Image of an entire scanned microscopic slide.
- The authors should take all reasonable steps to protect patient confidentiality (although this may be challenging in cases involving truly unusual injuries, complications, etc.).
- A minimum of 1 year of follow-up is required for most case reports (although some exceptions may exist with appropriate justification).

VII. Discussion

- The Discussion section should establish the proper context of the report by comparing/contrasting it with the existing literature.
- The authors should identify the strengths and weaknesses of the clinical experience (e.g., what was done well, what could be done better, how the report may impact future research or patient care, etc.). When reasonable, the report should include the patient's perspective on the experience or outcome.
- The authors should emphasize the specific educational value of the case.
- In the concluding paragraph of the Discussion section, the authors should concisely state their principal message and conclusions. All conclusions must be fully substantiated by the data presented in the case report.