

Abstract Writing Guidance

Global Health Symposium

October 18, 2019

Setting the Stage

- Know the abstract requirements
 - Due date and time – September 15th, midnight
 - Submission requirements
 - Headings
 - Word and/or character count
 - 250 words
 - Typically around 2,500 characters
 - Figures and tables
 - Send abstract to Mary Moua at mary.moua@cuanschultz.edu
- Plan enough time to:
 - Write the abstract
 - Get feedback on the abstract
 - Revise the abstract
 - Submit the abstract

Setting the Stage

- Know your audience
 - The Global Health Symposium audience is made up of faculty, students and staff from the CU campuses, other campuses and the community.
- Abstract reviewers look at 50 abstracts or more frequently outside of their regular work hours
 - Make it EASY for them to read and understand
 - Have one or two critical messages and make them very CLEAR

Research Abstract Sections

(If the below format is not followed, the abstract will be returned for revisions.)

- Title
- Background
- Objective (sometimes combined with Background)
- Methods/Design
- Results
- Conclusions

Example of an abstract in the required format

Abstract:

Title: Community-based Census and Mapping in El Trifinio Guatemala

Saskia Bunge Montes MD, MPHc

Maureen Cunningham MD, MPH

Edwin Asturias, MD

Background: The Center for Human Development (CDH) provides healthcare services in El Trifinio, a rural impoverished region in southwest Guatemala. To effectively respond to the populations needs it is necessary to know their size and distribution. The last population census in Guatemala was completed in 2002 and no community mapping using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) has been previously documented in the area. Community-based mapping and surveying has been successful and widely used in public health, it plays an important role in needs assessments and health service planning.

Objective: Determine the size and distribution of the population in 14 communities in the catchment area of CDH in El Trifinio, Guatemala.

Methods/Design: This is a cross-sectional community-based census and mapping project in which community members and leaders participate in collecting demographic and need-based data from their communities. A group of four local surveyors and a coordinator were trained in data collection and participated in community outreach to introduce the mapping and census project to leaders and community members. Local guides were then recruited to accompany each surveyor through their community during the data collection process. The project included all households located in 15 rural impoverished communities in southwest Guatemala, included in the catchment area of CDH.

Results (preliminary): Data from nine of the fifteen communities indicate that on average surveyors are able to collect information on 20 homes per day. Variability in the number of homes surveyed per day is primarily due to the distance between homes in each community. Data collection has so far been successful with over 85% participation rate in 6 of the completed communities.

Conclusions: This project provides further evidence on the importance of community-based interventions in rural settings in Guatemala. Involvement of community members was the key for accurate geographic data collection and successful community participation. Information and maps from this project will help community leaders coordinate resources and plan for their communities in the future. The results from this updated census and mapping will also help guide future research, inform grant applications, target clinic operations and inform the design of community programs for the Center for Human Development.

Title

- Often choose the title LAST
- Should be compelling (think about newspaper headlines)
- One idea:
 - Write out 6 to 10 key words found in the abstract
 - Try writing various titles with them
 - Try to condense
- If the meeting has a specific theme or goal, try to speak to that theme or goal in your title

Background

- Rarely longer than 1 or 2 sentences
- Is NOT a literature review
- Establish importance of the topic and need for your study
- Only include what must be known to understand the context of the abstract
- Answers at least one, if not all, of the following questions:
 - What is the problem?
 - What information is lacking?
 - **Why do we care?**

Objective

- Being absolutely clear on your objectives and/or hypotheses is the essential first step to writing a good abstract
- Usually 1 to 3 objectives per abstract (put together in one sentence)
- Consider using 'PICO' to help you
 - P = population
 - I = intervention (for epidemiology or observational studies consider 'exposure')
 - C = comparison (sometimes this doesn't need to be explicit)
 - O = outcome

Methods/Design

- 3 to 4 sentences, but variable
- Challenging—the reader must be able to evaluate what you did and the quality of the science in a very brief space
- Research design, i.e.
 - Survey study
 - Retrospective cohort study
 - Experimental study
 - Secondary data analysis
- Research setting
- Number of subjects and how they were selected
- Description of the intervention (when applicable)
- **OUTCOME VARIABLES** and how they are measured—**should be described exactly in the order of your objectives**
- Statistical analysis
 - Okay to leave out if analysis was basic, descriptive
 - Must put in if the analysis was complex or unusual or a key component of your project

Results

- Longest section—usually small paragraph—abstracts should be very data heavy
- Describe your population, i.e. who participated, survey response rate
- Make sure you include overall N and n's of important subgroups
- Describe your results for each of your outcome variables **in the order of your objectives**
- When applicable present p-values and/or 95% confidence intervals
- Consider using tables or figures
- Avoid summary or conclusion statements without data
- Avoid 'other data will be presented'; you must provide actual results

Conclusions

- Usually 2 to 3 sentences
- Don't just repeat findings—make a conclusion about them
- State the implications of your finding(s) and/or address the applicability to broader populations
- Your conclusions **MUST** be supported by your results
- Avoid 'more research is needed...'