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WRITER'S WORKSHOP

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A novice's guide to preparing and presenting an oral presentation at a Scientific Conference

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Introduction

It can be an overwhelming thought to consider presenting your original research, quality assurance activity, case study, clinical initiative or idea at a conference.[1] The two most common methods of research presentation at a scientific conference are oral or poster presentation. Information pertaining to poster preparation and presentation has previously been outlined by Ranse and Aitken,[2] whereas this article will focus on information to assist the novice presenter with preparation of an oral presentation - from submitting the abstract to closing the presentation.

This article will not provide guidance on public speaking techniques or details on the use of presentation software programs commonly used at conferences.

Advantages of oral presentation

Oral presentations provide an opportunity to receive instant peer-reviewed verbal feedback.[3] Such feedback can be useful in providing guidance when preparing your presentation as a manuscript for submission in a peer-reviewed journal.

Submitting an abstract / once accepted

When writing an abstract for potential oral or poster presentation, it is valuable to follow a guide. Macdonald and Shaban[4] provide an outline of the format required when writing a structured abstract for submission at a scientific conference. In addition, it is important to consider the requirements set by the conference organisers as described in the Abstract Guidelines (usually found on the conference website). In particular, you should note the specified word limit, structure and formatting requirements.

Some conference organisers request that you indicate if you are a novice presenter. By selecting that you are a novice presenter you may be provided with additional support and guidance. If information relating to this is not available on the conference website, it is

advisable to contact the organisers to discuss the availability of support or other requirements that may assist your presentation.

Design and layout
As outlined earlier, the aim of this paper is not to assist with public speaking or the use of specific presentation software. Public speaking and information technology training resources are widely available through libraries, local educational institutions and the Internet.

Detailed information regarding slide presentations can also be found on the Internet using keywords such as *slide presentation; example and/or tutorial*. However, the following points, and those shown in Appendix 1 are worth considering in the preparation of your slide design and layout:

Slide Detail
Each slide should have a maximum of five points or short sentences. Slides should represent summary points of your discussion rather than your verbal presentation in totality. Avoid using transitions between slides and within slides as these become distracting.

Number of Slides
The duration of your presentation will determine the number of slides that is acceptable. As a general rule, if your presentation is 10 minutes in duration 5 slides would be acceptable; if your presentation is 20 minutes in duration 10 slides would be acceptable. Remember you are talking to your slides and not from them.

Font
Font type and size is determined by personal preference. Basic fonts such as 'Times New Roman' or 'Arial' are easy to read. A font size of 26 – 30 is acceptable.

Images and Illustrations
Always check for the presence of copyright notices and watermarks on images downloaded from the Internet or copied from another source. Copyright notices are not always visible on images, however, this does not mean that one does not exist. When in doubt, you should seek written permission from the publisher before using any images or illustrations in your conference presentation, as this will most definitely be required if you submit your paper for publication at a later stage. Additionally, if you are using personal photographs, you will need to obtain written permission from all of the people whose identity is visible in the photograph.

Content
As described above, the content of your slides should be brief. Your presentation should have a distinct introduction, body and conclusion and the following headings should be included: *title, overview, background, objectives, body, conclusion, recommendations and acknowledgements*

Title
Your title slide should convey the message of your presentation. Additionally, you should include the names of the authors, regardless of whether they are present or not [1 slide].

Overview
Your overview should outline the progression of your presentation. It is purely a brief overview of what you're going to discuss and in what order [1 slide].

Background
This slide should outline the current literature on the topic and provide a rationale for undertaking the research or quality project. If the presentation relates to a clinical initiative or idea, the background should highlight how the problem was identified [1 slide].

Objectives
This should outline what you hoped to achieve [1 slide].

Body
If you are presenting the findings of your research or quality assurance activity, the body of your presentation should include:

- Methods [1 slide],
- Findings / Results [1 slide], and
- Limitations [1 slide].

Depending on the type of presentation, the body should include a maximum of three slides on the discussion or main theme of your topic. If your presentation has in-depth findings with multiple figures, tables and/or graphs, additional slides maybe required.

Conclusion
The conclusion should summarise the key points and objectives of your presentation [1 slide].

Recommendation
This slide should highlight your recommendations for clinical practice, research and education [1 slide].

Acknowledgements
If you received assistance from any funding bodies, individuals or institutions, it is important that you publically acknowledge the assistance you received [1 slide].

Final preparations
Prior to attending the conference it is important to ensure that your presentation opens and runs in the sequence and format that you intend it to. You should confirm with the event organisers that your slide presentation is compatible with the software that is available at the conference.

It is a good idea to practice your final presentation with a data projector as colours and images are sometimes displayed differently. Additionally, you should check the presentation to ensure your font size and images are appropriate and clear, and that your presentation runs within the time set by the conference organisers. At this stage, it is worth inviting your colleagues or peers to review your presentation and provide constructive feedback.

At the conference: before your presentation
Event organisers will commonly ask you to provide a copy of your presentation via e-mail prior to attending the conference. If this is the case, it is important to take a back-up of your presentation to the conference on a USB drive.

Once you arrive at the conference, you should locate the information technology (IT) technicians regarding the procedure for uploading your presentation (if you are not already

aware of this information prior to the conference). Presentations are currently uploaded from a USB drive or CD. However, it is best to confirm this with the event organiser prior to attending the conference. It is also good practice to view your presentation with the IT personnel prior to your presentation to ensure that it displays in the way that you intend it to.

It is recommended that you introduce yourself to the session chairperson before your presentation and to identify yourself as a novice presenter. It is also advisable to arrive in your designated presentation area at least 10 – 15 minutes prior to commencement of your presentation to compensate for delays and interruptions between speakers. This time is not wasted as it provides an excellent opportunity to network with other presenters who have similar interests in your programmed session.

At the conference: after your presentation

At the conclusion of your presentation, if you have time, you should remain to discuss your presentation with the audience. However, it is common that delegates may not be willing to ask questions in front of the wider audience and will feel more comfortable in meeting with you face-to-face. It is also useful at this time to provide a small number of handouts for interested delegates to obtain further information and contact details.

Presentation evaluation tool

Commonly, oral presentations are assessed at conferences to judge their content and delivery for conference specific awards. Below is an excerpt from a presentation marking guide developed by Shaban[5] which is used at the College of Emergency Nursing Australasia's annual conference. Such a tool may assist you when reviewing your presentation.

1 Poor; 2 = Marginal, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Outstanding.

Score Sheet						
Criteria	1	2	3	4	5	Notes
Relevance to the practice of Emergency Nursing						
Relevance to the conference theme						
Originality and currency						
Quality of Presentation - Purpose						
Quality of Presentation – Method						
Quality of Presentation – Results						
Quality of Presentation – Discussion						
Quality of Presentation – Conclusion/Recommendations						
Clarity of Presentation						
Audience Engagement						
TOTAL SCORE	/50					

Conclusion

Oral presentations are an effective means of communicating the findings of your original research, quality assurance activity, case study, clinical initiative or idea at a conference. This article has provided an overview of the process of presenting an oral presentation, from abstract submission to presentation conclusion.

Useful websites

- www.microsoft.com
  Provides free tutorials, templates and examples of PowerPoint presentations
- www.evidence-basedmanagement.com/guests/abela_apr08.html
  Provides an overview of an evidence based approach to designing and delivering presentations.

Other papers in the Writer's Workshop

A Guide to Writing Book Reviews
A Guide to Writing Conference Reviews
A Guide to Writing Website Reviews
Preparing a Structured Abstract for Presentation at a Scientific Conference
Preparing and presenting a poster at a Scientific Conference

References

1. Ranse J. A nurse's guide to presenting and publishing: dare to share, by Heinrich K. *Australasian Emergency Nursing Journal* [book review]. 2009;12(1):23.

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3. Cleary M, Walter G. Apportioning our time and energy: oral presentation, poster, journal article or other? *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*. 2004;13:204-207.

4. Macdonald R, Shaban R. Preparing a structured abstract for presentation at a scientific conference. *Journal of Emergency Primary Health Care*. 2007;5(2).

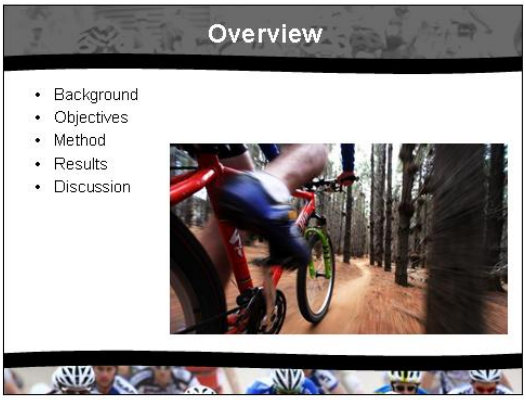
5. Shaban R. Marking guide for presentations.

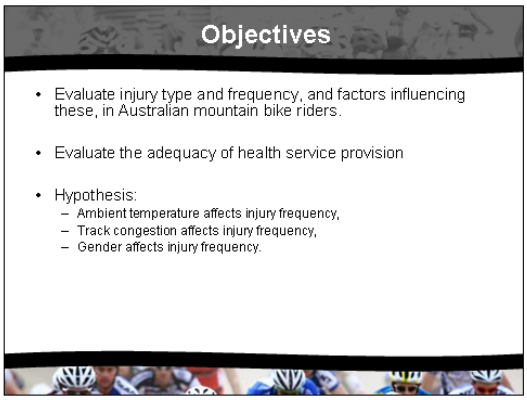
6. Ranse J, Taylor N. Mountain biking events: presentation characteristics and medical needs; paper presented at the *8th Rural Critical Care Conference*. Batemans Bay, Australia, 23rd August 2008.

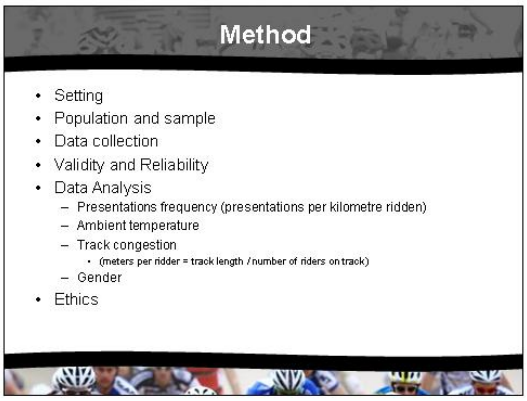
7. Ranse J. Medical emergency teams: graduate nurses interactions, attitudes and perceptions during resuscitation events in the non-critical care environment; paper presented at the *ANZICS/ACCCN Intensive Care Annual Scientific Meeting*, Rotorua, New Zealand, 26th October 2007.

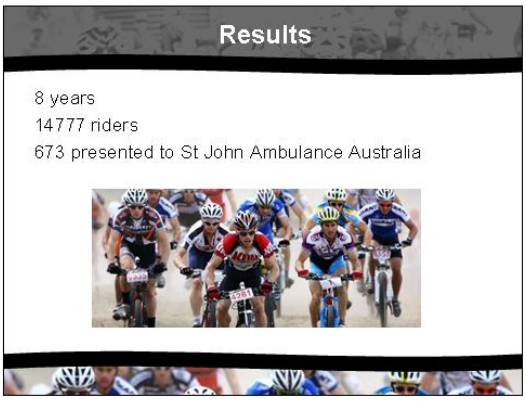
Appendix 1

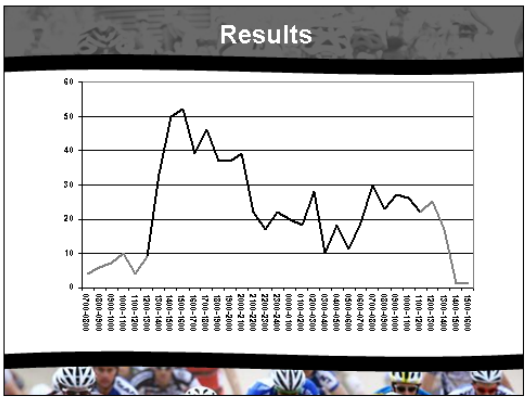
Example 1: Quantitative Research Presentation[6]

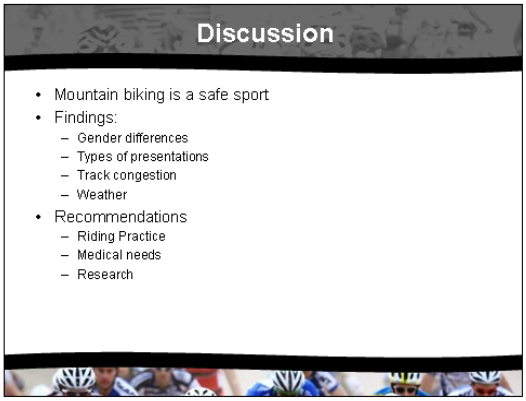












Example 2: Qualitative Research Presentation[7]

MEDICAL EMERGENCY TEAMS:
graduate nurses interactions, attitudes and perceptions during resuscitation events in the non-critical care environment

ACT Health

Jamie Ranse
Clinical Manager
Emergency Department
Calvary Health Care ACT Ltd.

OVERVIEW

- Background
- Purpose
- Methods
- Findings
- Discussion
- Recommendations

BACKGROUND

- Previous research has explored the resuscitation experience of:
  - Bystanders
  - Laypersons
  - Volunteer first aiders
  - Junior doctors
  - Critical care nurses, and
  - General nurses
- Graduate Nurse transition experience

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this research was to explore, describe and interpret the lived experience of graduate nurses who have participated in an in-hospital resuscitation event within the non-critical care environment.

METHODS

Design
- Hermeneutic phenomenological

Population and Sample
- Convenience sample
- Six graduate nurses

Data Collection and Analysis
- Focus groups
- Thematic analysis

FINDINGS

Four main themes:
- Needing to decide
- Having to act
- Feeling connected
- Being supported

CONCLUSION

- Graduate nurses feel stressed in new situations
- Similar experience to other cohort
  - Lack of an opportunity to debrief
  - Resuscitation events are chaotic
- Decision making
- Graduate nurses don't feel publicly tested

RECOMMENDATIONS

Practice
- Encourage nurses to remain involved in resuscitation events
- Ensure optimal number of staff are present
- Opportunities for formal debriefing

Research
- Effectiveness of coping strategies
- Other cohorts

Education
- Non-critical care staff should undertake ALS
- Simulation that replicates reality