How to Prepare a Clinical Case Report

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Clinical Case Reports

- Routine case reports (wards)
- Case reports of scientific value
  - Case reports
  - Case reports with a literature review
  - Case series reports
  - Systematic reviews of cases
Clinical Case Reports: Importance

- First link in the chain of evidence.

- The first link needs to be solid for the chain to be strong.

- There can be an evidence-based format for strong case reports.
Case Reports for the Wards

- Familiar SOAP format:
  - Presentation of problem (chief complaint)
  - Subjective history of HPI
  - Objective data
  - Assessment (differential, diagnosis)
  - Plans of treatment, care and evaluation
  - Discussion
Clinical Case Reports

- Form of scientific & professional communication

- It has its own rules

- These rules allow for more clear presentations and more scientific value
Clinical Case Reports: Keys to Success

- Relevance of the topic
- Value of the presentation
  - Precision, organization & structure
- Knowledge that this case contributes to the existing general information of a topic
- Clarity of the elements that can be retained for practice and/or research
Clinical Case Reports: Reasons & Motivations

- Unusual presentation of unknown etiology
- Unusual natural history
- Unusual natural or clinical courses
- Challenging differential diagnosis
- Mistake in diagnosis – its causes & consequences
- Unusual and/or unexpected effect of treatment
- Diagnostic and therapeutic “accidents”
- Unusual co-morbidity
- Transfer of medical technology
Clinical Case Reports: Reasons & Motivations 2

- Unusual setting of medical care
- Management of an emergency case
- Patient compliance
- Patient/doctor interaction
- Single case clinical trial (‘n-of-1 trial’)
- Clinical situation which cannot be reproduced for ethical reasons
- Limited access to cases
- New medical technology
- Confirmation of something already known
The Case Report: Components

- Summary
- Introduction
- Presentation of the case
- Discussion and conclusion
- References
Clinical Case Reports: The Title

- Should directly convey the point of the article

- “Cute” or allegorical titles may catch the eye but also lead to confusion

- Do not complicate the presentation with extraneous data
Clinical Case Reports: The Data

- Provide enough information to understand the case
- Essential information only
- “Go for the jugular”
Clinical Case Reports: Summary

- Motives & reasons for the report
  - “Why are we reporting this”
- Background of the problem
  - “In what context”
- Highlights of the report
  - “What have we found”
- Conclusions
  - “What does this mean”
- Similar to an abstract
Clinical Case Reports: Summary 2

- The summary represents the “abstract” that is submitted.
- It serves the same purpose as an abstract for a research article.
- It allows the busy reader to get the point quickly.
- It is not always required for publication.
Clinical Case Reports: Introduction

- Definition of the topic
  - Problem, disease, mgmt

- General context of the topic
  - Knowledge, clinical situation

- Question which this report should answer of gap in knowledge this report can fill

- Objectives and justification of this report
Clinical Case Reports: Presentation of the Case

- This section is the core of the report
  - Patients are what this is all about

- Clinimetrics
  - Measurement of clinical data

- Hermeneutics
  - The exercise/study of interpretation and understanding
Clinical Case Reports: Presentation of the Case 2

- Situation, context & triggering factor(s) of the report
- Clinical (and paraclinical) initial state of the patient
- Evolution of the clinical (& paraclinical) spectrum of disease
- Diagnostic & therapeutic acts
- Expected and actual results of actions carried out or omitted
- Unexpected results and events
Clinical Case Reports: Discussion

- Generally as long as everything else combined
- Allows authors to express opinions, doubts, questions
- Essentially the most important part of the report as it leads to new information or leads to the search for new information
Clinical Case Reports: Discussion 2

- Discussion of observations and results

- Contribution of the report to the fundamental knowledge of the problem represented by the reported case

- Proposals & recommendations for practice and for research
Clinical Case Reports: References

- Health problem and disease under study
- Clinical and paraclinical actions
- Decisions and actions under consideration
Clinical Case Reports: Ethics & Confidentiality

- Some now advocate informed consent for the use of a case in the literature.
- Certainly photographs should not reveal the patient’s identity & if they must then written consent is a must.
- Care should be taken not to have the patient be identified from the presentation.
Clinical Case Reports: CMAJ Expectations

**Summary**
- Does the summary give a succinct description of the case and its implications?

**Introduction**
- Is the case new or uncommon with important health implications?
- Is the rationale for reporting the case adequately explained?
- Has an adequate review of the literature been done?
Clinical Case Reports: CMAJ Expectations 2

Description of the case

• Is the case described briefly but comprehensively?
• Is the case described clearly?
• Are the results of investigations and treatments described adequately, including doses, schedules and duration?
• Are the results of less common labs accompanied by normal ranges?
Clinical Case Reports: CMAJ Expectations 3

Comments

• Is the evidence to support the author’s diagnosis presented?

• Are other plausible explanations considered and refuted?

• Are the implications & relevance of the case discussed?

• Is the evidence to support the recommendations presented clearly?

• Does the author indicate directions for future investigation or management of similar cases?
Clinical Case Report: 12 Commandments
Clinimetric Criteria

- Scientific manner in which one needs to examine and present data for a case report
  - Some style and form
  - Some critical distinctions
  - Some more important for publishing than posters

- We will examine these as you prepare your cases