Objectives

- Discuss initial stages in creating an abstract to submit to conference organizers
- Recognize features of abstracts that increase chances of acceptance
- Describe what a structured abstract contains
Why present at conferences?

- Share your research
- Build your CV
- Build relationships
- Learn about up-to-date research before it is published
- Hallway conversations
- "Find out you're at least as smart as other researchers" (Notkin, 1993)
- Exotic locales!


First, you have to get your abstract accepted....

- Who should be an author?
  - Each author should accept responsibility for the integrity of the research
  - ICMJE Authorship and Contributorship Criteria: http://www.icmje.org/ethical_1author.html

- Identify professional society
- Submission format and ‘tracks’
- Oral (more prestigious) or poster presentation?
Same goes for journal articles

Abstract
The Abstract of the manuscript should not exceed 350 words and must be structured into separate sections: Background, the context and purpose of the study; Methods, how the study was performed and statistical tests used; Results, the main findings; Conclusions, brief summary and potential implications. Please minimize the use of abbreviations and do not cite references in the abstract. Trial registrations. If your research article reports the results of a controlled health care intervention, please list your trial registry, along with the unique identifying number (e.g. trial registration: Current Controlled Trials I5RCTN7932463Q). Please note that there should be no space between the letters and numbers of your trial registration number. We recommend manuscripts that report randomized controlled trials follow the CONSORT extension for abstracts.

Keywords
Three to ten keywords representing the main content of the article.

http://www.biomedcentral.com/biomedcentral/article/doi#formatting-abstract

Effective abstracts
Features of a good abstract (Draper, 2012)

- Punchy and informative title
- Engaging and attractive, "Your shop window"
Features of a good abstract (Draper, 2012)

- Engaging and attractive, “Your shop window”
- Punchy and informative title
- Well written, attention to detail
- Concise
- Conference guidelines
- Audience
- Structured

Other features of a good abstract

- Not just an advertisement
- Consider how readers from across the globe ‘use’ abstracts
  - Will I keep reading the full paper?
  - Will I put in the effort to order the full-text article?
  - Will I include this study in my literature review?
  - Will I invite you to publish in my journal?

- Accurate reflection of your study/project
- Contains all aspects of your paper
- Title should include the methodology
- Differentiates from others in the field

Common pitfalls

- Trying to be too clever, using complicated language
- Jargonistic, buzzwords
- Underestimating the time it takes to write it
- No context or contributions
- Research that is incomplete
- Salami slicing
- Including information that is not included in the main text
- Replicating a sentence in the main text
- Abbreviations

* References...check your guidelines *

(Draper, 2012; Jalalian, 2012)
Structured Abstracts

Structured abstracts
- Prevents you from omitting key details (Hartley & Betts, 2009)
- Makes it easier to read
- Background, Aim/Objectives, Method (setting, participants [n, sex, age]), Results, Conclusions

Follow your headers
- Background
  - 1-3 sentences (big context, smaller context, problem/gap)
  - Build your argument
- Objective
  - sentence
- Methods
  - Cover each subheading: design, participants (n, demographics) and recruitment, data collection, data analysis
- Results
  - Major results: interpret the findings for your reader
- Conclusion
  - Go back to your objective/research question
  - Implications: clinical, theoretical, training
  - Future research
Objectives

- Understand the purpose of conference posters
- Identify the elements of an effective poster
- Explore different ways to lay out your poster

Next time....
- Create a draft version of a conference poster in PowerPoint
The conference poster

- Document that communicates your research at a conference
- Rapid communication - could be read in <5 mins
- An illustrated abstract
  - Background to your research question
  - Methods
  - Results
  - Discussion
  - Conclusion
  - Acknowledgements
  - References

Posters can be better than talks!

- More efficient
- Establishing a relationship with your audience
- Personally interact with those interested in your topic
- Can be viewed when you are not at the poster
- Removes the element of public speaking

Conferences

- Large room, noisy, crowded
- Hundreds of posters in ‘lanes’
- Wine and cheese

- Think about the environment
  - Eye catching
  - Concise
  - Aesthetically pleasing
  - ‘In competition’ for attention
Take a poster tour...

- Faculty of Nursing
- Faculty of 1000 Posters (more bioscience)
  - Look under Subjects
- Search Google Images
  - "conference poster"

Less effective posters

- Unorganized
- Cluttered
- Confusing
- Too much text
- No images or figures

Great posters

- Start early!!!!
- Content + presentation
- Looks professional
- Visually appealing
- Tell a story
- Organized
Getting started

- Poster guidelines from your conference

- Stick to one platform – Mac or PC
  - Don’t switch between

- Software
  - PowerPoint
  - Others: Keynote, QuarkXPress, InDesign, LaTeX, Scribus, Illustrator, CorelDRAW, Freehand, Omnigraffle, Inkscape

Layout & Design

Layouts

- Page setup
  - Dimensions
  - PowerPoint only goes up to 56 inches

- Horizontal or Vertical
- # Columns can vary

- A word on templates....
Fonts
- Sans serif
  - Arial, Helvetica, Calibri, Franklin Gothic, Verdana
- Take a break from Times New Roman (serif font)
- 1-2 different fonts

Size
- See from 6 feet away
  - Titles – 90-96 pt
  - Authors – 48-72 pt
  - Headings – 36-72 pt
  - Text – 24 pt
  - References – 16 pt

Colors
- Muted/light/neutral color for background
  - Offer the best contrast
  - Easy on eyes
  - Emphasize your graphics
- Overly bright colors
  - Wear out readers’ eyes
  - Can be used in borders, bullet points, small features
- I like to pull in logo colors

Tips
- Only concentrate on main points for each section
- Creating space
  - Choppy chop! Be ruthless in your edits
  - Use bullet points &/or blocks of text
  - &’s and narrow fonts
  - Play with spacing
- Balanced and consistent
- Left justified text
- Explain all acronyms, and don’t assume people know your ‘jargon’
Graphics

- 20% text, 40% white space
- 40% graphics, mix of types
  - Tables, figures, SmartArt, infographic, photos

  - Introduction (topic): Photo, infographic
  - Method (flowchart): Infographic
  - Results (predominantly): Table, figure, SmartArt, infographic
  - Conclusion (model): Photos
Title & Authors

- **Title**
  - This is your reader's first glimpse at your poster!
  - Short and specific title
  - Imbed key findings in your title
  - 1-2 lines

- **Authors**
  - Use journal formatting for listing
  - Identify the institutions

Introduction

- Ideally, 3-5 lines

- **Background:** Big context, what's been done previously

- **Problem:** What are the gaps?
  - Why is it important?
  - How will your analysis will add to the existing literature in the field?
  - Rational

- **Purpose/research question** (can be own section too)

Methods

- Give enough information for another research to judge if the study design was adequate to answer your research question
- Describe what you are studying, why did you choose those methods

- **Design**
- **Sample**
- **Data collection**
- **Data analysis**
Results
- Main section
- Let your figures do the talking!
- Provide a very short figure description
- Strive for a balance between guiding your reader through the poster and maintaining a clean, uncluttered poster

Discussion / Conclusion
- What do you think your results mean?
- Relate back to your research question
- **Contributions**: What has your work contributed?
  - Present supporting evidence
  - Contradictory findings should be addressed
- **Limitations**
- **Implications**: How results can be used to inform programs, policies, or future research

References & Acknowledgments
- **References**
  - Use numeric format to save space: [1], (1), 1
  - Abbreviated journal reference format (NLM)
  - Key references – don’t take up too much space!
    - Consider substituting et al. for many author names
    - No ‘rules’ for reference formats at conferences
- **Acknowledgements**
  - Give credit
  - Everyone who helped you get this done
  - Financial support (could use logo instead of text)
Logos
• Check with your organization’s communications dept
• UCalgary visual identity guidelines:
  • https://www.ucalgary.ca/brand/identity-standards

Conference Preparation

Options to Enhance your Poster Presentation
• Narrative
  • Oral synopsis
  • Keep it short (3-4 sentences)
  • Gesture to the relevant parts of your poster as you speak
  • You can then tailor your discussion to suit that particular reader if they choose to stay!
  • This is your opportunity to fill in the details
  • Practice presenting and think about questions

• Handouts
  • PDF of your poster
  • Abstract, name, contact information, references
  • Tack it to the poster board
Checklist (Hofmann, 2010)

- Do the illustrations tell the story?
- Is the purpose of the research or topic stated precisely?
- Did you attach the conference abstract?
- Does the Introduction have the following components?
  - Background
  - Problem or unknown
  - Purpose or review
  - Overview of content
- Did you concentrate on the main points in each section?
- Is the flow of the panels self-evident to the viewers?
- Is the topic summarized and interpreted in the Conclusion section?
- Do all figures and tables have a title and a legend?
- Is your poster layout uncluttered?
- Did you use visuals where possible rather than text?
- Did you keep text to a minimum?
- Is text written in sans serif font, and is the font large enough?
- Are exhibits kept simple?
- Are exhibits attractive? Is color used well?
- Did you use active voice in the text?
- Have all jargon and redundancies been omitted?
- Did you proofread your text?
- Be ruthless when you edit.
- Do you plan to be at your poster during the assigned poster session to answer questions and tell viewers about your work.

Resources

- Justin Matthew: http://justinlmatthews.com/posterhelp/posterguide/
- Colin Purrington: http://colinpurrington.com/tips/poster-design