

Writing a Case Report

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With a new online Journal of Clinical Case Reports, it is interesting to remind authors of writing a case report.

What is a case report

A case report is an article that describes and interprets an individual case, often written in the form of a detailed story. It is medical information collected and presented on no more than three patients to highlight an interesting treatment, presentation, or outcome. It generally results from a retrospective review (retrospective analysis) of the medical record and/or the clinical provider's files. In this regard, case reports differ from research protocols in which data are collected with intent to evaluate a specific hypothesis.

Case reports often describe [1-8]:

- Unique cases that cannot be explained by known diseases or syndromes;
- A positional or quantitative variation of the anatomical structures;
- Unusual disease or presentation of known disease or new etiology;
- Cases that show an important variation of a disease or condition;
- Cases that show unexpected events that may yield new or useful information;
- Unexpected association between diseases or symptoms;
- Cases in which one patient has two or more unexpected diseases or disorders;
- An unexpected event in the course of observing or treating a patient;
- New or improved treatment type;
- Findings that shed new light on the possible pathogenesis of a disease or an adverse effect
- New or rare side effects or complications of treatment;

Case reports are often accompanied by a review of other cases previously reported in the biomedical literature to put the reported case in context.

How to write a case report

Much has been written about what type of case is worthy of reporting and publishing. Guidance and suggestions for improving the writing and reporting of case reports have been reported [3,6,9,10]. For example, to help practitioners write case reports, McCarthy and Coll [3] have developed an outline-style worksheet. That case report worksheet provides a uniform approach to preparing case reports and can be used to collect and organize scientific observations into interesting and publishable case reports [3]. However, the most important rule for writing a good case report is to be very clear about the single message that you want to bring [5].

Why to write a case report

Case reports are helpful in stimulating learning and research. They have their proper place in evidence-based medicine [8,11] and have aims that are also important in the progress of medical science and education [4]. Throughout history, case reports have led to significant research and resulted in important clinical advances [2,12-16].

Case reports have always had an important role in the advancement of medical knowledge example [6,17-19] and continue to mark the frontiers of what we know as physician [6]. Carefully documented and well written, they may be a valuable education and research resource" [1] and so, may contribute usefully to medical education [7]. They are capable of developing new subject areas, providing educational material. Often they are the first line of evidence for new therapies. On rare occasions the information provided in case reports is sufficient to establish efficacy [8].

Where to publish

Case reports have a place in journals [7,8] are an important part of medical publishing and continue to be published in virtually all medical journals (Table 1). It is essential for authors to carefully document and well write the case report and to follow exactly the target journal's instructions to authors [3]. Reasons for non-publication or low acceptance rates of case reports by journals include space constraints (limited pages), prioritization of cost-benefit, negative contribution to the journal impact factor, and very low citations rates compared to other paper types [20].

Grand Rounds
Case Reports in Medicine
Journal of Medical Case Reports
Cases Journal
BMJ Case Reports
Radiology Case Reports
Journal of Surgical Case Reports
Journal of Orthopaedic Case reports
Journal of Clinical Case Reports

Table 1: Partial Listing of Journals that accept and publish Case Reports (in all areas of medicine).

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The Journal of Clinical Case Reports is a new online, peer-reviewed, scientific publication in all areas of medicine related to clinical case reports. Submissions to this new journal are encouraged and welcome!

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