

## Writing in neurosurgery

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Motto: "God doesn't require us to succeed; he only requires us to try."

Mother Teresa 1910-1997

"There are many paths to the top of the mountain, but the view is always the same."

Chinese proverb

Neurosurgery today is an open discipline based on technological innovations referring on information processing, imaging, nanotechnology with molecular engineering, neural prosthetics, proliferation of capabilities with regard to minimally invasive surgical techniques, endovascular surgical procedure, radio-surgical methods. The actual neurosurgeon should become a conductor of professionals oriented for a successful intervention to restore function by modulation, rather by injury a structure; assuming primary the utility for information management, future emerging technologies, but also for the practicing neurosurgeon for daily procedures (1).

In such a spirit, writing in neurosurgical papers is important for several reasons (2-4):

- support the education of future neurosurgery investigators, fix the research opinion on certain point, establish new ideas cancelling a previously established fact, share experience, anticipate readers' needs, establish strong links between neurosurgeons, even

some sort of friendship

- is an essential job skill, permit improving quality of life by incorporating an evidence-based view of neurosurgery practice, transfer experience, solve local problems

- organize the knowledge into clinically useful forms, via the publication of meta-analyses and dissemination of clinical practice guidelines in electronic formats, offer ethical and procedural safeguards

- for a young neurosurgeon, write afford to be appreciated for intellectual activity and personality making clear, visible personal ideas, opinions; giving others the possibility for feedback or even for the author to reflect upon them later

- writing is an art, good writings are usually an expression of maturity, intellectual flexibility, the ability to pose worthwhile questions. For medical community, articles should pin point work, hitting one target at a time; without changing for the sake of change. Such articles should be original, reflecting personal experience, establishing an easy

solution for a difficult situation: randomized trials, cooperative studies, observational cohort study a case report, a controversial point, an analytic study, a descriptive or review article, experimental or animal studies, a technical note, even a letter to the editor. Most cited works in neurosurgery cover cerebrovascular diseases followed by trauma, stereotactic and functional neurosurgery and neuro-oncology (5).

To stimulate readers' interest, making a neurosurgical article, several keys are mandatory to respect (2-4):

- the title should be directly related to the content, attracting attention, be concise, impressive, mentioning the real authors names who did the article and order depending on their contribution

- the abstract must be synthetic (not exceed 250 words), written in the past tense, containing comprehensive information, pointing the originality of the paper, providing a brief summary of the main section of the paper without abbreviation and anything that is not in the paper

- introduction data must explain the objective of a specific subject, related to literature review, with the aim to enable the reader why and how to appreciate the significance of author findings, an historical review is necessary to point evolution in knowledge of the paper subject

- material and methods should describe the details needed to clarify the used idea, presenting only facts, avoiding exaggeration; especially animal experiment, enabling other researcher to reproduce the same experience, performing statistical analysis, disseminate

information and convince readers using tables (generally one table for every thousands words), illustrations with explicit text content, remember the ethical aspect

- results should reflect with accuracy and precision statements, with statistical significance; even negative results if significant.

- discussions should assess the validity and significance of the results obtained, comments, comparing results; establishing conclusions as clearly as possible, summarize the evidence, pointing out any results that suggest new lines of study.

- references must consider Vancouver guidelines, without including unpublished data: author, name of the article, name of the journal, year of publication, volume, no., page; for book: title of the book, place of publication, publisher, year of publication chap, page no.

Argues for accepted papers: real original work, concise, precise, reflecting controlled clinical trials, double blind study, experimental work.

Argues for rejected papers: the article is difficult to read, validity of results is doubtful, nothing original, too long despite available information it contains.

In conclusion my plea for writing neurosurgical articles are addressed to young neurosurgeons:

- don't hesitate to write
- read in full reputable papers on the subject you are interested
- get reports on ethical issues of research presenting honestly results compared with similar work

- ask a senior writer assistance, presenting topic clearly and simply as possible, giving confidence and understanding how truth is established in neurosurgery; even today failures doing an neurosurgical article are tomorrow pillars of success

- avoid spelling and grammar mistakes, confusions, difference between tables, illustrations and the text, no abbreviations

- dissipate fear to be accepted sending your article to a well-known journal and read their remarks carefully

- offering visibility of achievements and a future plan.

## References

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3. Why is writing important - Brown University and the University of Missouri brochures
4. Hamdan A.T. - Why Arab Spine Journal? - 16th Dubai Spine Conference 2015
5. Ponce F.A., Lozano A.M. - Highly cited works in neurosurgery. Part I: the 100 top-cited papers in neurosurgical journals, *J Neurosurg.* 2010 Feb;112(2): 223-232