Mentoring Trainees in Writing a Case Report

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SCENARIO

• “Dr. Prakash, that was such an interesting case of TB arthritis!”
• “Great! I’m glad you got so much out of it!”
• “Can I write it up?”
• “Sure!”
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• “Dr. Prakash, that was such an interesting case of TB arthritis!”
• “Great! I’m glad you got so much out of it!”
• “Can I write it up?”
• “Sure!”
• “Okay, so now what……………”?

WRITING A CASE REPORT

• Identify all involved parties
  • Outline roles/responsibilities of each member
• Determine authorship
  • First, Second, to Senior
• Select a journal
  • Peer-reviewed, preferably pub med indexed
• Read Instructions to the Authors carefully
• Set a realistic timeline with goals
• Hold the trainee to the timeline
• Stay responsive
• Be patient
• Give constructive feedback during the process
• Detailed final editing
IDENTIFY ALL INVOLVED PARTIES

• The resident who wants to write up the case
• You as the attending physician on the case
• Any other attendings/residents who contributed substantially to the case—invitation as a basic courtesy
  • Don’t forget Pathologists and other consultants
• Fellows
  • Always ask the involved fellow if he or she intends to present or publish the case.
  • If more than one resident and fellow with similar involvement are interested, form a writing team and distribute the work with deadlines. Whoever does most of the work responsibly and on time gets first authorship.

DETERMINE AUTHORSHIP

• First author
  • Leads the project
  • Responsible for the majority of the paper
    • Outline, looking into journals and instructions for authors
    • Leads the majority of correspondence among authors during editing process
• Second and Subsequent Authors
  • Works closely with first author
  • Contributes ideas and assists with editing process
• Senior or last author
  • You as the attending physician
  • Typically the corresponding author as well
SELECT A JOURNAL

• Peer-reviewed
  • More academic
  • Regarded as a legitimate publication by fellowship training programs
• Preferably pub-med indexed
• Success in Publishing In:
  • Chest
  • Infectious Diseases in Clinical Practice
  • Annals of Internal Medicine
  • Journal of Clinical Microbiology
• Reach out to fellowship PDs or consultants with experience in publishing for suggested journals

READ “INSTRUCTIONS TO THE AUTHOR”
SET A REALISTIC TIMELINE WITH GOALS

- **By November 15th**
  - Resident will reach out to all parties and determine authorship
  - Resident will determine which journal to submit to
  - Resident will organize a meeting among authors to review *Instructions to the Authors*

- **By November 30th**
  - With attending guidance, group will come up with a core group of articles from the literature

- **By December 30th**
  - Resident will work with co-residents to come up with draft
    - Abstract and introduction
    - Case itself
    - Discussion and Review of the Literature
    - Send drafts to attending throughout the process
    - First author delegates responsibility (attending guides this to ensure it is equitable)
SET A REALISTIC TIMELINE WITH GOALS

• By January 15th
  • Attending reviews first draft and sends group the manuscript with edits and suggested changes

• By January 30th
  • First author submits manuscript to journal

HOLD THE TRAINEE TO THE TIMELINE

• A deadline is a deadline
  • Provide mentorship and constructive feedback

“When people stop giving you constructive criticism, they have most likely have given up on you.”
STAY RESPONSIVE AND BE PATIENT!

• A deadline is a deadline
• Try to get back to the trainee within a week
• Feedback should be constructive
• Stay supportive and encouraging
  • Oftentimes a lengthy and frustrating process
    • Expect to add twice the amount of time to what you had predicted
  • Easy for trainee to get discouraged

DETAILED FINAL EDITING

• As senior author, you are ultimately responsible for the manuscript!
• Check through manuscript for spelling and grammar first
• Edit for content and flow
• Check out all references
  • You would be surprised at how many are out of order or plagiarized.
• If evidence of plagiarism, give constructive feedback
• Make sure it follows the format detailed in Instructions to the Author.