Tips for Getting Your Case Report Published

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Disclosures

- I have no actual or potential conflicts of interest in relation to this program/presentation.
Background

Case reports shape the understanding, diagnosis, or management of a disease with the hope to inspire larger clinical studies.

Posed a challenge to me.

Case reports traditionally serve the following important functions:

- Propose novel medical ideas that may be the basis for future research studies:
  - Clinical trials and observational studies
- Identifying rare medical scenarios
- Anecdotes that help perfect and improve upon medical practice
  - Clinical pearls
Screening for an “interesting” case

- Importance of choosing a case that is “interesting” enough to influence the literature
  - Sometimes, witnessing a rare disease is insufficient, especially if there are no unique features
- Evaluate each “interesting” case according to the following criteria:
  - Epidemiology (e.g. first time disease reported in skin of color)
  - Clinical features
  - Diagnostic modality/features
  - Treatment & Prevention Modalities
  - Complications
  - Prognosis
- Helpful to use a recent literature review for the disease as a baseline for comparison
Case that is “interesting” but not interesting enough

- Consider other publication modalities such as online clinical vignette quizzes (e.g. dermatological picture identification)

Diagram:

- Does the case meet any of the aforementioned criteria?
  - YES: Are any of the criteria educational?
    - YES: Submit as case report
    - NO: Consider other publication modalities
  - NO: Consider other publication modalities
Writing a Case Report

- **General tips:**
  - Keep writing focused upon anything that meets the aforementioned criteria
    - Avoid superfluous material that is beyond the scope
    - Educational value = thesis of the case report

- **Cover Letter**
  - **Goal:** to convince the journal to accept publication
  - **Components:**
    - Addressed to editor of journal
    - Brief description of case, unique findings, and importance/educational value to medical community
    - Conflicts of Interest & Disclosures
  - Typically optional, but encourage everyone to submit one alongside any publication
Writing a Case Report (cont.)

- **Abstract**
  - Summary of the key points of the case presentation and discussion laid out in a concise manner

- **Title & Introduction**
  - Goal: to captivate the reader
  - Unique findings, relation to literature, and impact on medical literature

- **Case Report**
  - Goal: to describe the case concisely and chronologically
  - Subjective (CC, HPI, relevant PMH), objective (physical exam, diagnostic studies), treatment & outcome

- **Discussion**
  - Goal: to sell the reader that your findings are unique and impact the way clinicians practice
    - “persuasive essay”
  - Perform an in-depth evaluation of “unique” features of a case in the setting of a comprehensive literature review, drawing out conclusions and recommendations (e.g. how do these findings impact how we practice?)
Selecting a journal for submission

- Consult attending physicians, as well as library staff, regarding how to select a journal that would best represent your work
- Important to review submission criteria for journals in consideration
  - Some journals require patient permission documentation
    - Crucial to maintain patient confidentiality: patient name and MRN should be omitted
  - Other journals have restrictions on word counts, image quality, etc.
- If not initially accepted, consider submitting to another journal with a lower impact score
Summary Points

- Case reports should focus on educational value
  - Rare and unique findings on their own may not shape clinical practice
- Utilize your resources
  - Library staff
  - Colleagues: attending physicians, residents, medical students, etc.
  - The Howard family


Thank you!

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