

International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE): uniform requirements for journals

Summary of technical requirements

- Double space all parts of manuscripts.
- Begin each section or component on a new page.
- Review the sequence: title page, abstract and key words, text, acknowledgments, references, tables (each on separate page), legends.
- Illustrations, unmounted prints, should be no larger than 203 × 254 mm (8 × 10 inches).
- Include permission to reproduce previously published material or to use illustrations that may identify human subjects.
- Enclose transfer of copyright and other forms.
- Submit required number of paper copies.
- Keep copies of everything submitted.

Preparation of manuscript

The text of observational and experimental articles is usually (but not necessarily) divided into sections with the headings Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion. Long articles may need subheadings within some sections (especially the Results and Discussion sections) to clarify their content. Other types of articles, such as case reports, reviews, and editorials, are likely to need other formats. Authors should consult individual journals for further guidance. Type or print out the manuscript on white bond paper, 216 × 279 mm (8.5 × 11 inches), or ISO A4 (212 × 297 mm), with margins of at least 25 mm (1 inch). Type or print on only one side of the paper. Use double spacing throughout, including for the title page, abstract, text, acknowledgments, references, individual tables, and legends. Number pages consecutively, beginning with the title page. Put the page number in the upper or lower right-hand corner of each page.

Manuscripts on disks

For papers that are close to final acceptance, some journals require authors to provide a copy in electronic form (on a disk); they may accept a

variety of word-processing formats or text (ASCII) files.

When submitting disks, authors should:

1. be certain to include a print-out of the version of the article that is on the disk;
2. put only the latest version of the manuscript on the disk;
3. name the file clearly;
4. label the disk with the format of the file and the file name;
5. provide information on the hardware and software used.

Authors should consult the journal's instructions to authors for acceptable formats, conventions for naming files, number of copies to be submitted, and other details.

Title Page

The title page should carry 1) the title of the article, which should be concise but informative; 2) the name by which each author is known, with his or her highest academic degree(s) and institutional affiliation; 3) the name of the department(s) and institution(s) to which the work should be attributed; 4) disclaimers, if any; 5) the name and address of the author responsible for correspondence about the manuscript; 6) the name and address of the author to whom requests for reprints should be addressed or a statement that reprints will not be available from the authors; 7) source(s) of support in the form of grants, equipment, drugs, or all of these; and 8) a short running head or footline of no more than 40 characters (count letters and spaces) at the foot of the title page.

Authorship

All persons designated as authors should qualify for authorship, and all those who qualify should be listed. Each author should have participated sufficiently in the work to take public responsibility for appropriate portions of the content. One or more authors should take responsibility for the integrity of the work as a whole, from inception to published article.

Authorship credit should be based only on 1) substantial contributions to conception and design, or acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data; 2) drafting the article or

revising it critically for important intellectual content; and 3) final approval of the version to be published. Conditions 1, 2, and 3 must all be met. Acquisition of funding, the collection of data, or general supervision of the research group, by themselves, do not justify authorship.

Authors should provide a description of what each contributed, and editors should publish that information. All others who contributed to the work who are not authors should be named in the Acknowledgments, and what they did should be described (see Acknowledgments).

Increasingly, authorship of multicenter trials is attributed to a group. All members of the group who are named as authors should fully meet the above criteria for authorship. Group members who do not meet these criteria should be listed, with their permission, in the Acknowledgments or in an appendix (see Acknowledgments).

The order of authorship on the byline should be a joint decision of the coauthors. Authors should be prepared to explain the order in which authors are listed.

Abstract and Key Words

The second page should carry an abstract (of no more than 150 words for unstructured abstracts or 250 words for structured abstracts). The abstract should state the purposes of the study or investigation, basic procedures (selection of study subjects or laboratory animals; observational and analytical methods), main findings (giving specific data and their statistical significance, if possible), and the principal conclusions. It should emphasize new and important aspects of the study or observations.

Below the abstract authors should provide, and identify as such, 3 to 10 key words or short phrases that will assist indexers in cross-indexing the article and may be published with the abstract. Terms from the Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) list of Index Medicus should be used; if suitable MeSH terms are not yet available for recently introduced terms, present terms may be used.

Introduction

State the purpose of the article and summarize the rationale for the study or observation. Give only strictly pertinent references and do not include data or conclusions from the work being reported.

Methods

Describe your selection of the observational or experimental subjects (patients or laboratory animals, including controls) clearly. Identify the age, sex, and other important characteristics of the subjects. Because the relevance of such variables as age, sex, and ethnicity to the object of research is not always clear, authors should explicitly justify them when they are included in a study report. The guiding principle should be clarity about how and why a study was done in a particular way. For example, authors should explain why only subjects of certain ages were included or why women were excluded. Authors should avoid terms such as "race," which lacks precise biological meaning, and use alternative descriptors such as "ethnicity" or "ethnic group" instead. Authors should specify carefully what the descriptors mean, and tell exactly how the data were collected (for example, what terms were used in survey forms, whether the data were self-reported or assigned by others, etc.).

Identify the methods, apparatus (give the manufacturer's name and address in parentheses), and procedures in sufficient detail to allow other workers to reproduce the results. Give references to established methods, including statistical methods (see below); provide references and brief descriptions for methods that have been published but are not well known; describe new or substantially modified methods, give reasons for using them, and evaluate their limitations. Identify precisely all drugs and chemicals used, including generic name(s), dose(s), and route(s) of administration.

Reports of randomized clinical trials should present information on all major study elements, including the protocol (study population, interventions or exposures, outcomes, and the rationale for statistical analysis), assignment of interventions (methods of randomization, concealment of allocation to treatment groups), and the method of masking (blinding).

Authors submitting review manuscripts should include a section describing the methods used for locating, selecting, extracting, and synthesizing data. These methods should also be summarized in the abstract.

Ethics

When reporting experiments on human subjects, indicate whether the procedures followed were in accordance with the ethical standards of the

responsible committee on human experimentation (institutional or regional) and with the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, as revised in 1983. Do not use patients' names, initials, or hospital numbers, especially in illustrative material. When reporting experiments on animals, indicate whether the institution's or a national research council's guide for, or any national law on, the care and use of laboratory animals was followed.

Statistics

Describe statistical methods with enough detail to enable a knowledgeable reader with access to the original data to verify the reported results. When possible, quantify findings and present them with appropriate indicators of measurement error or uncertainty (such as confidence intervals). Avoid relying solely on statistical hypothesis testing, such as the use of *P* values, which fails to convey important quantitative information. Discuss the eligibility of experimental subjects. Give details about randomization. Describe the methods for and success of any blinding of observations. Report complications of treatment. Give numbers of observations. Report losses to observation (such as dropouts from a clinical trial). References for the design of the study and statistical methods should be to standard works when possible (with pages stated) rather than to papers in which the designs or methods were originally reported. Specify any general-use computer programs used.

Put a general description of methods in the Methods section. When data are summarized in the Results section, specify the statistical methods used to analyze them. Restrict tables and figures to those needed to explain the argument of the paper and to assess its support. Use graphs as an alternative to tables with many entries; do not duplicate data in graphs and tables. Avoid nontechnical uses of technical terms in statistics, such as "random" (which implies a randomizing device), "normal," "significant," "correlations," and "sample." Define statistical terms, abbreviations, and most symbols.

Results

Present your results in logical sequence in the text, tables, and illustrations. Do not repeat in the text all the data in the tables or illustrations; emphasize or summarize only important observations.

Discussion

Emphasize the new and important aspects of the study and the conclusions that follow from them. Do not repeat in detail data or other material given in the Introduction or the Results section. Include in the Discussion section the implications of the findings and their limitations, including implications for future research. Relate the observations to other relevant studies.

Link the conclusions with the goals of the study but avoid unqualified statements and conclusions not completely supported by the data. In particular, authors should avoid making statements on economic benefits and costs unless their manuscript includes economic data and analyses. Avoid claiming priority and alluding to work that has not been completed. State new hypotheses when warranted, but clearly label them as such. Recommendations, when appropriate, may be included.

Acknowledgments

List all contributors who do not meet the criteria for authorship, such as a person who provided purely technical help, writing assistance, or a department chair who provided only general support. Financial and material support should also be acknowledged.

Groups of persons who have contributed materially to the paper but whose contributions do not justify authorship may be listed under a heading such as "clinical investigators" or "participating investigators," and their function or contribution should be described for example, "served as scientific advisors," "critically reviewed the study proposal," "collected data," or "provided and cared for study patients."

Because readers may infer their endorsement of the data and conclusions, all persons must have given written permission to be acknowledged.

References

References should be numbered consecutively in the order in which they are first mentioned in the text. Identify references in text, tables, and legends by Arabic numerals in parentheses. References cited only in tables or figure legends should be numbered in accordance with the sequence established by the first identification in the text of the particular table or figure.

Use the style of the examples below, which are based on the formats used by the NLM in *Index*

Medicus. The titles of journals should be abbreviated according to the style used in *Index Medicus*. Consult the *List of Journals Indexed in Index Medicus*, published annually as a separate publication by the library and as a list in the January issue of *Index Medicus*. The list can also be obtained through the library's web site (<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/>).

Avoid using abstracts as references. References to papers accepted but not yet published should be designated as "in press" or "forthcoming"; authors should obtain written permission to cite such papers as well as verification that they have been accepted for publication. Information from manuscripts submitted but not accepted should be cited in the text as "unpublished observations" with written permission from the source.

Avoid citing a "personal communication" unless it provides essential information not available from a public source, in which case the name of the person and date of communication should be cited in parentheses in the text. For scientific articles, authors should obtain written permission and confirmation of accuracy from the source of a personal communication.

The references must be verified by the author(s) against the original documents. The Uniform Requirements style (the Vancouver style) is based largely on an ANSI standard style adapted by the NLM for its databases. Notes have been added where Vancouver style differs from the style now used by NLM.

Articles in Journals

1. *Standard journal article*
List the first six authors followed by *et al.* (Note: NLM now lists up through 25 authors; if there are more than 25 authors, NLM lists the first 24, then the last author, then *et al.*)

- Vega KJ, Pina I, Krevsky B. Heart transplantation is associated with an increased risk for pancreatobiliary disease. *Ann Intern Med* 1996 Jun 1; 124 (11): 980-3.

As an option, if a journal carries continuous pagination throughout a volume (as many medical journals do) the month and issue number may be omitted.

(Note: For consistency, the option is used throughout the examples in Uniform Requirements. NLM does not use the option.)

- Vega KJ, Pina I, Krevsky B. Heart transplantation is associated with an

increased risk for pancreatobiliary disease. *Ann Intern Med* 1996;124:980-3.

More than six authors: Parkin DM, Clayton D, Black RJ, Masuyer E, Friedl HP, Ivanov E, et al. Childhood leukaemia in Europe after Chernobyl: 5 year follow-up. *Br J Cancer* 1996;73:1006-12.

2. *Organization as author* The Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand. Clinical exercise stress testing. Safety and performance guidelines. *Med J Aust* 1996; 164: 282-4.

3. *No author given*
Cancer in South Africa [editorial]. *S Afr Med J* 1994; 84:15.

4. *Article not in English*
(Note: NLM translates the title to English, encloses the translation in square brackets, and adds an abbreviated language designator.)
Ryder TE, Haukeland EA, Solhaug JH. Bilateral infrapatellar seneruptur hostidligere frisk kvinne. *Tidsskr Nor Laegeforen* 1996;116:41-2.

5. *Volume with supplement*
Shen HM, Zhang QF. Risk assessment of nickel carcinogenicity and occupational lung cancer. *Environ Health Perspect* 1994; 102 Suppl 1: 275-82.

6. *Issue with supplement*
Payne DK, Sullivan MD, Massie MJ. Women's psychological reactions to breast cancer. *Semin Oncol* 1996; 23 (1 Suppl 2):89-97.

7. *Volume with part*
Ozben T, Nacitarhan S, Tuncer N. Plasma and urine sialic acid in non-insulin dependent diabetes mellitus. *Ann Clin Biochem* 1995; 32 (Pt 3): 303-6.

8. *Issue with part*
Poole GH, Mills SM. One hundred consecutive cases of flap lacerations of the leg in ageing patients. *N Z Med J* 1994; 107 (986 Pt 1): 377-8.

9. *Issue with no volume*
Turan I, Wredmark T, Fellander-Tsai L. Arthroscopic ankle arthrodesis in rheumatoid arthritis. *Clin Orthop* 1995; (320):110-4.

10. *No issue or volume*
Browell DA, Lennard TW. Immunologic status of the cancer patient and the effects of blood transfusion on antitumor responses. *Curr Opin Gen Surg* 1993: 325-33.

11. *Pagination in Roman numerals*

Fisher GA, Sikic BI. Drug resistance in clinical oncology and hematology. Introduction. *Hematol Oncol Clin North Am* 1995 Apr;9(2):xi-xii.

12. *Type of article indicated as needed*
Enzensberger W, Fischer PA. Metronome in Parkinson's disease [letter]. *Lancet* 1996; **347**: 1337. Clement J, De Bock R. Hematological complications of hantavirus nephropathy (HVN) [abstract]. *Kidney Int* 1992; **42**: 1285.

13. *Article containing retraction*

Garey CE, Schwarzman AL, Rise ML, Seyfried TN. Ceruloplasmin gene defect associated with epilepsy in EL mice [retraction of Garey CE, Schwarzman AL, Rise ML, Seyfried TN. In: *Nat Genet* 1994; **6**: 426-31]. *Nat Genet* 1995; **11**: 104.

14. *Article retracted*

Liou GI, Wang M, Matragoon S. Precocious IRBP gene expression during mouse development [retracted in *Invest Ophthalmol Vis Sci* 1994; **35**: 3127]. *Invest Ophthalmol Vis Sci* 1994; **35**: 1083-8.

15. *Article with published erratum*

Hamlin JA, Kahn AM. Herniography in symptomatic patients following inguinal hernia repair [published erratum appears in *West J Med* 1995; **162**: 278]. *West J Med* 1995; **162**: 28-31.

Books and other monographs

(Note: Previous Vancouver style incorrectly had a comma rather than a semicolon between the publisher and the date.)

16. *Personal author(s)*

Ringsven MK, Bond D. *Gerontology and leadership skills for nurses*. 2nd ed. Albany (NY): Delmar Publishers; 1996.

17. *Editor(s), compiler(s) as author*

Norman IJ, Redfern SJ, editors. *Mental health care for elderly people*. New York: Churchill Livingstone; 1996.

18. *Organization as author and publisher*

Institute of Medicine (US). *Looking at the future of the Medicaid program*. Washington: The Institute; 1992.

19. *Chapter in a book*

(Note: Previous Vancouver style had a colon rather than a p before pagination.) Phillips SJ, Whisnant JP. Hypertension and stroke. In: Laragh JH, Brenner BM, editors. *Hypertension: pathophysiology, diagnosis, and management*.

2nd ed. New York: Raven Press; 1995. p. 465-78.

20. *Conference proceedings*

Kimura J, Shibasaki H, editors. *Recent advances in clinical neurophysiology*. Proceedings of the 10th International Congress of EMG and Clinical Neurophysiology; 1995 Oct 15-19; Kyoto, Japan. Amsterdam: Elsevier; 1996.

21. *Conference paper*

Bengtsson S, Solheim BG. Enforcement of data protection, privacy and security in medical informatics. In: Lun KC, Degoulet P, Piemme TE, Rienhoff O, editors. *MEDINFO 92*. Proceedings of the 7th World Congress on Medical Informatics; 1992 Sep 6-10; Geneva, Switzerland. Amsterdam: North-Holland; 1992. p. 1561-5.

22. *Scientific or technical report*

Issued by funding/sponsoring agency: Smith P, Golladay K. Payment for durable medical equipment billed during skilled nursing facility stays. Final report. Dallas (TX): Dept. of Health and Human Services (US), Office of Evaluation and Inspections; 1994 Oct. Report No.: HHSIGOEI69200860. Issued by performing agency: Field MJ, Tranquada RE, Feasley JC, editors. *Health services research: work force and educational issues*. Washington: National Academy Press; 1995. Contract No.: AHCPR282942008. Sponsored by the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research.

23. *Dissertation*

Kaplan SJ. Post-hospital home health care: the elderly's access and utilization [dissertation]. St. Louis (MO): Washington Univ.; 1995.

24. *Patent*

Larsen CE, Trip R, Johnson CR, inventors; Novoste Corporation, assignee. Methods for procedures related to the electrophysiology of the heart. US patent 5,529,067. 1995 Jun 25.

Other published material

25. *Newspaper article*

Lee G. Hospitalizations tied to ozone pollution: study estimates 50,000 admissions annually. *The Washington Post* 1996 Jun 21; Sect. A:3 (col. 5).

26. *Audiovisual material*

HIV+/AIDS: the facts and the future [videocassette]. St. Louis (MO): Mosby-Year Book; 1995.

27. *Legal material*

Public law: Preventive Health Amendments of 1993, Pub. L. No. 103-183, 107 Stat. 2226 (Dec. 14, 1993). Unenacted bill: Medical Records Confidentiality Act of 1995, S. 1360, 104th Cong., 1st Sess. (1995).

Code of Federal Regulations: Informed Consent, 42 C.F.R. Sect. 441.257 (1995). Hearing: Increased Drug Abuse: the Impact on the Nation's Emergency Rooms: Hearings Before the Subcomm. on Human Resources and Intergovernmental Relations of the House Comm. on Government Operations, 103rd Cong., 1st Sess. (May 26, 1993).

28. *Map*

North Carolina. Tuberculosis rates per 100,000 population, 1990 [demographic map]. Raleigh: North Carolina Dept. of Environment, Health, and Natural Resources, Div. of Epidemiology; 1991.

29. *Book of the Bible*

The Holy Bible. King James version. Grand Rapids (MI): Zondervan Publishing House; 1995. Ruth 3:1-18.

30. *Dictionary and similar references*

Stedman's medical dictionary. 26th ed. Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins; 1995. Apraxia; p. 119-20.

31. *Classical material*

The Winter's Tale: act 5, scene 1, lines 13-16. The complete works of William Shakespeare. London: Rex; 1973.

Unpublished Material

32. *In press*

(Note: NLM prefers "forthcoming" because not all items will be printed.) Leshner AI. Molecular mechanisms of cocaine addiction. N Engl J Med. In press 1996.

Electronic Material

33. *Journal article in electronic format*

Morse SS. Factors in the emergence of infectious diseases. Emerg Infect Dis [serial online] 1995 Jan-Mar [cited 1996 Jun 5];1(1):[24 screens]. Available from: URL: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/EID/eid.htm>

34. *Monograph in electronic format*

CDI, clinical dermatology illustrated [monograph on CD-ROM]. Reeves JRT, Maibach H. CMEA Multimedia Group, producers. 2nd ed. Version 2.0. San Diego: CMEA; 1995.

35. *Computer file*

Hemodynamics III: the ups and downs of hemodynamics [computer program]. Version 2.2. Orlando (FL): Computerized Educational Systems; 1993.

Tables

Type or print out each table with double spacing on a separate sheet of paper. Do not submit tables as photographs. Number tables consecutively in the order of their first citation in the text and supply a brief title for each. Give each column a short or abbreviated heading. Place explanatory matter in footnotes, not in the heading. Explain in footnotes all nonstandard abbreviations that are used in each table. For footnotes use the following symbols, in this sequence:

*, †, ‡, §, ||, ¶, **, ††, ‡‡

Identify statistical measures of variations, such as standard deviation and standard error of the mean. Do not use internal horizontal and vertical rules.

Be sure that each table is cited in the text. If you use data from another published or unpublished source, obtain permission and acknowledge them fully.

The use of too many tables in relation to the length of the text may produce difficulties in the layout of pages. Examine issues of the journal to which you plan to submit your paper to estimate how many tables can be used per 1000 words of text.

The editor, on accepting a paper, may recommend that additional tables containing important backup data too extensive to publish be deposited with an archival service, such as the National Auxiliary Publication Service in the United States, or made available by the authors. In that event an appropriate statement will be added to the text. Submit such tables for consideration with the paper.

Illustrations (figures)

Submit the required number of complete sets of figures. Figures should be professionally drawn and photographed; freehand or typewritten lettering is unacceptable. Instead of original drawings, x-ray films, and other material, send sharp, glossy, black-and-white photographic prints, usually 127 × 173 mm (5 × 7 inches) but no larger than 203 × 254 mm (8 × 10 inches). Letters, numbers, and symbols should be clear and even throughout and of sufficient size that

when reduced for publication each item will still be legible. Titles and detailed explanations belong in the legends for illustrations not on the illustrations themselves.

Each figure should have a label pasted on its back indicating the number of the figure, author's name, and top of the figure. Do not write on the back of figures or scratch or mar them by using paper clips. Do not bend figures or mount them on cardboard.

Photomicrographs should have internal scale markers. Symbols, arrows, or letters used in photomicrographs should contrast with the background.

If photographs of people are used, either the subjects must not be identifiable or their pictures must be accompanied by written permission to use the photograph (*see* Protection of Patients' Rights to Privacy).

Figures should be numbered consecutively according to the order in which they have been first cited in the text. If a figure has been published, acknowledge the original source and submit written permission from the copyright holder to reproduce the material. Permission is required irrespective of authorship or publisher except for documents in the public domain.

For illustrations in color, ascertain whether the journal requires color negatives, positive transparencies, or color prints. Accompanying drawings marked to indicate the region to be reproduced may be useful to the editor. Some journals publish illustrations in color only if the author pays for the extra cost.

Legends for Illustrations

Type or print out legends for illustrations using double spacing, starting on a separate page, with Arabic numerals corresponding to the illustrations. When symbols, arrows, numbers, or letters are used to identify parts of the illustrations, identify and explain each one clearly in the legend. Explain the internal scale and identify the method of staining in photomicrographs.

Units of Measurement

Measurements of length, height, weight, and volume should be reported in metric units (meter, kilogram, or liter) or their decimal multiples. Temperatures should be given in degrees Celsius. Blood pressures should be given in millimeters of mercury. All hematologic and clinical chemistry measurements should be

reported in the metric system in terms of the International System of Units (SI). Editors may request that alternative or non-SI units be added by the authors before publication.

Abbreviations and Symbols

Use only standard abbreviations. Avoid abbreviations in the title and abstract. The full term for which an abbreviation stands should precede its first use in the text unless it is a standard unit of measurement.

Sending the Manuscript to the Journal

Send the required number of copies of the manuscript in a heavy-paper envelope, enclosing the copies and figures in cardboard, if necessary, to prevent the photographs from being bent. Place photographs and transparencies in a separate heavy-paper envelope.

Manuscripts must be accompanied by a covering letter signed by all coauthors. This must include 1) information on prior or duplicate publication or submission elsewhere of any part of the work as defined earlier in this document; 2) a statement of financial or other relationships that might lead to a conflict of interest (*see* below); 3) a statement that the manuscript has been read and approved by all the authors, that the requirements for authorship as stated earlier in this document have been met, and that each author believes that the manuscript represents honest work; and 4) the name, address, and telephone number of the corresponding author, who is responsible for communicating with the other authors about revisions and final approval of the proofs. The letter should give any additional information that may be helpful to the editor, such as the type of article in the particular journal that the manuscript represents and whether the author(s) would be willing to meet the cost of reproducing color illustrations. The manuscript must be accompanied by copies of any permission to reproduce published material, to use illustrations or report information about identifiable people, or to name people for their contributions.

