

The Clinical Review Article How to get published in *JAAPA*

Tanya Gregory, PhD

Editor, *JAAPA—Journal of the American Academy of Physician Assistants*



Topics for today

- What are the characteristics of a good clinical review article?
- For PAs who want to publish professionally, what are the secrets to success?



Definitions

The *JAAPA* clinical review article as defined

- In the author guidelines
- By the *JAAPA* editorial board



From the author guidelines

Clinical review articles offer a critical assessment of the current state of knowledge and research about a disease or condition often encountered by PAs, or they offer a how-to approach to diagnosing or managing a specific problem. Such an article should not be exhaustive or comprehensive. Instead, it should be practical, evidence-based, and absolutely up-to-date regarding the state of medical knowledge about the subject. References should be recent and evidence-based; textbook references should be avoided.



The evidence-based clinical review article

"Clinical review articles, also known as updates, differ from systematic reviews and meta-analyses in important ways. Updates selectively review the medical literature while discussing a topic broadly."



"Choose a common clinical problem and avoid topics that are rarities or unusual manifestations of disease or that have curiosity value only."



“Choose common problems for which there is new information about diagnosis or treatment. Emphasize information that, if valid, should prompt a change in clinical practice.”

How to write an evidence-based clinical review article. *American Family Physician*. 2002;65(2): 251-258.



The two most important qualities are

- A clinically relevant topic
“I won't read esoterica unless forced to—I don't have time”
- The most up-to-date information
“Nothing turns me off quicker than looking at the reference list and finding nothing from the previous 12 months”



Choosing an article topic

- Write about something you know well, or write about something you know you do well
- Focus on what your reader needs to know, not what you want to say



Four questions on the reader's mind

1. Why is this article being published?
2. Why is it being published now?
3. Will it be worth my time to read it?
4. What does it have to say to me?



What makes a good topic?

- Relevance to today's practice: PAs need to know
- Immediacy: PAs need to know right now
- Impact: it will change what they do
- Teaching value: there is a knowledge gap



Tip for success

- Your article should be useful, interesting, or enjoyable to read
- It needs to be only one of the three
- If it is none of the three, no one will want to read it



So what's the story?

- Show and tell: derm slides; visual guide to eye conditions
- How-to: hands-on procedures; one-on-one counseling
- Diagnostic pearls: focus on the workup
- The history lesson: how to take a family history, drinking history, sexual history



- Patient-focused: children, the elderly, pregnant patients, minorities, teens
- Situational: acute/chronic/urgent/emergent
- Whatdunit? Symptoms in search of a diagnosis (lower abdominal pain, the red eye, chronic cough)
- Whatizzit? Stuttering or normal language development? Delirium or dementia? Child abuse or something else?



- Successes and failures: 10 clues to diagnosing depression; 10 pitfalls in diagnosing depression
- Focus on therapy: drug, nondrug, or both; new classes of drugs
- When to worry: when skin lesions signal systemic disease
- Case studies/memorable patients



So what's new?

- Pathophysiology: new understanding
- Diagnosis: new tests, technologies
- Treatment: new drugs, approaches, evidence, guidelines
- Prevention: new strategies, findings, recommendations
- Opportunities for patient education
- Controversy?



One topic, 12 article ideas

Topic: Vaccines

- 2007 immunization update
- Don't miss opportunities to immunize kids
- Exploring today's vaccine controversies
- Talking to parents about vaccines
- Adolescent immunization: A new era



- Vaccines in pregnancy: Which to give?
- Flu shots: 10 steps to a successful program
- Tracking immunization status in your office
- Vaccines: Once is not enough (waning immunity)
- The sorry state of adult immunization
- Today's vaccines: How safe?
- Chickenpox vaccine: Will a booster be needed?



Focus the topic

ADHD

- ADHD in adults
- Treatment of ADHD in adults
- Drug treatment of ADHD in adults
- Cardiovascular risks of drug treatment of ADHD in adults



Too narrow, too broad, just right

- Too broad: Asthma
- Too narrow: Effect of gestational asthma therapy on fetal growth
- Just right: Controlling exercise-induced asthma in athletes
- Too broad: Obesity
- Too narrow: Gastrojejunal strictures after Roux-en-y gastric bypass
- Just right: Maintaining weight loss over the long term



More about references

References should be

- Recent: "Anything more than 2 to 5 years old is close to being outdated, unless we are talking about zebras for which there are few references"
- Primary: "Use serious, peer-reviewed references from the journals in which the research is actually being published"
- Evidence-based: "Avoid textbooks, which generally don't reflect the most up-to-date evidence"



Cite recent sources

- Search the literature to find out what has happened recently in your topic area
- Keep looking for new material, up till the day you submit the manuscript



- If you're citing a paper that is more than 5 years old, it should be one of a kind (a seminal study) or the only source for the data you're citing
- If neither is the case, you may not need to cite a source at all, or you may need to find a more recent one



Cite primary sources

- The primary source is the place where the information was first published
- Check the paper you're citing to make sure that the authors have not in fact taken their information from another source
- If they have, that other source is probably primary



Cite evidence-based sources

- AHRQ Clinical Guidelines and Evidence Reports
- Bandolier
- Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews
- InfoPOEMs
- National Guideline Clearinghouse
- US Preventive Services Task Force



Beware of long strings of references

- Often, you can cite the most recent reference, the most respected reference, or the primary reference and let it go at that
- If you can't decide which reference is most respected, there may not be one
- Sometimes the primary reference is obvious



Know what not to reference

- Do not reference statements that most clinicians would consider common knowledge
- Many citations from textbooks fall into this category
- Citations from textbooks should generally be avoided



Know what requires a reference

- All data or statistics
- Any study
- Any statement readers might consider to be controversial
- Any idea, argument, opinion, or theory that is not your own



For PAs entering the world of professional publishing, what are the secrets to success?



There are four

1. Research your target publication
2. Read—and follow—the author guidelines
3. Take advantage of peer review
4. Develop a good relationship with the editorial staff



1. Research your target publication

- Notice the types of articles that appear
- Read some of the more recent articles, especially if you aren't a regular reader of the publication
- Try to write your article so it fits the parameters of what that journal typically publishes



Notice the tone and style

- Is it conversational—speaking directly to the reader?
- Is it formal and academic?
- Somewhere in between?
- When you write, try to imitate the same tone and style



Notice the length of articles

Make your article about as long, or about as short, as what the journal usually publishes



Look at the accessories

- Notice the use of tables, photos, algorithms, imaging studies, etc
- Provide, or suggest, similar accessories for your article



2. Read—and follow—the author guidelines

- The guidelines will describe the types of articles the publication wants, what the requirements are, and how to prepare a manuscript
- Write your article to comply with the guidelines—or, if the article is already written, revise it to comply before you submit



3. Take advantage of peer review

- Peer review is used to test the “publishability” of a manuscript
- We subject it to the scrutiny of other clinicians who are experts in the same field



Do's and don'ts

- You do NOT have to make every change reviewers have suggested
- Do make the changes that are reasonable and consistent with your purpose in writing the article
- Do explain to the editor any changes you have chosen not to make



4. Develop a good relationship with the editorial staff

- Expect your manuscript to change during editing
- During the editing, author review, and production periods, be responsive to questions and requests from the staff
- If you disagree with some aspect of the editor's work, be prepared to negotiate effectively



Expect your manuscript to change during editing



During the editing, author review, and production periods, be responsive to questions and requests from the staff



If you disagree with some aspect of the editor's work, be prepared to negotiate effectively



Thank you

- E-mail the editor at jaapa@aapa.org or tanya.gregory@haymarketmedical.com
- *JAAPA* author guidelines are available at www.jaapa.com

