How to Convert an Oral Presentation to a Manuscript

Papers presented at meetings often contain the seeds of excellent journal articles. To be accepted for publication, however, they often need careful revision by the author. These guidelines highlight the characteristics that cause the greatest problems when written versions of oral presentations are submitted to journal editors. By addressing the following series of questions, an author may avert the disappointment of rejection or avoid the delay caused by the editor's return of a manuscript for rewriting.

Review the paper as it was prepared for oral delivery in light of the following guidelines and considerations:

Purpose of Paper

Does the audience for the oral presentation differ from the readership of the publication to which the paper is being submitted? How does that affect the focus of the written manuscript?

Was the primary aim of the oral presentation:

- to inform?
- to teach?
- to entertain?
- to provoke action?
- to stimulate thought?
- to solicit feedback?
- to test theory?

Is the purpose of the written paper the same, or has the emphasis changed?

Content and Organization

Look for evidence of incompleteness. Because of time constraints, oral presentations usually cover only a fragment of the information associated with a research study or program development description. Journal articles based on oral presentations frequently must be expanded and reorganized to cover their topics more thoroughly.

- Is there an abstract? Is it informative? Is it structured?
- Does the introductory section give background information? Why was the study or project undertaken? What problem or question was addressed? What was it expected to accomplish?
- If the article reports a survey or study, has the methodology been fully described?

- Is the information put in context? Is there a description of the setting when germane to the topic (e.g., the nature of the institution, types and numbers of clientele)?
- How does the particular project, program, or study fit into the current state of knowledge or practice? What similar work or programs have been reported in the literature? How do they compare? What unique element or new knowledge is being described in the present paper?
- Is applicability to other institutions or settings discussed?
- Is the content broken into sections that flow logically? Are the sections labeled informatively to guide the reader?
- If the paper describes a study or evaluates a program, does the conclusion summarize the significant results? Are questions for further examination raised?

Style

Is the writing informal? The use of anecdotes, asides, personal comments, broken phrases, questions to the audience, and other rhetorical devices intended to lighten an oral delivery and stimulate interest, while appropriate for a public presentation, make a written paper less readable.

Is the tone right for the reading audience? Is the level of information appropriate? Are less commonly used terms explained? Are **ALL** acronyms spelled out with the first use in the paper as well as in the abstract? Is the use of jargon and current expressions in vogue minimized?

If visual aids were used in the oral presentation, are they needed in the written paper or were they used only to focus the attention of listeners? Do they convert well to tables and figures? Are they labeled to be self-explanatory? Is the textual commentary adequate?

Is the literature search thorough and current? Are the references adequate, complete, and accurate, and in the correct style for the publication to which the paper is being submitted?

- Are the references cited in the text?
- Are transitions between sections smooth and logical?
- Avoid the use of "I," "me," "us," and "we" when possible.
- Avoid "our" in reference to the author's own library, hospital, or program; use "the" or "this" instead.
- Avoid reference to individuals by personal name; use the person's full name and title instead.
- Avoid use of the passive voice.

Converting Presentation to Paper

1. Review the paper as it was prepared for oral delivery, evaluating:

- purpose
- appropriateness for audience
- completeness

- flow of content
- writing style

2. Make sure the manuscript covers:

- objectives
- context and background
- methodology
- resulting data
- conclusions

3. Examine the most recent instructions to authors of the journal to which the paper will be submitted.

4. Revise and expand the paper as needed.

5. Ask one or two colleagues to critique the revised paper. Select people who did not hear the original presentation and who represent the primary audience you wish to reach.

6. Revise again.

7. Submit for [publication review](#).

These guidelines were originally prepared by Dottie Eakin, FMLA, and other members of the Consulting Editors Panel, the Editorial Committee, and the Editorial Board.