



## DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY MEDICINE Presentation Guidelines

Avoid common errors when presenting research:

- Avoid using long complicated words to impress people—it doesn't!
- Avoid spurious accuracy.
- Percentages: if there are less than 100 in the sample, don't give decimal places: 7 out of 11 is 64%, not 63.64%!
- Statistical values should only be quoted to 2 places, eg.  $P < 0.05$ ;  $r = 0.94$
- Give subject ages as mean (to one decimal place) and range, not standard deviation, for example: mean 43.1 years, range 29-68 (easy to understand) mean 43.148 years, s.d. 7.415 (hard to understand)
- When drawing charts, don't let a computer design crazy scales for you, eg. 2.19, 5.38, 7.57 ...
- Don't assume that everyone reading or listening to your paper is an expert in the field—make it clear enough for students, and for people from other disciplines.
- Understand that there may still be a real difference between two groups, even if the statistical test fails to support it (eg. Because the sample was too small).
- Also understand that a statistically significant result may have no practical significance in the real world.
- Whether it is a written paper, an oral presentation or a poster, have someone else review it before you go public!

### Oral Presentations: Planning & Preparation

- Don't simply read a paper that would be suitable for publication—an oral presentation is a totally different medium which requires a totally different approach.
- One picture is worth a thousand words.
- Humour is useful within limits—it can make a talk more interesting, but must not distract the audience from what you are trying to say. Sometimes a relevant cartoon will help get a point across, but a long irrelevant joke will detract from the talk.
- Avoid irrelevant sides—nature scenes, glamour pictures, etc. They may wake the audience up, but they may also distract or offend.
- Use only images that are licensed!
- Unless you are very experienced, do a dry run for timing. It is better to make it too short than too long—leave them begging for more, not begging you to stop!



- Look through the slides after loading the magazine, to make sure none are backwards or upside down.

### Speaking—General Pointers

- Make a point of studying the technique of other speakers when you go to meetings—learn from both their good and their bad points.
- Preferably, talk off the cuff, using the slides as notes. If you can't do this, use notes on file cards. If you are too frightened and must use a script, write it as a speech, not as a written paper.
- If you are using notes or a script, make sure there is enough light to read. If not, try and get a reading light of some sort.
- Find out how to use the pointer and control the slides before you go up to give the talk.
- Look at each slide as it goes up on the screen—don't just plough ahead, oblivious of projection problems.
- Talk to the audience, not to the screen or your notes.
- Make sure you can be heard—allow for the deaf person in the back row! If using a microphone, stay about 12 inches from it and talk normally—don't either stray away from it, or talk too closely into it.
- Point to relevant items on the slides. This is difficult if you are reading from a script or heavily dependent on notes.
- What is on the screen must relate to what you are talking about—if you want to talk about something different, you need another slide.
- Conversely, don't put things on the slide that you don't intend to talk about—make a simpler slide. Busy slides are a disaster!
- Stick to the time limit. No matter how interesting it may be, you will lose your audience's attention if you over-run significantly. Rule of thumb—Average one slide per minute, so for a ten minute talk use ten slides (maybe eleven or twelve), but certainly not fifteen, twenty or more!
- Tell your audience clearly when you have finished. Don't say "Well, that's about it.." or "any questions?"
- Thank them for their attention and wait for the applause!

### Projection & Slides

- Always look at the screen to make sure the image is satisfactory.
- Don't block the projector beam.
- Don't block the audience's view.



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