

## **On Submitting Abstracts to the Education Section for Combined Sections Meeting**

There are three types of abstracts that are acceptable for submission to the Education Section for the Combined Sections Meeting: Research Reports, Special Interest Reports and Theory Reports. For each type of report, the Research Committee is looking for particular features of the submitted abstract. Here are some guidelines for each type of submission:

### **Research Reports**

Research reports are presentations of author(s)' original data or findings. Any established research format, including experimental and nonexperimental designs, may be used (eg, case studies, clinical trials, descriptive studies, single-subject designs, qualitative methods, etc).

Abstracts for research reports should include a complete description of the:

- Introduction – provide a rationale for the study which demonstrates that the author(s) understands the related literature and can clearly delineate why this study was done. This may include a hypothesis if appropriate.
- Methods (including statistics used if appropriate) - it must be clear that the methods are appropriately rigorous and that appropriate statistical tests have been used for quantitative designs. For qualitative designs, data analysis and interpretation processes must be described so that rigor can be assessed.
- Results – include a clear report (including statistical significance if appropriate) of the outcomes or findings of the study
- Conclusions/Significance – places this study in the context of other related studies and/or current theoretical discourse

### **Special Interest Reports**

Special interest reports are presentations of **unique** and **innovative** concepts, ideas, devices, or approaches to meet the special needs of physical therapy education. Ways in which these reports can be expressed include case reports, case studies, and reports of projects. Emphasis should be on the unique and innovative nature of the concept or idea presented. All special interest reports must contain **some evidence of effectiveness**. This does not require the rigor of a research report, but there needs to be a clear statement of how the effectiveness of the concept, idea, device or approach was evaluated. Reports that are limited to a "proposed" idea, concept, device or product are not appropriate for submission and will not be considered for presentation. There needs to be a clear indication that this work was reviewed by colleagues who agree on the innovative nature of the work.

### **Theory Reports**

Theory reports are presentations of a theory, idea, concept, or model that describes a foundation for the practice of physical therapy education. "Theory is a general, abstract body of interrelated principles, concepts, and constructs that present a systematic, scientifically acceptable view of phenomena. Theory is conjecture that is inferred from a set of logical propositions that, in turn, are based on empirically derived evidence. Acceptable

scientific theory is internally consistent, empirically testable, parsimonious, and congruous with existing knowledge. Theory also should be important scientifically." (Krebs DE, Harris SR, Herdman SJ, Michels E. Theory in physical therapy. Phys Ther. 1986;66:661-662.). This is perhaps the most challenging of the categories of abstract submission. Reports of rigorous qualitative research completed using a grounded theory approach may be appropriate for this category. Again, there should be a clear indication that any work presented in this category was reviewed by colleagues who agree on the innovative nature of the work.

### **Some Additional Musings On Abstract Submission**

Let me be clear. If you happen to have a new teaching method, we welcome the opportunity to review your presentation of this new method. However often what we too often see is that a new faculty member may be unaware that what they feel is a new idea, in fact, has been around for a long time. This is why it is important to discuss your submission with more experienced colleagues to see if they agree that it is really new and unique. In addition you need to show that the idea is effective. Now this demonstration of effectiveness can take on the rigor of a research study and be submitted as a research abstract, or it can be a less rigorous assessment and be submitted as a special interest report. But some measure of effectiveness must be there.

If you are considering a qualitative design and you are not experienced in this type of research, you should consult or collaborate with someone who has experience with the use of qualitative methods. Qualitative research is a lot more rigorous than many give it credit.

In any research study, the investigator should make sure that the assessment methods used match the hypothesis or research question being posed. The selection of the measurements to be used is critical to the development of a research study that will result in the submission of a successful abstract. Very often we have seen that the sole outcome measure of the effectiveness of a particular teaching intervention is student receptiveness to a teaching intervention. Let me make this perfectly clear. Student perception of a teaching method is **NOT** a sufficient sole outcome measure for a research abstract. If student perceptions are used as a measure of effectiveness, they **MUST** be accompanied by other measures of effectiveness.

In conclusion, if you are interested in developing a study for eventual submission as an abstract to the Education Section, and you have questions, they can be addressed to me or other members of the Section Research Committee. The members of the Research Committee and I are very interested in developing a stronger evidence base for the practice of physical therapy education. Therefore, we are very interested in helping you in your scholarly activities. So, please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss with me your ideas.

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