Purpose, Academics, & Writing

Clifford C. Sheckter, MD
Assistant Professor of Surgery
Stanford University
Director, Regional Burn Center
Santa Clara Valley Medical Center
No disclosures
Ikigai
A JAPANESE CONCEPT MEANING “A REASON FOR BEING”

What you LOVE
What you are GOOD AT
What the world NEEDS
What you can be PAID FOR

Ikigai
Satisfaction, but feeling of uselessness
Delight and fullness, but no wealth
Comfortable, but feeling of emptiness
Excitement and complacency, but sense of uncertainty

PASSION
MISSION
PROFESSION
VOCATION

SOURCE: dreamstime
TORONTO STAR GRAPHIC
What does it mean to be an academic?
Surgeon

Educator

Academic

Writer (investigator, thought leader)
There is no cure for agraphia.

-MTL
Outline

• Strategies for writing
  • Deliberate writing
  • Writer’s block
  • Power of iteration
  • Best practices for academic writing
• Anatomy of a manuscript
• Strategies in publishing
Write deliberately
Do the references last

Breast Reconstruction After Mastectomy

Clifford C Sheckter, Gordon K Lee

Breast Reconstruction as Right

Breast reconstruction following mastectomy was legislated as a right in the United States following Passage of the Women’s Health and Cancer Rights Act (WHRCA) in 1998(**). Since that time, the evolution of breast cancer treatment and surgical innovations have led to significant advancements the effectiveness and safety of reconstructive breast surgery. A growing body of literature supports improvements in patient-reported outcomes and well being after mastectomy (**), and nearly 40%(***) of women will undergo reconstruction following mastectomy. Today, there are few—if any—contraindications to reconstruction (**), as even women with advanced disease are eligible for restorative surgery following mastectomy.
Rapid Outline Generation for Your Trainee

**Introduction** (3-4 paragraphs, no more than 1-1.5 pages)

- Burn patients get cold easier and being cold is a problem. Single institution data on cold is bad in burn
- Burn mortality remains problem despite modern critical care and early burn excision.
- Can't change TBSA and age. **BUT**, Modifiable risks factors are of interest because these can be intervened.
- Temperature is possible modifiable risk factor. Temp can be altered with various means including heat shield, bair hugger, zoll catheter, etc.
- Need to better characterize the effects of temp on mortality and hospital course using national data.
Writer’s Block

GOOD LUCK WITH THE SECOND SENTENCE.
Know Your Circadian Rhythm
Work expands to fill the time allotted for its completion
–Cyril Parkinson
Maybe you don’t actually know what to write?

• Take a walk, run, ride
• Talk in the shower
• Drink a glass of wine (or whiskey → Nicole Gibran)
  • I condemn substance abuse and alcohol misuse
• Talk with mentor
• Talk with friends, family, non-medical person
• Dictate your first draft (car, bathroom, etc.)
• Chat GPT (must disclose in paper if you used)
• Read
  • Don’t write, read, write, read
Strategies for Writing

• Fail fast. Fail often. Fail forward
  • John Maxwell
• The power of iteration
• Don’t get out of your chair without a draft
Best Practices

• Active Voice
  • The association between VTE and COVID was uncovered by our investigation...

• Verbs!!!
  • Avoid helping verbs

• Avoid gratuitous adjectives
  • Very, extremely, really, large

• Avoid long sentences

• Vary sentences

• Use –
Outline

• Strategies for writing
  • Deliberate writing
  • Writer’s block
  • Power of iteration
  • Best practices for academic writing

• Anatomy of a manuscript

• Strategies in publishing
Anatomy of Manuscript

- Methods
- Results

What to write first?
- Divide and conquer

Introduction
- Discussion
- Conclusion

NOTE: Abstract, Tables/Figures are the most important parts of an article
Anatomy of a Manuscript—Methods

- Database
- Outcomes
- Covariates
- Model
- Sensitivity analysis

NOTE: reproducibility key. How did you do it?
Anatomy of a Manuscript—Results

• Keep your answer specific and relevant to research hypotheses
• Other relevant information about study sample
• Data resulting from study should be presented from broad to specific
• Tables and figures should be discussed but not repeated in text
• An ideal paper's results could be distilled into one table or figure and discussed in one page.

NOTHING MATTERS MORE THAN YOUR FIGURES
From: Association of Structural Fires in New York City With Inequities in Safe Heating for Immigrant Communities

Anatomy of a Manuscript—Introduction

• Introduction (1-1.5 pages, MAX)

• 3 Paragraphs

  • Introduction to topic-avoid a summary of what everyone already knows
    • 1\textsuperscript{st} sentence or 2-will keep or lose the readers interest

  • What specific aspect of the clinical problem you will address

• Explicit statement of a study \textit{hypothesis}
Anatomy of a Manuscript—Discussion

• The most difficult piece to write and least reproducible
• Do NOT redo the introduction
• DO jump straight to your biggest finding in the first paragraph, which should address your primary hypothesis
• Remaining paragraphs are each unique insights about your findings vis-à-vis existing literature
• Limitations and future studies
• Brief conclusion
Abstract

• Varies by journal
• 2 sentence max intro
• Clean methods with primary outcome/hypothesis
• Results are meat of abstract. Focus on primary outcome
• Conclusion is what most people will read. Keep it honest. Keep it within the context of your study
Revising a Manuscript

Be respectful but not over the top in response letter

Treat the cover letter as literature and not just a list of comments and questions to be addressed

Answer every question

Submit rejections ASAP
Continued

Do not repeatedly thank everyone for great suggestions.

Avoid too many “respectfully disagrees”

OK to disagree with reviewer but need to explain why - back up with references, preferably from the journal you are submitting to.
Writing is like a sport. If you don’t practice, you don’t get any better.

Rick Riordan