

# Successful Abstract Submission Involves Some Art, More Science

**S**HAKESPEARE wrote in *Hamlet* that brevity is the soul of wit. His description is also apt for the art of submitting abstracts for the RSNA annual meeting.

The abstract submission process, which opens in January each year, attracts thousands of studies from intrepid authors around the world. Regardless of how well-executed the study or how compelling the science, an abstract that isn't complete or well-prepared has diminished chances of being accepted.

"We're looking for completed research that has a sound, scientific methodology and that clearly presents its results and conclusions," said Gerald D. Dodd III, M.D., professor and chair of the Department of Radiology at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. As chair of the RSNA Scientific Program Committee, Dr. Dodd oversees the hundreds of volunteers who review submitted abstracts and decide which should be accepted for presentation at the annual meeting.

Submissions for the RSNA annual meeting fall into two broad categories—science or education. Scientific papers present completed hypothesis-driven research or report the ongoing research of emerging ideas. Education exhibits are designed to teach or review radiologic signs, pathologic correlations, procedures, techniques, treatments and interventions related to the practice of imaging.

Regardless of the category, the submitted abstract should provide a brief summary of each of the main sections

of the paper, including the statement of purpose or hypothesis, materials and methods, results and conclusion.

## Hypothesis-Driven Research Sought

The abstract's statement of purpose presents the goals of the research. The hypothesis being tested or procedure being evaluated should be clearly and concisely stated, said Robert M. Quencer, M.D., chair of the Department of Radiology at the University of Miami.

"Sometimes we get abstracts that have no well-defined purpose at all, or they only say, 'we are going to compare X and Y,' without explaining what the significance of doing so may be," said Dr. Quencer, who will become chair of the Scientific Program Committee for RSNA 2008. "Abstracts should be hypothesis-driven."

RSNA asks authors to briefly sum up a study's clinical significance as well. "We're looking for new information, new research that changes the



**Robert M. Quencer, M.D.**  
University of Miami

study and resubmit it, it should present new data."

Added Dr. Quencer, "What is important is demonstrating the reproducibility of the findings."

The methods and materials section of the abstract should specify exact figures regarding the study population and

the method of sample collection. A common mistake made by researchers is what Dr. Dodd called a "promissory note," where the author has not yet actually done the research, but instead explains what they will be doing.

"That's a surefire way to get rejected," Dr. Dodd said.

Though there is no minimum sample number, both Drs. Quencer and Dodd agreed that single case reports are not usually accepted. However, if the research is particularly novel or compelling, studies with a small number of cases may be considered, they said.

### ■ The deadline for abstract submission is April 15, 2007.

Please note that the deadline has been changed to **NOON Central Standard Time**, 12 hours earlier than in previous years.

Submitters will be notified in late June about the status of abstracts submitted for education exhibits and in late July about those submitted for scientific papers and posters.



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clinical practice," said Dr. Dodd.

Abstracts that only reiterate established knowledge probably won't be accepted, he said. On the other hand, larger studies that validate a previous initial observation may have scientific value, he said.

"However," he warned, "If someone is going to enlarge their previous



Education exhibits, such as the hard copy ones seen here at RSNA 2006, are designed to teach or review radiologic signs, procedures and other fundamentals of imaging practice.

The final sections of the abstract, the results and conclusion, should draw on the clinical significance of the study and directly follow the research goals given in the hypothesis.

### Writing Should Be Same Quality as Research

A successful abstract is as well-written as it is complete, said Drs. Quencer and Dodd. Abstracts are generally 250-300 words, so clarity and economy are important. Authors whose native language is not English, said Dr. Quencer, may want to seek assistance from someone who is facile with the language.

The path to a complete and well-written abstract, said Dr. Dodd, begins

before the research is finished. He encourages residents to choose research that asks meaningful scientific questions and maintains the importance of reporting positive results. "Studies that report negative results are generally not well-received," he said.

"Know your field well and know what has been written before so you are not redundant," Dr. Dodd concluded. His checklist for a good abstract: sound science, well-written and novel research that will impact clinical care.

"If you cover those bases, your chances of getting accepted are good," Dr. Dodd said.

### 5 Keys to Successful Abstract Submission

- 1 Plan ahead.** Because the volume of submissions increases as the deadline nears, RSNA cannot guarantee technical support for individuals who wait until almost April 15 to submit their abstracts.
- 2 Know your topic.** A full awareness of what exists in the literature helps you avoid being redundant.
- 3 Follow the directions.** Read carefully to make sure you are providing requested information in the requisite format.
- 4 Be clear and concise.** The abstract's statement of purpose should leave the reader with no doubt about the goals of the research.
- 5 Describe the clinical significance.** Reviewers are looking for research that moves the specialty forward, rather than just reiterates established knowledge.

### RSNA.org/abstracts

Additional information about abstract submission can be obtained by contacting RSNA at 1-877-776-2227 within the U.S. or 1-630-590-7774 outside the U.S.



### Education Exhibit Awards

RSNA presents education exhibit awards to recognize educational content and design excellence. An anonymous panel appointed by the RSNA Board of Directors judges the educational content of abstracts accepted for presentation at the annual meeting.

For design excellence awards, the Education Exhibits Committee uses RSNA criteria to determine how visually pleasing exhibits are and how well the information can be assimilated in a relatively short time.

Award winners are announced Wednesday afternoon during the annual meeting, before the Annual Oration in Radiation Oncology. Signs are also posted on the award-winning exhibits and a list of winners is published in the Thursday edition of the *Daily Bulletin*, the official newspaper of the RSNA annual meeting. See the RSNA 2006 winners at [RSNA.org/bulletin](http://RSNA.org/bulletin).

