



HIV/STI Surveillance Research Center, and
WHO Collaborating Center for HIV Surveillance



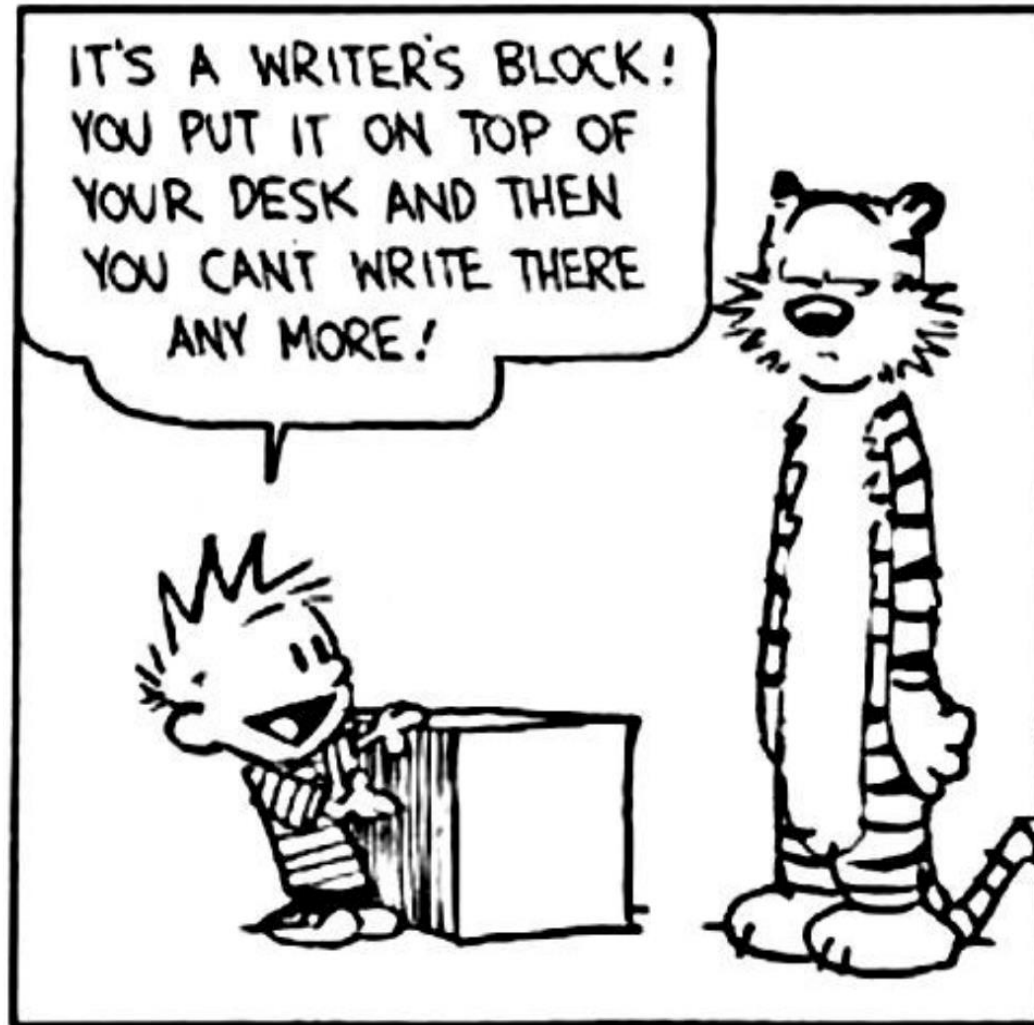
Some Practical Tips to Succeed in Publication

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Writer's block



Why are you here?

What you hope to have achieved after this workshop?

1. Writing skills: easier, faster, more organized, grammar, consistency of manuscript, scientific and attractive
2. Reducing likelihood of rejection
3. Tricks of article writing more easily
4. Training others
5. Editorial issues
6. Publishing in high IF journals

Understand the process of medical publication

What would you consider as the key determinant of getting your paper into the target journal?

- Research idea
- Team, research organisation
- Analysis
- **Message**
- Paper
- Peer-reviewers
- **Journal editor!**

The message determines everything else

- Imagine you want to excite a friend about your work
- How do you tell them in a sentence what your study has shown?
- Think of the EDITOR!

Step 1: Define the key message of your paper

Your message

- You have no clear message? Perhaps not ready for writing a paper
- You have more than one message? Which one is the most important one? Do you need more than one paper?

Step 2: Select your target journal(s)

- Time?
- Impact factor?
- Likelihood of acceptance?
- Specific area of interest to journal? How to investigate?
- Website searches: jane.biosemantics.org

Step 3: Agree on authorship

Who is an author?

The ICMJE (<http://www.icmje.org>) recommends that authorship be based on the following 4 criteria:

- *Substantial contributions* to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND
- Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND
- Final approval of the version to be published; AND
- Agreement *to be accountable for all aspects of the work* in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

In which order?

- **First author:** the person who has carried out a majority of the work
- **Senior author** (typically the last): individuals who “generally direct, oversee, and guarantee the authenticity of the work reported” and “implicitly take responsibility for the work's scientific accuracy, valid methodology, analysis, and conclusions”
- **Corresponding author** (typically the first or last): takes primary responsibility for communication with the journal during the manuscript submission, peer review, and publication process, and typically ensures that all the journal’s administrative requirements, such as providing details of authorship, gathering conflict of interest forms and statements, are properly completed, although these duties may be delegated to one or more co-authors.
- **“Middle” or “contributing” authors:** ordering should reflect their relative contribution to the work, in descending order.

Draft and track a writing schedule

- Communicate early!
- Document communication and agreements!
- Plan and revise throughout the course of paper writing and submission

Step 3: Develop a journal and paper-specific structure
for your paper



10 tips for more success

Tip #1: Write to the message, not the topic

- Focus on the 1 most important finding
- Find your message as soon as you can
- It should already be there:
 - The main objective, aim, question answered, central hypothesis of your study



Tip #1: Write to the message, not the topic

- The task is not to show you know everything about the topic
 - Not a dissertation
- Rather, that you have one clear message that adds to the topic
- A clear message increases your paper's chance of acceptance by a journal

How busy editors judge a manuscript

- They look for one clear message
- Make it very clear in 4 places!
 1. **Title:** Message anticipated in the title
 2. **Abstract:** Message is the final sentence
 3. **First sentence of Discussion:** Some only read this
 4. **Cover letter to the editor:** Boast a little!
- Extra tip: keep it ≤ 22 words
- Less is more!

Tip #1: Write to the message, not the topic

- **Say your message in ≤ 22 words**
- **The Elevator Test**

The Elevator Test



- You get into the elevator with your boss. She asks:

“Oh, hi... Didn’t you help with some study in Iran?”
- You have one minute before she gets off on her floor.
- Give her the message of your study in one minute.
- In 22 words or fewer!

Example of The Elevator Test

- **Yeah, that study was cool!**
- **We surveyed HBV infection in PWID arrested in Tehran.**
- **Prevalence was 45%, and vaccination was nil.**
- **Iran needs to vaccinate this population.**
- **22 words**



Example of The Elevator Test

- In one sentence?
- Government-trained peers providing rapid HIV testing and case management increased new diagnoses and linkage to care for HIV-positive PWID in Iran.
- 21 Words



Class participation: The Elevator Test

- What did you find in your study? (≤ 22 words)



Evaluator Speech Template

We studied “what” in/among “who”
in “where /when”. We found “what”.
Our findings show/indicate/suggest
“what”.

22 words

Tip #2: Know where you are going and work backwards



Sections of a Research Paper

- 1. Abstract**
- 2. Introduction**
- 3. Methods**
- 4. Results**
- 5. Discussion**
- 6. References**
- 7. Tables and Figures**

Recommended order for writing (Willi order)

- 1. 3 Tables and 1 Figure**
- 2. Results**
- 3. Discussion**
- 4. Introduction**
- 5. Methods**
- 6. Abstract**
- 7. References**

Order of writing: Willi's Way

1. 3 tables and 1 figure

- Tells the facts of the story in numbers



Order of writing: Willi's Way

2. Results

- Tells the important facts in words
- Follow the order of data within the tables and figures

3. Discussion

- Tells the meaning of the facts (hint: the message)
- Answers the question you will ask in the Introduction

4. Introduction

- Asks the question...
- ...that you already answered!

Big picture: what is known

Specific issue: what is known

Gap: what is not known

Ask

?

Answer

Gap filled: new knowledge

Specific issue: compare to other studies

Big picture: what to do next

Introduction

Discussion

Order of writing: Willi's Way

5. Methods

- How you got to the message
- No more, no less

Are the Methods a recipe?

- Can a reader reproduce your study by reading the Methods?

Easy as Pizza !

- **Maybe:**
 - If they expert in your field
 - And have done similar studies
- **The Methods section is not a protocol**



Order of writing: Willi's Way

6. Abstract

- Use what is already written (falls into place)

7. References

- Demonstrate you know an important question (not that you know everything)

Tip #3: Follow directions!

- Get “Instructions to Authors” and do exactly what they say
- Vancouver guidelines default
- Don't be *weird!*
(e.g., one font size, type, no color, footnotes, extra doodads...)
- Follow a template publication from the journal



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Original Articles	Case Records of the Massachusetts General HealthCare Nucleus
The Limited Role of Cholesterol in Human Atherogenesis 670 K. PAPER AND F.L. LEWIS	A 43-Year-Old with Persistent Fever and Rash after Three Years of Service on the Planetary Shuttle 694
Percutaneous Vascularoscopic Aortic-Valve Replacement 675 R.E. HARRIS AND OTHERS	Editorial
The Framingham Study: Survival of Fourth-Generation Males Following the Framingham Diet, as Compared with Control Males 680 A.S. JONES AND OTHERS	Is It Ethical to Program Aging into Replacement Bioprostheses? 696 A.L. WARRER
DNA Probes for the Detection of Infections in the Outpatient Clinic 682 M.D. RAWLAND AND OTHERS	Sounding Board
Comparison of Neurologic Complications of Several Human Immunodeficiency Virus Vaccines 683 H.J. BLONDEL AND R.W. WU	The Resurrection of Private Practice and Its Implications for the Future of American Otolaryngology 701 D. HARRIS
Brief Report: Earthquake Aftermath — Cholera in Coastal California 685 J.P. BUCK AND OTHERS	Correspondence
Review Article	Legacy of the Clinton-Era Health Care Reform ... 702
Current Concepts: Medical Illnesses Caused by Ozone-Layer Depletion 688 M.H. GROSSBERG AND OTHERS	The Dubious Ethics of Gene-Splice Surgery ... 702
Clinical Problem-Solving	Why the Government Should Stop Making Pharmaceuticals 704
A Patient with Unexplained Radiation Sickness 691 R.M. BERNARD AND P.M. BAYLER	A Day at the Beach and Cancer 705
Information for Authors 708	Silicon-Book Reviews: Manual of Medical Therapeutics, 56th Ed., on Chip for the Docman 706

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Follow any special directions

**Specific guidelines for different types of studies
(some journals require)**

Study type	Reporting guideline
Randomized controlled trial	CONSORT
Systematic review	PRISMA
Observational study	STROBE
Meta-analysis of observational studies	MOOSE
Diagnostic accuracy studies	STARD

Tip #4:

4

4x4 template (WOW)



1. Introduction

1. Big Picture
2. Specific Issue
3. Gap in knowledge
4. How we fill the gap

2. Methods

1. Overall study design
2. Study subjects, sampling, recruitment
3. Measures
4. Analysis

3. Results

1. Trust me
2. Cool measures
3. No tricks
4. It's solid

4. Discussion

1. Mission accomplished!
2. Not only that...
3. Limitations
4. Conclusion

Also rule of 4: 3 tables and 1 figure

Tables

Table 1. Baseline characteristics of study participants

Characteristics	Study Participants, No. (%)	
	Intervention (n=55)	Control (n=48)
Age		
18-24	9 (16)	18 (38)
25-34	27 (49)	21 (44)
35+	19 (35)	9 (19)
Mean (SD)	32.5 (10.1)	28.9 (8.4)
Sex		
MSM	53 (96)	39 (81)
Transwoman	2 (4)	9 (19)
Current Marital Status		
Single	20 (36)	23 (48)
In relationship but not living together	15 (27)	6 (13)
Married/living with partner	19 (35)	19 (40)
Widowed	1 (2)	0 (0)
Educational Attainment		
Primary or less	13 (24)	6 (13)
Some or completed secondary	33 (60)	35 (73)
College, university, Technikon	9 (16)	7 (15)
Able to read and write		
No	9 (16)	3 (6)
Yes	46 (84)	45 (94)
Income		
R0-R1199	31 (57)	33 (69)
R1200-R2499	10 (19)	5 (10)
R2500-R9999	13 (24)	10 (21)
Experienced HIV stigma		
No	35 (65)	27 (56)
Yes	19 (35)	21 (44)
Number of clinic visits in past 12 months, Median (IQR)	4 (10)	5 (10)
Disclosed HIV status to anyone outside of clinic		
No	18 (34)	17 (36)
Yes	35 (66)	30 (64)
Years since HIV diagnosed, Mean (SD)	1.9 (3.2)	2.1 (2.8)
Antiretroviral therapy (ART)		
Ever received	33 (64)	21 (47)
Currently using	33 (64)	21 (47)
Years since ART started, Mean (SD)	2.3 (2.6)	1.7 (2.1)
Adherence to ART	25 (46)	19 (40)
Virally suppressed (<1000 copies/ml)		
No	36 (67)	23 (48)
Yes	18 (33)	25 (52)

* % are in columns

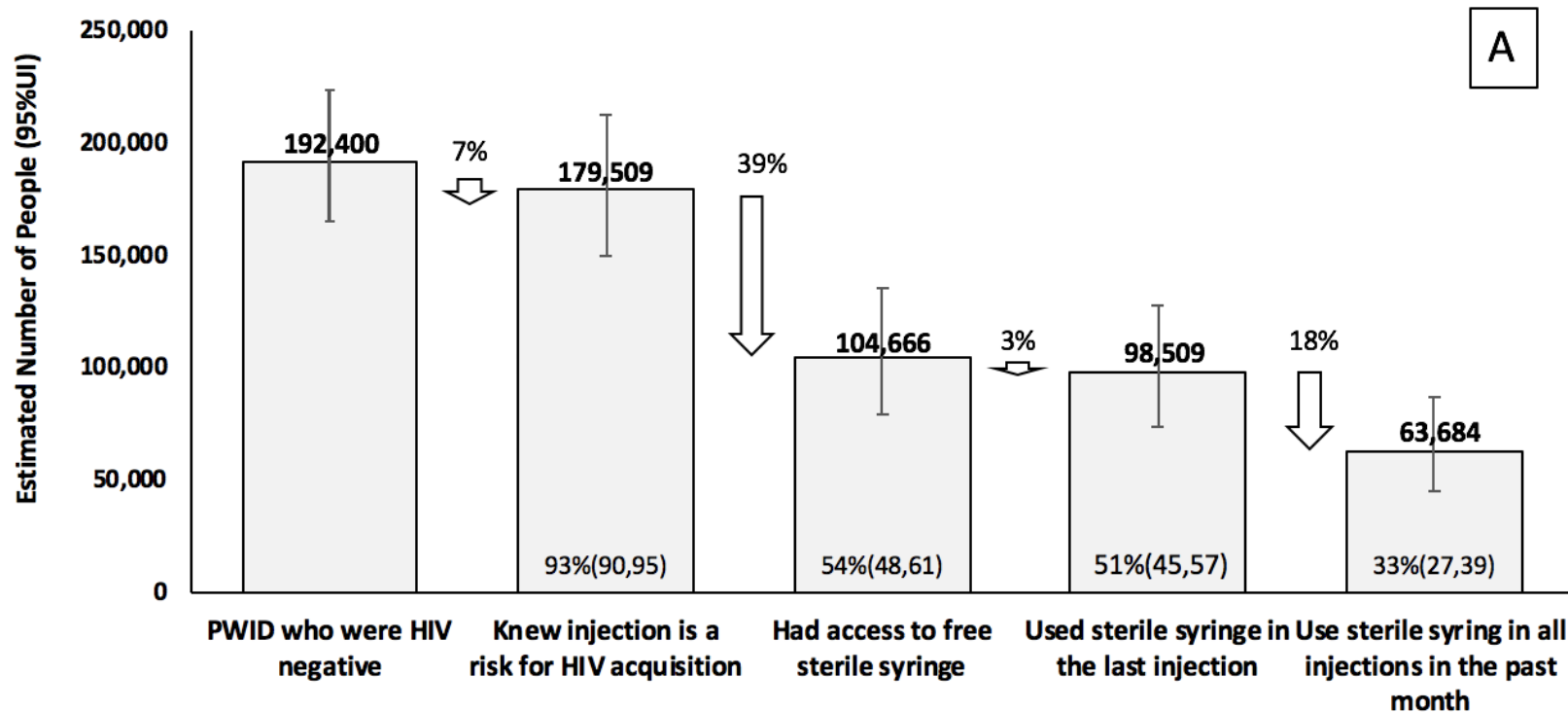


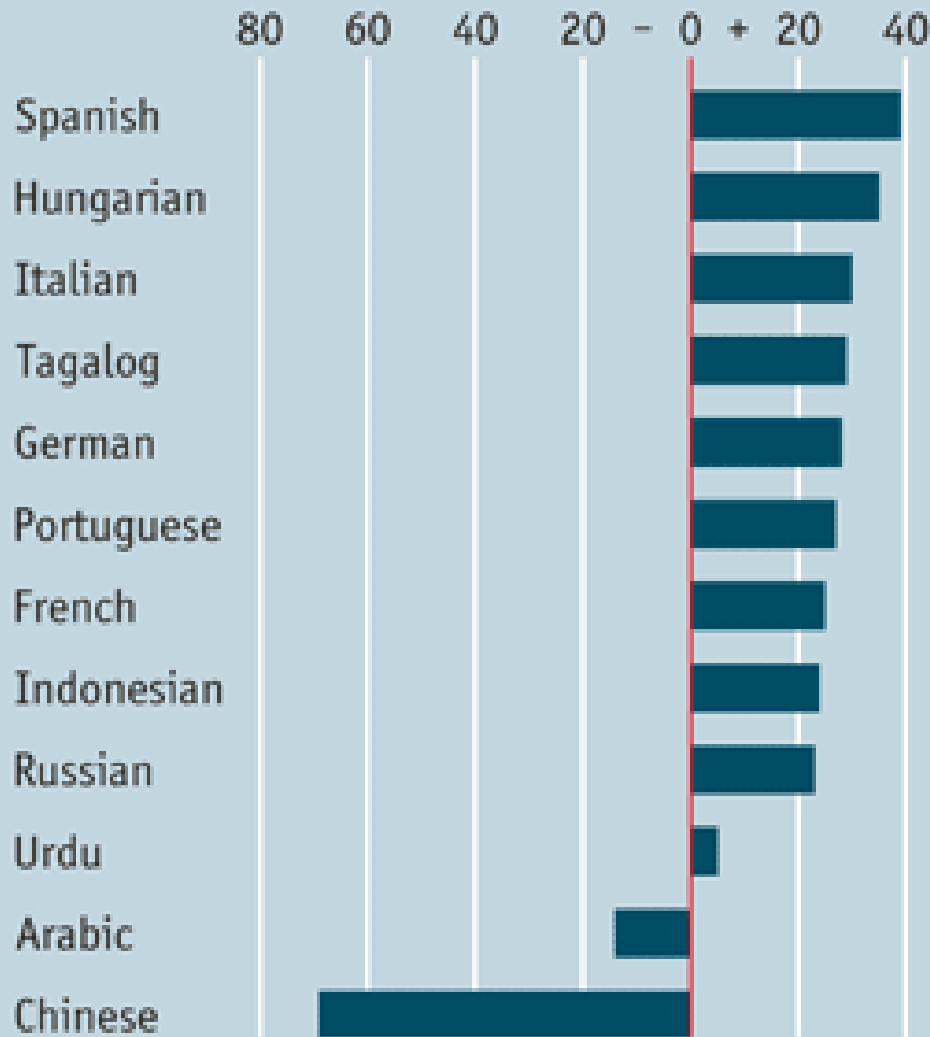
Figure 1. HIV prevention cascade for safe injection (A) and sex (B) among people who inject drugs (PWID) in Iran. In all figures, the denominator for all % is the estimated number of people for the first column. UI: 95% Uncertainty Intervals.

More tips to move forward and get published

- **Tip #5: Only write on a topic that you are interested in**
- **Tip #6: Internal peer review**

Character study

Change in length when translating 1,000 characters (including spaces) of English text, %



Source: Today Translations, London

Tip #7: Write concisely

**Learn Chinese
or Arabic**

Tip #7: Write concisely

- **To write well is to re-write shorter**
- **Short words:** impossible to misunderstand
- **Short sentences:** 1 idea per sentence
- **Short paragraphs:** 1 topic per paragraph
- **Short publications:** 1 message per paper



Write the paper in as few words as possible

- Too many points, too many targets for reviewers!
- Best way to communicate a message
- Easier for an editor to accept one more short paper

But! Beware of salami



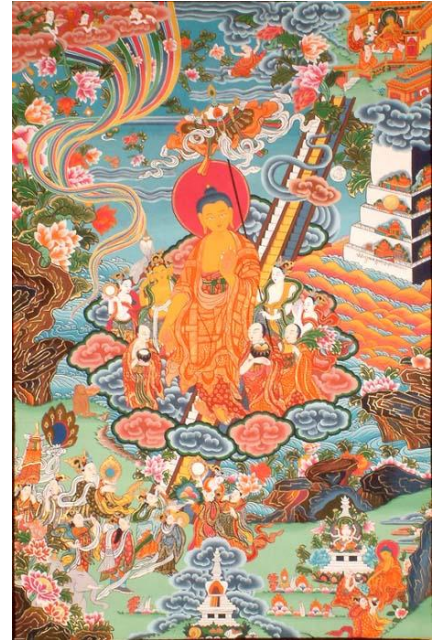
Tip #8: To move forward, retreat!

- Retreat from daily work
- Peer review
- Peer pressure
- Structured course
 - Step by step
 - Template paper
 - Capacity-building
 - Follow-up



Tip #9: Remember why you are publishing:

- Ethical obligation to your participants
- Moral obligation to your country
- Greatest impact on health: advocacy, policy, programs, address disparities
- Contribute to pool of knowledge
- Inspire new research
- Corroborate, refute, modify past research
- **Moral duty to publish if you engage in research**



Tip #9: Remember why you are publishing

- **Publish or die!**
- **Self-promotion**
- **To really understand your topic**
- **Documents ideas are yours**
- **Documents your productivity**
- **Builds your reputation as an expert**
- **Future grant applications**
- **Promotion, builds your career: “Publish or perish”**
- **The “currency” of research**

Publications: The Currency of Research



Tip #10: Don't get discouraged!



Publication Records

- **#? accepted papers**
- **#? Rejections**
- **#? criticisms from peers ☹️**
- **Oldest data still published?**
- **#? Of most rejections before finally published?**
- **Fastest rejection?**

Reasons for fast rejection?

- Unclear message
- Did not follow instructions
- Clear ethical problems (**plagiarism**)
- Outside scope of journal (read instructions!)
- Methodological weakness (e.g., small N)
- Statistical analysis lacking
- Nothing new

Overriding the Way of Willi

- Whatever your mentor or boss tells you to do
- Whatever the “Instructions to Authors” say to do
- Whatever reviewers say to do
- Norms of your field (e.g., biomedical vs. social science)
- Type of publication (e.g., qualitative vs. quantitative)
- Whatever works for you (especially if you are “on a roll”)

Final tip: end on a Kumbaya



We made it to the summit!



Resources

<http://globalhealthsciences.ucsf.edu/resources/writing-scientific-manuscript>

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Education

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Writing a Scientific Manuscript

This course will walk you through the steps necessary to draft, finalize, and submit a Scientific Manuscript for publication. Prior to starting this course students should have collected and analyzed their data as well as completed working tables. Please note that the content of this course is best suited for quantitative studies to be published in biomedical journals.

We recommend you complete the course in the order listed below.

1. [Tables and Figures](#)

The purpose of Tables and figures is to present data that cannot be adequately captured in text in a comprehensive and organized manner. In this lesson, we'll address the basic types of tables and figures and learn how to use them in a scientific manuscript.

2. [Results](#)

The purpose of the Results section is to objectively describe the main findings of the study. In this lesson, we'll describe how to write your Results section. We will also explore representative examples of the Results section from the literature to help you identify and apply the basic parts of an organized and comprehensive Results section.

3. [Methods](#)

The purpose of the Methods section is to describe how you did the study including a description of the study design, sampling, measurements, and data analysis to allow the reader to critically

RESOURCES

[Bay Area Global Health Newsletter](#)

[Global Research Projects Database](#)

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Thank you

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