

MicroResearch Writing Workshop Report

Maternal Newborn Child Health Institute
Mbarara University of Science Technology (MUST)
Dalhousie University/ IWK Health Centre



February 8 - 9, 2020



BACKGROUND

In follow up to the formal five-day writing MicroResearch Writing Workshop held at MUST in June 2019, a two-day compressed MR Writing Workshop was developed and piloted at MUST in February 2020. The purpose of this workshop was to provide hands-on experience for MicroResearch workshop graduates and others professionals involved in research to enhance their technical writing skills using their project and data. The format was modelled on lessons from the 2019 workshop, with a number of modifications. Each participant was required to come to the workshop with a developed project and data, although their study did not need to have been completed at that stage. The workshop was focused on adult learning principles.

MICRORESEARCH WRITING WORKSHOP

MicroResearch Writing Workshop Facilitators

The two facilitators, Noni MacDonald and Shawna O’Hearn, are experienced facilitators with the MicroResearch program from Dalhousie University. They brought extensive writing, editorial and reviewer experience to the workshop. Louisa Horne, a business consultant in strategy, leadership and education facilitated on the second day and presented the certificates with Jerome Kabakyenga, the Director of the MUST Maternal Newborn Child Health Institute.

Objectives

The objectives for this MR Writing Workshop were to:

1. Outline steps in development of a manuscript from research data
2. Identify the “gold nugget” in the data
3. Identify journals of interest to submit
4. Describe factors that should raise suspicion of predatory journals
5. Draft a rough outline (bullet points only) of a manuscript based on IMRaD
6. Describe next steps for writing first draft

Preparation before Workshop

Prior to the workshop, participants were made aware of the requirement to have a project and data to work on.

Participants

Fifteen (15) participants were recruited by staff at Healthy Child Uganda/Maternal Newborn Child Health Institute at MUST (see Appendix 1). MR coaches, project team members and others who had research data were encouraged to participate in the planned 1.5 day writing workshop.

Program Overview

A daily agenda was developed to meet the identified objectives and the compressed timeframe compared to the five-day version. The focus of the workshop was to facilitate participants developing a rough bullet outline for their first draft paper for their study.

Day	Schedule	Activities	
Feb 8 AM	Introductions, Objectives, Materials, Journal selection process, predatory publishing & Overview of IMRaD: Introduction Focus on Introduction/ Bkg-Questions to answer	State "gold nugget" from the research data Select appropriate journal(s) Review author instructions for each Write Draft bullet point Introduction	
PM	IMRaD: Focus on Methods-Questions to answer Class discussion on challenges	Refine bullet points for Introduction; Review with facilitator Write bullet points for methods-Check if author instructions	
Feb 9 AM	IMRaD: Focus on Results-Questions answered Authorship, Abstract & Title Define next steps to get to first draft Class discussion on challenges, lessons learned Time for writing tips	Write bullet points for results: Tell story & border and content Review with facilitator Write and refine discussion; Review with preceptor Check if author with instructions	
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Day 1

Each participant introduced their research question then were partnered with another participant to work on explaining their gold nugget (i.e. main finding of their project, justification and identifying the target audiences). Following the presentation to whole class, the facilitator and class made comments and suggestions.

The next activity was to find journals that fit their purpose using their gold nugget statement as the input to "Jane": <http://jane.biosemantics.org/>. This was a new process and elicited discussion regarding predatory journals, with an emphasis on how to recognize and avoid them.

The class worked in pairs on developing the introduction for their paper in bullet format answering the following questions: Why did we do the study? (i.e. the problem); What do we know? What don't we know? What did we do? Each group presented their findings for discussion and were offered tips on how to improve and streamline. The importance of logic and storytelling were emphasized.

The same process was used with the Methods section focusing on: What did we do? What was the design/method? Where did we do it? When did we do it? Who were the participants and how were they recruited? What were the inclusion/exclusion criteria?

Information was provided on tools used, data collection methods, data analysis, consent, REB, and funding. Each participant worked with a partner to discuss methods and presented their summary to the class for comments and discussion. The emphasis was on “telling” the story and using logic presented to the whole class.

Of note, for several projects it became obvious that more than one paper would be required for the project. The reporting continued into Day 2.

Day 2

The day began by concluding the remaining methods presentations and discussions, followed by the Results section of IMRaD. Participants worked in pairs to develop their results and covered: What did we find? Who was recruited? Who was approached but chose not to participate? How many dropped out? What were the major findings in detail – tables or figures or themes, etc.? There was also attention paid to what may have been found, but is not needed for the “gold nugget” for this paper.

The Results work was followed by an activity on developing the IMRaD discussion section. The four parts were emphasized: major findings, how do these findings compare with what is known, the limitations of the study, and the conclusions and way forward. Participants continued to work in pairs to develop the limitations and conclusion section and then presented their materials to the class.

The day concluded with a short review of how to write the abstract, developing the title and reviewing who can be author. The class was reminded of next steps to develop the first draft of the paper.

WORKSHOP EVALUATION

An assessment of the workshop was obtained using structured evaluation forms submitted anonymously with 100% (15/ 15) of participants completing the form. The scores and summary of comments from the workshop evaluation are presented in Appendix 2.

Overall the workshop received positive feedback. About half the participants felt that the workshop needed more time. The practical application using IMRaD and the team work to develop bullets for each section based upon their own project were valued learning opportunities for the participants. The concept of the gold nugget and the need for logic and a story was seen as helpful.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Administration

1. *Physical Space*

The blue shed at Healthy Child Uganda (HCU) was a good environment for teaching and for this group size, allowing teams to work together and independently but remain in the

same space. The tea available was well appreciated. On the second day, the group worked through the tea. It was not easy to get lunch close by on the weekend.

2. *Internet*

For this workshop and training, it was mandatory to have internet. Having the router from the guesthouse worked well.

3. *Program Logistics*

Having a project and data was key to enhancing the participants' experiences – if a participant did not have data, the workshop was likely be less helpful. However, using the partner model for discussion of each section worked well and meant some participants without complete data could fully participate.

Education

1. *Curriculum Revisions*

Refine the PPT to fit the time slot. Encourage participants to use the writing section in the online curriculum especially topics on plagiarism and how to cite. It would be useful to develop a toolkit on predatory journals and how to avoid.

2. *Group Work*

Group work was a critical aspect of the workshop. Pairs worked well. However, having 14 participants made reporting back to the class take time for each IMRaD section. Having two full days would make this more feasible, however, this could be hard for some participants to commit to on a weekend. Note that over half the participants wanted a longer workshop, while no one asked for a shortened version.

3. *Feedback*

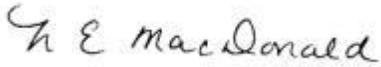
- The workshop worked well, although over half of participants reported needed to be longer.
- Many participants valued the practical activities, as well as working in pairs to discuss and then present each section to the class over the 1.5 days.
- Many valued learning how to develop their story and the focus on logic.

4. *Future MicroResearch Writing Workshops*

- This 1.5-day workshop was a success in terms of the participant perceptions. The time to work and develop an outline was valued. Concepts such as gold nugget and IMRaD were key to participants. The PPTs need to be revised and streamlined, additional resources on papers exemplifying different points would be helpful.

- The local site has a critical role to play in recruitment of the most appropriate participants and developing local coaches to lead the writing sessions. Having senior faculty complete the 2020 program is a foundation to this transition.

Respectfully submitted



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