Scientific Presentations: Abstracts, oral sessions, and posters

Mintu Turakhia, MD
Clinical Instructor & Fellow
Electrophysiology Section
Division of Cardiology
UCSF School of Medicine

Stephen Hulley, MD MPH
Professor
Division of Clinical Epidemiology
Department of Epidemiology & Biostatistics
UCSF School of Medicine
Elements of slide design

• Simple color scheme
  – White on blue or black on white
  – Avoid Verdana or Tahoma - spacing is not consistent between computers

• Consistent design and layout
  – Fonts, alignment, size, tables
  – Compare slide to previous and next slide to ensure consistency

• Animations are generally distracting
  – Avoid unless they add clarity
Preparing the talk

• Make slides telegraphic
  – Few words
  – Define common acronyms as they are used
  – No novel acronyms
  – Upper/lower case.
• < 10 lines per slide
• < 1 slide/minute
  – Fewer is better
• Rehearse > 1 times to > 1 person
  – Rehearse Q & A as well
Title slide

• Concise informative title
  – Placing title as footer on all slides helps audience know which talk is being presented

• Authors and co-authors
  – Presenter’s title and institution

• AHA mandates disclosure slide
Presenter disclosure information

Presenter_Name Here:
- Financial disclosure: None
- Unlabelled/unapproved use disclosure: TXZO1421 is not approved for human use. The data shown is from Phase I and II studies.

Co-author Here:
- Financial disclosure: Grant from Company X; Speakers’ bureau from Company Y.

All other authors:
- No disclosures
Background

• Concise rationale: 1 slide
  – Research question
    ◆ Why important
  – Prior work, why inadequate
  – How this study solves that
• Avoid citations, sentences, details
• Explicitly state research question
Methods: differs from manuscript writing

• Avoid rehashing manuscript
• Limit to 1-3 slides (boring)
  – More time on methods = less time on results
• Use informative titles
  – Don’t: “Methods 1”, “Methods 2”, …
  – Do: “Design and subjects”, “Predictors and outcomes”
• Don’t include statistical methods here
  – They can be mentioned on results slides
• Omit lesser details
Results: also differs from manuscript

• Informative titles, labels
  – (don’t use “Results” as the title)
• Build a story
  – Be selective, not comprehensive
• Graphs
  – Graphic (memorable)
  – Patterns
• Tables
  – Be parsimonious; omit details
  – Round values to 2-3 digits (3.1, not 3.14159)
  – Can it be seen from the back of the room?
Discussion

• Discussion slide is optional
  – Often not needed
  – Can provide comments while telling the story of the results slides

• Study limitations should be mentioned
  – Option of a “limitations” slide
Summary

• Concise statement of 2-4 findings
• Each bullet sentence can be read
  – Then embellished
• Linger to let it sink in
Conclusions

• Concise statement of, for example:
  – Interpretation of findings
  – Implications for practice
  – Implications for future research (specific)

• Sometimes combined with summary

• This is your take-home message
  – Again, linger on this

• At the very end, thank your audience
Giving the talk

- Engage the audience at the outset and throughout
  - Entertain, reveal personality
  - Be enthusiastic; speak with confidence
- Preferable not to read the text
  - It’s okay if you do read, but…
    * Follow text with finger so you can look up often
  - Option of reading just the background
- Start each slide with orienting audience, then give commentary
  - Title, graph axes, legends, etc
  - The key text or numbers on the slide
The laser pointer

• Helpful to orient audience while you speak
• Overuse or fast movements are distracting and directs speaker away from audience (and microphone)
• Use slowly, cautiously, and judiciously
  – Use in brief bursts (few seconds at a time)
• Muscle tremor is exaggerated with distance
  – Flex elbow and use opposite hand to support forearm against your side
• At AHA, the computer mouse is the pointer
  – Practice with mouse if you have not used this technique before
How to make a poster

• Posters are similar, except…

• Use font size and position on the poster to create aesthetic whole and highlight key elements
  – Research question (top left)
  – Summary/conclusions (bottom right)

• Separate sections for methods, results and discussion (like a manuscript)

• The less you write, the more likely it will be read

• Don’t cut and paste your manuscript
How not to make a poster

**Clean design but...**

**Too much text**

**Tables are too detailed**

**No one has time or incentive to read this**
The whole point of it all

• Presenting is a way to network and exchange ideas
• Q & A is the best part
  – Engage with audience through proxies
  – Don’t shortchange
    ☺ Leave enough time for the audience to get fully involved
  – Meet people you don’t know
  – Build a reputation