

Writing A Case Study

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If you've been involved in transplant nursing for some time, it's likely that your experiences could certainly be of value to others in your position. You may want to consider a case study presentation for an upcoming ITNS event. Even if you have never prepared and presented a case study before, the following information and step-by-step guide will make it easy for you to share your knowledge with colleagues.

Identifying Case Study Possibilities

Think about your transplant nursing practice and all that you have observed, perceived, and experienced. Begin to identify interesting and unusual patient or caregiver situations. Distinguish those transplant nursing experiences that exceeded the daily challenges you had with other transplant patients. A pertinent case study will highlight a new or unique aspect of your transplant patient and nursing care. Consider the following suggestions:

- Identify any distinctive problems or issues you have experienced in your nursing area while caring for a transplant patient.

- Identify transplant patients who exceeded the daily challenges you normally face with other transplant patients. Be sure to identify the specific complexities that these transplant patients presented that others did not.
- Identify any interesting or uncommon family dynamic or psychosocial situations you have experienced with a particular transplant patient.
- Identify any unusual patient history or diagnosis resulting in a need for a transplant.
- Identify ethical considerations and complexities you have encountered in caring for a transplant patient.
- Identify any new or progressive treatment protocols that your transplant patients are receiving, and identify a patient associated with these regimens.

Preparing to Write Your Case Study Abstract

The organization and content of a case study abstract is distinctly different from a research or process-improvement abstract. It is a challenge to concisely summarize your topic in detail without revealing too much information about the patient, and yet still adequately tell your story. A number of important points to remember when writing an abstract include:

- **Identify two learning objectives and references.** Both are important in preparing to write your case study abstract and are required of most abstracts. A review of the literature will assist you in identifying reading materials that relate to your case study. If you have never done a literature review before, library personnel or a knowledgeable colleague can assist you.

Reading journal articles and book chapters related to your case study topic will confirm your perspective on how common or uncommon your chosen case study is. You may decide to locate a similar case study in the



literature or focus instead on particular aspects of your case study, such as the patient's diagnosis, medication regimen, or learning deficits.

Further reading will assist you in gaining additional understanding of the case study you are writing. Select your references for your abstract from your reading material.

Identification of your learning objectives prior to writing the abstract may assist you in organizing your case study abstract.

- **Prepare a content outline to include in your abstract.** Focus on the key elements and issues surrounding the patient. For example, when gathering background information, streamline the patient's medical history to fit the focus of your abstract and use the facts most relevant to your case study discussion. Meanwhile, don't lose sight of your intended learning objectives.
- **Protect patient confidentiality by providing a pseudonym to keep your patient anonymous.** Your hospital may have a process in place that you must follow when presenting on a patient. Contact your hospital's Risk Management Program or Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Writing Your Case Study Abstract

If writing is not your strength or is anxiety-producing, never fear; just follow your outline and work to get your ideas on paper in sentences. Your preparatory work will help you.

- Comply with the guidelines provided by the organization to which you plan to submit your case study. These guidelines are often specific and have limitations on font size, page setup, and length of abstract. Set up your computer ahead of time to comply with these specific guidelines.
- Follow the headings indicated by the organization (such as background, methods, results, conclusion) and begin to put your information in each section.
- Expect to create multiple drafts of your abstract. Whether you write a paragraph at a time or the entire abstract at once, put the document away and look at it again a day or two later to make changes. Continue this process until your abstract is complete and you are happy with your work.

- Consider including other multi-disciplinary members, such as the social worker, physician, or pharmacist. Their perspectives may be helpful as you write about your patient.
- Convey the implications and applicability of what you have learned from your case study in your conclusion. Discussing how your case study may apply beyond your own clinical setting to other transplant nursing settings is particularly helpful.
- Ask for editing assistance. A panel of experts will review your abstract once it is received by the organization. One of the best ways to ensure that your points are clear is to have two or three readers edit your final abstract draft. Additional readers can provide you with valuable insights and suggestions for improvements. Trusted colleagues can help you to fine tune your case study.

Helpful Hints for Your Case Presentation

Once your abstract has been reviewed and accepted for presentation, the next step is putting together your talk to showcase your case study in more detail. Your abstract will be your template from which to expand your thoughts and ideas. Here are some helpful hints:

- Check on how much time is allotted for your talk and for audience questions. The time limits will help you gauge the length of your presentation.
- Include facts/figures or background information about your patient not included in your abstract.
- Help your audience understand your patient and the intended issues for discussion from the beginning.
- Tell a story with a beginning and an end. Ensure that you include patient outcomes or circumstances that have changed since writing the abstract.
- Refer to your abstract often to confirm your focus points and assure that you are not straying from your intended purpose.



- Define the impact of this patient on transplant nursing practice.
- Point out any social or ethical considerations unique to your patient and the involvement of multidisciplinary team members.
- Assist the audience in making the connections that you desire and apply what you have taught them. Encourage the audience to learn and “think”. Interactive presentations are fun and welcome.

Useful Resources

Fellow ITNS members, nursing colleagues, social workers, physicians, pharmacists, and transplant patients and families help us to define a case study. Transplant nurses look forward to hearing about the clinical practice of other transplant nurses. Abstract presenters share their clinical experiences for professional growth but, more importantly, they enjoy the opportunity to impart what they have learned to an interested audience of transplant nurses. Included below is a list of useful resources to assist you in identifying, preparing, writing, and presenting a transplant case study.

- Hooker, E. Z. (1991). *Research - The case for case studies*. *SCI Nursing*, 8, 80-2.
- Polit, D., F., & Beck, C. T. (2012). *Nursing Research: Generating and Assessing Evidence for Practice* (9th ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Wolters Kluwer/Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- Steele, N. F., & Sterling, Y. M. (1992). *Application of the case study design: Nursing interventions for discharge readiness*. *Clinical Nurse Specialist*, 6, 79-84.
- Sterling, Y. M., & McNally, J. A. (1992). *Single-subject research for nursing practice*. *Clinical Nurse Specialist*, 6, 21-6.
- Vallis, J., & Tierney, A. (1999). *Issues in case study analysis*. *Nurse Researcher*, 7, 19-35. <http://hslweb01.umh.edu/ftproot/ejournalmultiform.cfm>
- Youngkins, J. M. (1991). *The impact of one staff nurse's research*. *Maternal Child Nursing*, 16, 133-5.

This educational resource was developed and made possible by the International Transplant Nurses Society (ITNS). A complimentary, downloadable copy of this publication is available at www.itns.org <<http://www.itns.org>>.

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ITNS

Our Mission

“ITNS is committed to the promotion of excellence in transplant clinical nursing through the provision of educational and professional growth opportunities, interdisciplinary networking and collaborative activities, and transplant nursing research.”

Membership Profile

Position descriptions

- 42% of ITNS members classify themselves as transplant coordinators
- 23% of ITNS members classify themselves as staff nurses
- 15% of ITNS members classify themselves as charge nurses/ team leaders/ supervisors/ instructors or nurse administrators
- 10% of ITNS members classify themselves as clinical nurse specialists
- 4% of ITNS members classify themselves as nurse practitioners
- 2% of ITNS members classify themselves as research
- 2% of ITNS members are employed by pharmaceutical or medical equipment/supply companies
- 2% of ITNS members have responsibilities related to procurement and working with donor families

Geographical Reach

- 77% of ITNS members reside in the USA
- 12% reside in Canada
- 10% reside in the UK and Europe
- There are also members in Mexico, South America, Asia, New Zealand, and Australia

Organ Focus

- 64% have a specialty interest in renal transplantation
- 52% have a specialty interest in liver transplantation
- 40% have a specialty interest in pancreas transplantation
- 33% of our members care for pediatric patients
- 24% have a specialty interest in heart transplantation
- 19% have a specialty interest in lung transplantation
- 13% have a specialty interest in small bowel transplantation
- 7% have a specialty interest in islet cell transplantation
- 2% have a specialty interest in bone marrow transplantation

Focusing on skills

- **ITNS** offers transplant-specific education targeted to all transplant health-professionals from the novice transplant nurse through the seasoned clinician at its annual symposium and regional workshops.
- **ITNS** educational endeavors provide transplant nurses with clinical practice updates and methods to improve patient care at all levels.
- **ITNS** provides regular immunomodulation updates on both new and existing products as well as dosing and side effect issues.
- **ITNS** offers opportunities for clinicians to present papers, research findings, and case studies at its Annual Symposium.
- **ITNS** provides grant funding for Transplant Nursing Research.
- **ITNS** provides educational and membership benefits to transplant professionals who are in non-traditional nursing roles such as case managers, home health care, and corporate representatives.
- **ITNS** provides networking opportunities with other transplant professionals around the world.
- **ITNS** provides access to ITNS-developed or ITNS-sponsored patient educational materials.
- **ITNS** offers bedside nurses and clinicians a voice in transplant policy making.

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