

## WRITING A CASE REPORT

**Introduction.** Writing a case report accurately and transparently may be easier if written in a different sequence than when it is published.

**First:** Clearly identify the message you wish to communicate. Is this case report about an outcome, a diagnostic assessment, an intervention, a new or rare disease, etc.?

**Second:** Create a timeline of your case report—a visual summary of the case report (see examples of timelines that follow the CARE guidelines).

**Third:** Complete the remainder of the case report using specialty-specific information if necessary with appropriate scientific clarification. Write the abstract last.

Patient information should be de-identified and informed consent obtained prior to submitting your case report to a journal. If the patient is a minor or unable to give informed consent seek consent from a close relative.

### Part 1 — Working Title, Timeline, Patient Narrative

1. Develop a descriptive and succinct **working title** that describes the phenomenon of greatest interest (symptom, diagnostic test, diagnosis, intervention, outcome).
2. Create a **timeline** as a chronological summary of an episode of care as a figure or table. This should begin with antecedents and past medical history through the outcome. Examples are available on the CARE website.
3. **Narrative of the episode of care** (including tables and figures as needed.)
  - The **presenting concerns** (chief complaints) and **relevant demographic information**.
  - **Clinical findings** describe the relevant past medical history, pertinent co-morbidities, and important physical examination (PE) findings.
  - **Diagnostic assessments** discuss (1) diagnostic tests and results; (2) differential diagnoses; and (3) the diagnosis.
  - **Therapeutic interventions** describe the types of intervention (pharmacologic, surgical, preventive, lifestyle) and how the interventions were administered (dosage, strength, duration and frequency). Tables or figures may be useful.
  - **Follow-up and outcomes** describes the clinical course of the episode of care including (1) follow-up visits, (2) intervention modification, interruption, or discontinuation; (3) intervention adherence and how this was assessed; and (4) adverse effects or unanticipated events. Regular patient report outcome measurement surveys at such as PROMIS® may be helpful.

### Part 2 — Introduction, Discussion (including limitations), Conclusion

1. The **introduction** should briefly summarize why this case report is important and cite the most recent CARE publication. (Gagnier JJ, Kienle G, Altman DG, Moher D, Sox H, Riley D, et al. [The CARE Guidelines: Consensus-based Clinical Case Reporting Guideline Development](#). *Glob Adv Health Med*. 2013 Sep;2(5):38-43.)
2. The **discussion** describes case management, including strengths and **limitations** with scientific references.
3. The **conclusion** offers the most important findings from the case.

### Part 3 – Abstract & Key Words, References, Acknowledgement, Informed Consent, Appendices

1. **Abstract.** Briefly summarize in a structured or unstructured format the relevant information without citations. Do this after writing the case report. Information should include: (1) Background, (2) Key points from the case; and (3) Main lessons to be learned from this case report.
2. **Key Words.** Provide 2 to 5 key words that will identify important topics covered by this case report.
3. **References.** Appropriately chosen references from the peer-reviewed scientific literature.
4. **Acknowledgements.** A short acknowledgement section should mention funding support.
5. **Informed Consent.** The patient should provide informed consent and the author should provide this information if requested. Rarely, additional approval may be needed.
6. **Appendices.** If indicated.

### Submission to a scientific journal

**Follow journal submission requirements when writing and submitting your case report.** You may wish to contact the journal before submitting your manuscript if you have any questions. (Download a partial list of [Journals](#) that accept case reports.) Remember that journals that do not explicitly accept case reports may publish case reports as components of other articles such as brief reports or hypotheses.

