

"Publishing and Presenting Clinical Research"

Warren S. Browner, 1999, 206 pages, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, \$59.95

Review by Norman M. Goldfarb

"Publishing and Presenting Clinical Research" is the complete guide to sharing clinical research results with the scientific and medical communities. When bad scientific writers are sentenced to publication prison, careful study of this book should be the foundation of their reform and successful return to society as productive citizens.

This book has been selected for
[The First Clinical Research Bookshelf](#)
Essential reading for clinical research professionals

I could illustrate the style and content of this book with any section, but let's start with the book's first paragraph, about the research question:

Your manuscript's title and abstract should both focus on the research question, so make sure you have one before you start writing. Of course, you cannot have a research question if you do not know what one is. Simply put, the research question is what you might reply to a colleague who asks, between floors on an elevator, "What are you studying?" The research question should be sufficiently sophisticated so that if the chair of your department happens to be riding on the same elevator, she will be impressed by your savvy. If your uncle should step aboard, he should also be able to understand your answer. The research question does not have to be in the form of a question; this is not *Jeopardy!* Here are a few examples of how you might answer your fellow elevator passengers:

- I'm studying whether a 3-day course of antibiotics is as effective as a 7-day course in treating impetigo in children.
- My study looks at whether patients with rheumatoid arthritis who have used nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory agents are less likely to develop rheumatoid lung disease.
- My research question focuses on determining if a new blood test can identify patients at high risk of ventricular arrhythmias.

Assuming you actually have something to say, what could be simpler than that? Now all you need is a title, abstract, etc. Fortunately, Dr. Browner covers all these topics and more, in comprehensive, straightforward prose:

- Title and Abstract
- Introduction
- Methods
- Results
- Tables
- Figures
- Discussion
- References and Electronic Publishing
- Authorship
- Posters
- Oral Presentations
- Choosing a Journal and Responding to Reviewers' Comments

- Suggestions for Writing Well

Dr. Browner makes even complex statistics sound simple:

More elaborate methods, such as the logistic regression model or the Cox proportional hazards model, allow you to adjust the effect size for confounding variables or differences in length of follow-up. For example, in a cohort study of the predictors of hip fractures, one can determine the effect of family history of fracture after adjusting for age, gender, and history of falls.

He offers this advice for dealing with speaker anxiety:

Sprinkle friends in the audience, a few on each side, about five rows from the front. Do not expect your colleagues to anticipate this need. Be direct: "It would help me a lot if you would sit in about the fifth row, on the left side as you enter the room." As you begin your talk, focus on these friends. Look at them long enough to elicit a nod or smile. Encouragement means just that: providing courage.

Now, if only all scientific papers could be as easy to read as "Publishing and Presenting Clinical Research".

The book is out-of-print, but available at used book websites.

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