

Moving from wishing to success: Pointers for a successful abstract submission

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Have you ever attended a scientific conference and seen the rows and rows of abstract posters, wishing yours was among them? Abstracts are concise research papers that help advance the field of science and add to the body of evidence-based literature.

Each year, APIC posts a Call for Abstracts. At this time, members of the infection prevention community may submit their research for consideration as a poster or oral session for Annual Conference. Abstracts are then peer-reviewed for quality of research, educational or scientific content, presentation logic, and impact on the infection prevention and control field.

APIC invites the authors of accepted abstracts to present their posters to Annual Conference attendees. This year, the APIC 2017 Annual Conference Committee accepted more than 200 abstracts in the form of oral and poster presentations.

Being selected as an abstract presenter not only advances the infection prevention field, it advances your career as well. Oral presentation at the state, regional, or national level, or poster presentation at the national level, are criteria for the Fellow of the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (FAPIC) credential.

So...how can you change from wishing for an accepted poster to celebrating your success? The solution is simple: **Plan your work and work your plan.**

Plan to submit an abstract on your research project before you start the work,

and then work your project according to the plan. This might seem like a circular way to conduct your research, but it does work. The following three steps can help you successfully submit abstract.

1 Utilize the APIC resources in planning your abstract and begin planning with the rules. Review carefully the Call for Abstracts on the APIC Annual Conference website. The most common mistakes are made by not following the rules.

2 Another excellent tool for planning your work is the APIC Video “Writing Scientific Abstracts” by Kate Gase, MPH, CIC, FAPIC. Kate describes the basic sections of the abstract. Review the video throughout the entire research and writing process. (<https://tinyurl.com/APICabstractivevideo>)

3 While planning, seek a mentor who has previously presented at conference to review your work. Mentors can help guide you from the beginning planning stages, through study implementation, and writing stages. Visit MyAPIC (<http://community.apic.org/myapic/home>) to get connected with a mentor, or reach out to members of your local APIC chapter.

The most common reasons APIC Annual Conference abstracts are rejected:

- It has been previously published.
- The entry was faxed or mailed, and not electronically submitted.
- The abstract was submitted after the deadline.
- Brand or trade names are used in the abstract.
- It is longer than 300 words.
- It is poorly written.

Make sure you also familiarize yourself with abstract awards (see Abstract Award and Criteria on page 51). Quality work, combined with meeting the criteria for an award, can elevate your work from successful acceptance to award winning recognition. Use the same basic work management tool and reach for the stars!

We look forward to seeing your quality abstract submissions for the APIC 2018 Annual Conference, which will take place June 13-15, 2018, in Minneapolis, Minnesota! Visit the conference website for more information. 

Jan Ratterree, BSN, RN, CIC, is the chair of the Abstracts Subcommittee of the 2017 Annual Conference Committee. She has 28 years of experience in nursing, management, and staff education, followed by over 10 years as an infection preventionist. Julie Blechman, MPH, CHES, is the APIC communications manager and a handwashing enthusiast.



ABSTRACT AWARD AND CRITERIA

Blue Ribbon Abstract Award (*up to four winners*)
The Blue Ribbon Awards are given to a limited number of abstracts considered to be of exemplary scientific and/or educational quality.

Implementation Science Abstract Award (*one winner*)

The Implementation Science Award is presented for an abstract that is innovative, employs sound methodology, and represents a potentially significant contribution to the principles and practices of infection prevention.

New Investigator Abstract Award (*one winner*)

The New Investigator Award recognizes outstanding scientific research by an APIC member presenting for the first time at the APIC Annual Conference.

Best International Abstract Award

(*one winner*)

The Best International Abstract Award recognizes research from outside the United States that demonstrates exemplary scientific merit and is of high interest and relevance to the infection control community.

William A. Rutala Abstract Award (*one winner*)

This is given in the name of William A. Rutala, MS, PhD, MPH, CIC, for the best abstract on the subject of disinfection, sterilization, or antisepsis.

ANATOMY OF AN ABSTRACT

Abstracts must use a traditional four-section format as follows:

Background: Provide a brief background and describe study objectives, hypothesis tested, and/or problem addressed.

- This section should be written in present tense and answers the question: “What is the importance of this study?”
- A traditional format includes a description of the importance of the field, definition of the problem, and outline of the research question and objective.

Methods: Describe study design, including setting, sample, sample size, subjects, intervention, and/or type of statistical analysis. This section should be written in past tense.

- A traditional format indicates the study design, subjects, and time frame; outlines the study variables; and defines the statistical analysis.
- **Do not** include any numbers outside of time frame or the number of facilities (if a multicenter study) in this section. Reserve **all** numbers for the **results** section.

Results: Summarize essential results as clearly as possible with appropriate statistical analysis. This section should be written in past tense.

- Ensure that each result has a method included in the methods section.
- Ensure that each method outlined in the methods section has a corresponding result in the results section.
- If you have too many results, you need to limit the methods provided in the abstract.
- You can have more methods in the poster than you do in the abstract. Just provide the most important result in the abstract.
- The results should be described in the same order as the methods described in the methods section.

Conclusion: Interpret the study findings. Conclusions must be supported by the results. Concisely summarize implications of the results.

- This section answers the question “So what?” and is written in present tense.
- Do not state “Future studies are needed” or “A randomized trial is needed”—the goal is to provide implications in this section. More studies are always needed.
- Ensure that all conclusions are supported by the results.