Case Reports: Criteria for Publishable Case Reports

Publishable patient case reports include cases that:

- Advance medical science and spawn research;
- Describe rare, perplexing, or novel diagnostic features of a disease state;
- Report therapeutic challenges, controversies, or dilemmas;
- Describe a new surgical procedure;
- Report how a drug can enhance a surgical procedure;
- Teach humanistic lessons to the health care professional;
- Review a unique job description of a health care professional that improves patient care;
- Report new medical errors or medication errors;
- Discover a device malfunction that results in patient harm;
- Describe adverse effects and patient toxicity of a radiopaque agent;
- Describe life-threatening adverse events;
- Describe dangerous and predictable adverse effects that are poorly appreciated and rarely recognized;
- Describe rare or novel adverse drug reactions;
- Describe a therapeutic failure or a lack of therapeutic efficacy;
- Describe rare or novel drug–drug, drug–food, or drug–nutrient interactions;
- Report unlabeled or unapproved uses of a medication;
- Explore the use of pharmacogenomics to manage diseases;
- Use life-saving techniques not previously documented;
- Use pharmacoeconomic principles that improve patient care;
- Uncover barriers to patient adherence;
- Discover an interaction between a drug and a laboratory test that yields a false-positive or false-negative result;
- Describe the effect of drugs in pregnancy and lactation;
- Detect novel pharmacokinetic or pharmaco-dynamic principles; and
- Use technology to improve patient outcomes.

Case Report Content

Guidelines for writing patient case report manuscripts
(The following checklist is comprehensive; some items may not apply to all types of case reports.)

I. Abstract
☐ Introduction and objective.
☐ Case report.
☐ Discussion.
☐ Conclusion.

II. Introduction
☐ Describe the subject matter.
☐ State the purpose of the case report.
☐ Provide background information.
☐ Provide pertinent definitions.
☐ Describe the strategy of the literature review and provide search terms.
☐ Justify the merit of the case report by using the literature review.
☐ Introduce the patient case to the reader.
☐ Make the introduction brief and less than three paragraphs.

III. Patient case presentation
☐ Describe the case in a narrative form.
☐ Provide patient demographics (age, sex, height, weight, race, occupation).
☐ Avoid patient identifiers (date of birth, initials).
☐ Describe the patient's complaint.
☐ List the patient's present illness.
☐ List the patient's medical history.
☐ List the patient's family history.
☐ List the patient's social history.
☐ List the patient's medication history before admission and throughout the case report.
☐ Ensure that the medication history includes herbals, vaccines, depot injections, and non-prescription medications, and state that the patient was asked for this history.
☐ List each drug's name, strength, dosage form, route, and dates of administration.
☐ Verify the patient's medication adherence.
☐ Provide renal and hepatic organ function data in order to determine the appropriateness of medication dosing regimens.
☐ List the patient's drug allergy status, including the name of the drug (brand or generic) and the date and type of reaction.
☐ List the patient's adverse drug reaction history and the dates of the reaction.
☐ Provide pertinent serum drug levels and include the time of each level taken and its relationship to a dose.
☐ Provide the patient's dietary history.
☐ Provide pertinent findings on physical examination.
Provide pertinent laboratory values that support the case.
Provide the reference range for laboratory values that are not widely known or established.
List the completed diagnostic procedures that are pertinent and support the case.
Paraphrase the salient results of the diagnostic procedures.
Provide photographs of histopathology, roentgenograms, electrocardiograms, skin manifestations, or anatomy as they relate to the case.
Obtain permission from the patient to use the patient's photographs, or follow institutional guidelines.
Provide the patient's events in chronological order.
Ensure a temporal relationship.
Ensure a causal relationship.
Ensure that the patient case presentation provides enough detail for the reader to establish the case's validity.

IV. Discussion
Compare and contrast the nuances of the case report with the literature review.
Explain or justify the similarities and differences between the case report and the literature.
List the limitations of the case report and describe their relevance.
Confirm the accuracy of the descriptive patient case report.
Establish a temporal relationship.
Establish a causal relationship.
Report the validity of the case report by applying a probability scale such as the Naranjo nomogram.
Summarize the salient features of the case report.
Justify the uniqueness of the case.
Draw recommendations and conclusions.

V. Conclusion
Provide a justified conclusion.
Provide evidence-based recommendations.
Describe how the information learned applies to one's own practice.
List opportunities for research.
Ensure that this section is brief and does not exceed one paragraph.