Library News
News and information from the Research Medical Library
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MD Anderson Cancer Center
Making Cancer History®

## Elsevier Open Access Pilot Offers Discounts on Open Access Article Processing Charges for MD Anderson Authors

Along with several libraries from across the state of Texas, the Research Medical Library participated in discussions with major academic publisher Elsevier as part of the Texas Library Coalition for United Action (TLCUA).

One result of these discussions was the Elsevier Open Access Pilot that gives MD Anderson corresponding authors a 15% discount on Article Processing Charges (APCs) for articles accepted for publication in Gold Open Access journals and a 10% discount on APCs for articles accepted for publication in Hybrid Open Access journals.

The discounts on APCs apply retroactively for articles published July 1, 2021, and continues for articles published through December 31, 2024. The discount is available as part of the author journey after acceptance to an eligible Elsevier journal. MD Anderson authors must be listed as corresponding authors to take advantage of this discount.

A searchable list of eligible journals is available to determine if a journal to which your article has been accepted is included in the agreement.

More information can be found on the agreement page for TLCUA. Also, you can contact Elsevier directly with questions or contact the Research Medical Library at RML-Help@mdanderson.org.

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## iThenticate: Check Your Manuscript Before You Submit

Most major publishers run what's called a similarity report on all new manuscript submissions. The purpose of a similarity report is to identify the percentage of the manuscript text that may overlap with one or more published articles. Publishers are

looking to identify plagiarism or poor citation practices and a similarity report is a quick way to find potential problems. Publishers may reject manuscripts that receive a high similarity score. How can authors avoid this? Start by running a similarity report before submitting your manuscript.

The library offers access to iThenticate, which allows authors to run a similarity report on uploaded documents. MD Anderson faculty, staff, and students can request a free, private iThenticate account by emailing the library at RML-Help@mdanderson.org.

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## Employee Assistance Program eBook Collection

The Employee Assistance Program has funded a collection of eBooks and audiobooks for MD Anderson staff. Books are accessible on your desktop or smartphone through the Libby app. If you need assistance accessing the collection, please contact us at RML-Help@mdanderson.org.

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## Tips for Writing Project Narratives and Layperson's Summaries for Grant Applications

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) requires that applicants for funding submit a short statement called a Project Narrative "to help the public understand the value of NIH-funded research."[1] And the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT) requires a "Layperson's Summary" in many applications. Both Project Narratives and Layperson's Summaries are made public if applications are funded, and both should be understandable to a broad audience. Here we offer tips for writing these public-focused elements.

**Project Narrative for an NIH Application**

*Instructions*

The NIH offers these instructions for the Project Narrative: "Describe the relevance of this research to public health in, at most, three sentences. For example, NIH applicants can describe how, in the short or long term, the research would contribute to fundamental knowledge about the nature and behavior of living systems and / or the application of that knowledge to enhance health, lengthen life, and reduce illness and disability."[2]

The NIH advises that in writing the Project Narrative, applicants should "use plain language understandable by a general audience."[1]

*Examples*

The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) offers an excellent guide to writing NIH applications, which highlights the following example:

> From an application by Dr. Mengxi Jiang: "Polyomaviruses are a family of viruses associated with severe human diseases and a subset of them can also cause cancers. Our proposed studies aim to understand the interactions between polyomaviruses and the host DNA damage response, a cellular pathway important for both viral replication and host genome maintenance. This research will have the potential to reveal novel therapeutic host targets to treat polyomavirus-related diseases."

You can find other examples of well-written Project Narratives in the NIAID's collection of good sample applications and in the other collections mentioned in another Library News article. To find Project Narratives on a particular topic, you can search the NIH RePORTER repository, which contains Project Narratives and other information about projects funded by the NIH over the past 25 years.[3]

*Writing the Project Narrative*

Consider using a problem-solution structure that begins with the problem to be addressed and flows into how your proposed research will address that problem and the expected public health relevance of your work. Consider using the phrase "public health relevance" or something similar. Don't attempt to describe your project in detail; the details appear in other parts of the application. Note that first-person pronouns, for example, "we" and "our," are allowed in this section.

If you have trouble expressing scientific concepts in plain language, the National Cancer Institute's Dictionary of Cancer Terms and Dictionary of Genetics Terms may be helpful; both contain definitions of medical and scientific terms written to be clear to a general audience.

**Layperson's Summary for a CPRIT Application**

*Instructions*

CPRIT applications contain both an Abstract and Significance section, which is written in technical language, and a Layperson's Summary, which is written in simple language. The instructions for the Layperson's Summary are tailored to the specific request for applications (RFA), but in every RFA, the instructions for the Layperson's Summary say to use simple language and to summarize key elements of the proposed work. For instance, here are the instructions from a recent RFA for a pilot study award:

"**Layperson's Summary (2,000 characters).** Provide a layperson's summary of the proposed work. Describe, in simple, nontechnical terms, the overall goals of the proposed work, the type(s) of cancer addressed, the potential significance of the results, and the impact of the work on advancing the field of cancer prevention research, early diagnosis, treatment, or survivorship."

*Examples*

To find examples of Layperson's Summaries, search the Grants Funded part of the CPRIT website, where Layperson's Summaries are published along with other details about funded applications. Here is a well-written example:

> From an application by Dr. Maralice Conacci-Sorrell: "Liver cancer is the third leading cause of cancer mortality worldwide. Excessive alcohol consumption, viral hepatitis, metabolic syndrome, and obesity are major causes of liver damage. Liver damage can progress to fatty liver disease, fibrosis, and cirrhosis, which dramatically increase the risk of cancer. Likely due to these environmental factors, the incidence of liver cancer in the United States has tripled in the last decades; however, the overall survival rates of patients with liver cancer have remained low.
>
> Our work focuses on a simple question: What do cancer cells need to grow? To answer this question, we are focused on identifying the specific nutritional needs of

cancer cells that allow them to grow continuously. We discovered that liver cancer cells require very high amounts of a nutrient named tryptophan that is normally present in our daily diet in order to grow uninterruptedly. The main goals of our research are to: i) determine the potential of using tryptophan-derived molecules as markers to diagnose liver cancer; ii) examine the efficacy of limiting tryptophan availability or activity to inhibit tumor growth.

We expect that our work will form the foundation to start developing novel targeted therapy for growth-promoting nutrients as well as examining nutritional programs that could limit cancer cell growth. By identifying such specific tumor-promoting factors, this work will also contribute to the understanding of how to select the optimal treatment using individual tumor markers."

*Writing the Layperson's Summary*

Try using a 3-part structure: (1) the problem or question the proposed research will address, as well as any preliminary work you have done towards solving the problem or answering the question; (2) the overarching goal of the research and, briefly, your general approaches to achieving this goal; and (3) the potential positive outcomes of the proposed research, using language tailored to the RFA that you are responding to. As with a Project Narrative, plain language should be used.

You may be tempted to form the Layperson's Summary by systematically translating sentences of the Abstract and Significance section into lay language. However, what's needed in the Layperson's Summary is not a lay-language restatement of the Abstract and Significance but a simplified, relatively brief overview of the proposed project and its potential impact. Of note, the Layperson's Summary should include sufficient background information to ensure that lay readers understand your study's purpose and importance.

**References**


1. NIH Office of Extramural Research. Project Summary/Abstract and Project Narrative: What's the Difference and What to Include. Accessed January 18, 2023. https://nexus.od.nih.gov/all/2019/06/28/project-summary-abstract-and-project-narrative-whats-the-difference-and-what-to-include/#
2. NIH. General instructions for NIH and other PHS agencies. SF424 (R&R) application packages. Forms version H series. Released October 25, 2022.

Accessed January 18, 2023. https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/forms-h/general-forms-h.pdf
3. NIH Research Portfolio Online Reporting Tools. Frequently Asked Questions. Accessed January 18, 2023. https://report.nih.gov/faqs#

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# Guidance on Avoiding Vague Modifiers

Using modifiers like *very*, *fairly*, *quite*, *somewhat*, and *rather* can be problematic. If someone tells you that a joke is "quite funny," just how humorous did they find it? Or if a doctor describes a lesion in a patient's lung as being "very large," what exactly does that mean? To make things clear, especially in scientific writing, it's helpful to supply more specific information with or without the inclusion of a modifier.

**Examples:**
Unclear: The lesion in the patient's lung was very large.
Better: The lesion in the patient's lung was 5.2 cm in diameter.
Or: The lesion in the patient's lung was very large (5.2 cm in diameter).

Unclear: After treatment, the patient's symptoms were somewhat better.
Better: After treatment, the patient's fever and headache resolved.

Modifiers like *very* also tend to be overused, which makes them less meaningful. In general writing, such as emails or letters, try replacing them with synonyms or providing more detail to make your writing more expressive and interesting.

**Examples:**
Original: The puppy was very cute.
Better: The puppy was adorable.
Or: The puppy was irresistible.

Original: I was rather excited to see William.
Better: I was overjoyed to see William.
Or: I was delighted to see William.

**Bibliography**


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