Using calendar dates in case reports

-- Joe Munch

Well-written case reports convey a clear timeline of the patient’s course of care. Often, the easiest and most effective way of plotting such a timeline is to note important dates related to the patient’s health history, presentation, diagnosis, treatment, and outcome. Indeed, the CARE (case report) guidelines, which “provide a framework that supports transparency and accuracy in the publication of case reports and the reporting of information from patient encounters,” recommend that authors create just such a timeline when writing case reports. However, calendar dates are considered identifying information, and when they are paired with health information (e.g., diagnosis, treatment, current health status), that information is considered
protected health information (PHI), which cannot be divulged in a published article without the patient’s written authorization.

To publish a patient’s PHI in a case report, an author must first obtain permission from the patient or his or her legally authorized representative. (The Department of Scientific Publications recommends that such permission should be obtained even if the case report contains no PHI, since people familiar with the case could recognize the patient based on the health information alone.) In addition, many journals now require that the author obtain permission from the patient or his or her representative to publish a case report, regardless of whether it contains PHI. Case reports that meet these requirements can include specific dates paired with health information.

If permission to publish a patient’s PHI cannot be obtained, the author must remove all PHI from the case report. The exclusion of calendar dates paired with health information may make it difficult to convey the patient’s course of care, but authors can use other means of clarifying the timing of important events, such as the following:

- Specific notable dates in the patient’s care (e.g., January 22, 2012) can be reduced to the year (“2012”) in the case report. Because any element of a date that is directly related to the patient, except the year, is considered identifying information, general times—“early 2012,” “winter 2012”—cannot be used. (Conceivably, there may be some rare instances in which even the year could be considered identifying information and must be omitted.)

- Generic terms or phrases—“at presentation,” “3 months before presenting to our service,” “1 year after completing treatment”—can be used to provide a clear timeline without divulging PHI.

- In some instances, the timing of the patient’s presentation may be labeled “day 1,” and the timing of subsequent events may be denoted with “day 2,” “day 3,” and so on. (Depending on the time scale of the case, “week __,” “month __,” “year __,” or even “hour __” could also be used.)

To protect the patient’s rights and facilitate providing an effective narrative of the patient’s case, an author of a case report must obtain the patient’s permission to publish his or her PHI. If such permission cannot be obtained, the author must use caution when describing the timing of events in that patient’s case to avoid divulging the patient’s PHI.

Sources

Guidelines for the appropriate use and disclosure of PHI are given in Institutional Policy ADM0401, Patient Privacy: Uses and Disclosures of Protected Health Information Policy.

Details about de-identifying PHI are included in Institutional Policy ADM1180, Patient Privacy: De-Identification of Protected Health Information (PHI) Policy.

Additional details about obtaining authorization for release of PHI are available in Institutional Policy #ADM0396, Patient Privacy: Authorization for the Use and Disclosure of Protected Health Information Policy.

Additional information about publishing patient information in case reports is available from the Department of Scientific Publications on its intranet site and in the Winter 2016 edition of The Write Stuff. For specific questions about publishing patient information in case reports, please contact the Institutional Compliance Office at (713) 745-6636.
How does an author’s leaving an institution affect in-progress manuscripts?

-- Stephanie Deming

If you plan to leave an institution but you’re still working on a paper to report your work at that institution, there may be practical advantages to finishing the paper and submitting it to a journal before you leave. The main potential advantage is that communicating with colleagues may be easier when you are working in the same place. However, it is not necessary to submit the paper to a journal before you leave. Your status as an author and your institutional affiliation reported in the paper will not be affected by your leaving the institution. Furthermore, for authors of papers reporting on work performed at MD Anderson, you can have the paper edited by the Department of Scientific Publications even after you leave MD Anderson, provided that certain conditions are met.

Status as an author. If your work at an institution merits authorship credit on a paper, you should be credited as an author even if you leave that institution before the paper is submitted to a journal or accepted for publication. Authorship also entails responsibilities, including the responsibility to approve the final version of the manuscript before it is submitted to a journal and, after the paper is published, “to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved” (1). Thus, if you are not the corresponding author, be sure to leave accurate contact information so that the corresponding author can contact you to obtain feedback on the manuscript and obtain approval of the final version of the manuscript.

Institutional affiliation. If you are an author of a paper and you were professionally affiliated with Institution A when you performed the work described in that paper, you should list Institution A as your affiliation in the author-affiliations note on the title page. If you move to a different institution before the paper is submitted for publication, also list your current affiliation in a separate note on the title page. Different journals use different styles for describing current affiliations. If you are not sure what style to use, you can follow this example: “Dr. Lloyd is now with the Department of Emergency Medicine, St. Luke’s Hospital, Milwaukee, Wisconsin” (2).

Access to editing. Scientific Publications will edit reports of original research performed at MD Anderson, even if one or more of the MD Anderson authors have left the institution, provided that the conditions of MD Anderson’s Scientific Publication Policy (3) are met. If editing is desired, an author at MD Anderson should send the manuscript to Scientific Publications and should be included in all correspondence related to the manuscript.

References


What trainees should know before submitting manuscripts to the Department of Scientific Publications

-- Sarah Bronson

As a trainee at MD Anderson, you have free access to the services of the Department of Scientific Publications, an in-house professional scientific editing team, before you submit an article to your target journal. To help the editing process proceed smoothly, you should be aware of the following before sending a manuscript to Scientific Publications.

First, Scientific Publications encourages an open line of communication between trainees and their mentors before and throughout the editing process. Therefore,

- Trainees’ mentors should have the opportunity to review trainees’ manuscripts before those manuscripts are sent to Scientific Publications. This way, mentors can make any major revisions—such as structural changes or changes to the reported data—before the manuscript is edited in Scientific Publications, and the subsequent edits from Scientific Publications will be as useful and usable as possible.

- Editors in Scientific Publications routinely include trainees’ mentors in all correspondence with trainees.

Second, MD Anderson faculty are responsible for scientific materials emanating from the institution, as stated in The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center Institutional Policy #ACA0018, Scientific Publication Policy. Therefore,

- Before submitting a manuscript in any format for publication in the scientific literature, trainees must either include their mentor as a coauthor or obtain their mentor’s written approval.

- A title page with a full author list, including author affiliations, is required before a manuscript is edited in Scientific Publications.

EQUATOR Network offers more than 300 specialized reporting guidelines

-- Brandon C. Strubberg

Over the past 10 years, the EQUATOR Network has been working to improve the quality of health research and publications through accurate, complete, and transparent reporting. EQUATOR (Enhancing the QUAlity and Transparency Of health Research) began in 2006 and was built upon the work of other groups, like the CONSORT Group, to develop guidelines for reporting research.

EQUATOR provides a comprehensive database of reporting guidelines in its online library. The searchable database contains all reporting guidelines published since 1996 that have been identified via systematic literature searches. EQUATOR has developed specific keyword search strategies to identify guidelines for reporting research in PubMed, Embase, Cinahl, and Web of Science. These searches are run regularly to update the network’s database.
The database currently includes 331 reporting guidelines sorted into categories, including experimental studies (e.g., CONSORT for randomized trials), observational studies, diagnostic accuracy studies, biospecimen reporting, reliability and agreement studies, systematic reviews and meta-analyses, qualitative research, mixed methods studies, economic evaluations, quality improvement studies, reporting experimental data, and statistical methods and analyses. In addition, the database links to the “Minimum Information for Biological and Biomedical Investigations” website, which provides checklists for reporting experimental data in “omics” and allied technologies.

The EQUATOR database of guidelines includes guidelines for specific conditions and procedures, under which many reporting guidelines for cancer clinical trials are included. Moreover, to aid writers, the database includes guidelines for reporting specific sections of research reports.

Of particular note to MD Anderson researchers, EQUATOR also has begun compiling reporting guidelines for individual health specialties. The first of these collections, which is still under development, is the oncology specialist collection.

More than 150 journals currently refer to and encourage the use of the EQUATOR Network’s resources. In addition, the Council of Science Editors strongly supports EQUATOR.

Source


Autumn and winter schedule for the Research Medical Library webinar program

-- Jill Delsigne-Russell

Recent and upcoming webinars from the Research Medical Library include sessions helpful for people conducting literature reviews, as well as a new webinar on locating faculty publications. Also be sure to check out the library’s extensive archive of past webinars. You can participate in live webinars or access past webinars from the library’s “Classes & Webinars” page.

Recent and upcoming webinars:

Embase – Reviewing the Literature Beyond MEDLINE
Presented August 29, 2016

Comprehensive literature reviews require searching in more than one database. Embase, a biomedical literature database, indexes more than 6 million records and 2,900 journals that are not covered in MEDLINE and provides coverage back to 1947. In addition, Embase includes 2 million abstracts from more than 6,000 drug and biomedical research conferences dating back to 2009. This 30-minute webinar teaches you how to find the best literature for your research by searching Embase using the Ovid interface. Attend, ask questions, and receive helpful input from an experienced librarian from the Research Medical Library.
PubMed for Advanced Searches  
November 16, 2016, 11:00 am-12:00 pm

This online class is for advanced PubMed users. You will learn how to answer clinical questions quickly with PubMed and how to construct an advanced search strategy for a comprehensive literature review. The webinar also will cover how to create a custom PubMed page to find the most relevant literature quickly and how to access all of MD Anderson's full-text subscriptions.

Finding Faculty Publications  
December 7, 2016, 11:00 am-11:30 am

Keeping up to date with current publications is challenging. This webinar will demonstrate how to search for a specific author, set up author alerts, and access full-text articles. The webinar will also discuss several online author profile platforms, including Scopus, Influuent, and Google Citations.

To register for a webinar, please visit the library’s Class Calendar. Webinars are color-coded red. When you click on the link for the webinar, you will be directed to the registration screen.

Unusual terms used in scientific writing and publishing: Red Journal, Gray Journal, and other colorful nicknames

-- Bryan Tutt

If you’re looking for the Red Journal, you won’t find it under that name in PubMed. An Internet search engine, however, will lead you to the International Journal of Radiation Oncology • Biology • Physics, which is commonly referred to as the Red Journal because of its red cover.

Other peer-reviewed journals with nicknames derived from their cover colors include the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology (the Gray Journal) and Urology (the Gold Journal).

It gets more complicated if you’re looking for the Green Journal, which could mean Obstetrics & Gynecology, Neurology, Radiotherapy & Oncology, or The American Journal of Medicine. Likewise, the Blue Journal could refer to the Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology or the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine.

Although most readers view articles online and rarely see the covers of print journals, color-themed nicknames remain popular. Journal publishers seem to enjoy the distinction of having a sobriquet, and some even use the nickname in their Web address.

Upcoming events for authors

Please see the Scientific Publications website for more information on our educational courses.

Writing and Publishing Scientific Articles (WAPSA). WAPSA is a structured, practical, and in-depth writing-education program for postdoctoral fellows and clinical trainees of MD Anderson
taught by the Department of Scientific Publications. This 16-contact-hour course provides an excellent opportunity for advancing participants' skills in writing and publishing research articles while developing their in-progress manuscripts under the guidance of scientific editors.

Locations and times to be announced. Registration required through the Department of Scientific Publications. Details: John McCool (jhmccool@mdanderson.org), 713-792-3174.

November 1 & 8, 2016
January 11 & 18, 2017

Writing Scientific Articles (WSA): A Workshop for Faculty. WSA is a structured, practical, and in-depth writing-education program for clinical and basic science research faculty of MD Anderson taught by the Department of Scientific Publications. This 1-day, 8-contact-hour course provides an excellent opportunity to advance your skills in writing research articles with focus and clarity. Locations and times to be announced. Registration required through the Department of Scientific Publications. Details: John McCool (jhmccool@mdanderson.org), 713-792-3174.

February 9, 2017

Writing Persuasive R01 Proposals. This newly developed grant-writing workshop for clinical and basic science research faculty at MD Anderson focuses on the content, organization, and structure of an R01 grant application. Taught by senior editors in the Department of Scientific Publications, this 1-day workshop includes lecture, discussion, and guided grant outlining and development. Locations and times to be announced. Registration required through the Department of Scientific Publications. Details: Teasha Barker (tsbarker@mdanderson.org), 713-792-6019.

February 7, 2017

Short Courses in Scientific English for Non-Native Speakers of English. Courses last 7 weeks and meet twice a week for 1 or 1.5 hours each day. Classes are held early in the morning, during the lunch hour, or late in the afternoon. Classes are free of charge. Participants must speak English at the intermediate or higher level and be familiar with research and general biomedical terminology. Dates are subject to change. Details: Mark Picus (mapicus@mdanderson.org), 713-792-7251, or John McCool (jhmccool@mdanderson.org), 713-792-3174.

Session 1 – January 9 through February 23, 2017
Pronunciation 1, Pronunciation 2, Conversation 1, Conversation 2, Writing 3

Friday Conversation Group. The Friday Conversation Group provides an informal atmosphere for non-native speakers of English to practice their conversational abilities, learn more about American culture, and meet new friends. The class meets every Friday in the Mitchell Building (BSRB), room S3.8003, from 12:00 to 1:00 pm. No registration is required. Details: Mark Picus (mapicus@mdanderson.org), 713-792-7251, or John McCool (jhmccool@mdanderson.org), 713-792-3174.
Grant Writing Advice. The Department of Scientific Publications now offers grant writing suggestions (Writing R01 Grant Proposals) in the Writing Advice section of our website. This information, stemming from the Grant Writers’ Seminars and Workshops (developed by Drs. Stephen Russell and David Morrison and presented annually at MD Anderson) and from the NIH’s SF424 (R&R) Application Guide, focuses on R01 grants but can be applied to other types of NIH grants as well.

Writing the Specific Aims Section of a Grant Application. In this video, Scientific Editor Sunita Patterson presents a summary of the National Institutes of Health’s grant-review process and how it affects the grant proposal, an overview of the structure of an R01 grant proposal, and a model for writing the Specific Aims section. The video is available on the Scientific Publications website.

Writing Abstracts Online Tutorial. Writing Abstracts, an interactive, Web-based tutorial, covers the most important aspects of writing good abstracts. The lesson includes many examples and an optional self-assessment.

Improve Your Chances for IRG Funding. This PDF presentation by Walter Pagel, the former Director of the Department of Scientific Publications, guides researchers through the process of applying for institutional research grants.

Anatomy of a Research Article. In this video, Senior Scientific Editor Stephanie Deming presents advice on writing the parts of a research article: Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion, title, and abstract. The slides shown in the presentation and the presentation handout can be downloaded as well.

Classes Presented by the Research Medical Library. More classes will be posted on the Research Medical Library website once they have been finalized. Classes are located in the Research Medical Library classroom in the Pickens Academic Tower (FCT21.6008). Details: Laurissa Gann (lgann@mdanderson.org), 713-794-1111.

November 2, 11:00 am, Library Essentials for Administrative Assistants (Pickens, Floor 21)
November 7, 2:00 pm, Systematic Reviews: Planning the Literature Search (Pickens, Floor 21)
November 8, 3:00 pm, EndNote Basics (Pickens, Floor 21)
November 10, 3:00 pm, PubMed Basics (Pickens, Floor 21)
November 15, 3:00 pm, EndNote Advanced (Pickens, Floor 21)
November 16, 11:00 am, Online Class: PubMed for Advanced Searchers
December 1, 10:00 am, EndNote Basics (Pickens, Floor 21)
December 6, 10:00 am, PubMed Basics (Pickens, Floor 21)
December 7, 11:00 am, Online Class: Finding Faculty Publications
December 8, 10:00 am, EndNote Advanced (Pickens, Floor 21)
December 8, 2:00 pm, Literature Reviews: Searching for Evidence (Pickens, Floor 21)
December 13, 12:00 pm, Library Essentials for Administrative Assistants (Pickens, Floor 21)
All Research Medical Library classes require preregistration through the “Classes & Webinars” section of the Library’s website. MD Anderson employees should register through the Education Center. For class descriptions and printable handouts or calendars, go to the Research Medical Library’s Library Classes page.

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