

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Guidelines for preparing a poster for presentation at the POGP Annual Conference

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Abstract

As an organization, POGP are eager to encourage our members to undertake research and disseminate their work. In particular, we are keen for them to present their work at our Annual Conference in the form of a poster. This may sound daunting, but this article provides some tips on preparing a poster for presentation, with the aim of encouraging more members to share their work.

Keywords: Annual Conference, guidelines, Pelvic, Obstetric and Gynaecological Physiotherapy, poster presentation, research.

Introduction

Research posters are an excellent medium for presenting research to an audience in an informal setting away from the main platform (Gundogan *et al.* 2016). Over the past 5 years, the POGP Annual Conference has seen a steady increase in the number of poster presentations that have been submitted by attendees. A poster display allows delegates to read concise summaries of information in an attractive format. Meanwhile, researchers have an opportunity to disseminate their work, and answer questions from and generate discussion with conference attendees. Posters usually consist of a mixture of text and graphics in order to convey a message in as succinct and efficient manner as possible.

Submission

Before you begin to think about preparing a poster, you will need to submit a completed registration form to express your interest in presenting at Conference. Details of the call for abstracts are e-mailed to the POGP membership, and are posted on the microsite (<http://pogp.csp.org.uk/>) some months before each event (POGP 2018a). You will be informed of the decision to accept or reject your work 4–6 weeks in advance of Conference.

This may seem like ample time to prepare a poster, but you should bear in mind that

unexpected delays during peer review and the printing process may take up a lot of this period. Furthermore, your work may also be selected for platform presentation, in which case you will also have a presentation to prepare. Therefore, it is advisable to start your poster before you are made aware of the academic panel's decision.

It should also be obvious that you must know that you are able to attend the whole conference before you start the application process. You will need to stand beside your poster to answer questions on both Friday and Saturday to allow all one-day delegates to view your work.

Initial planning

It is worth taking some time to think about your poster before you begin work on it. The aim is to produce a poster that is attractive, but the presentation should not detract from the main/key points/takeaway messages that you want to make.

Start by considering your key points, and how you aim to make these the centre of attraction. Think about your graphics, but bear in mind that you should not overload the poster with these: always return to the aim of getting the delegate to take home your main points, not a memory of fancy graphics. A table or chart is often the most efficient way to present results, but you should resist the temptation to make these too elaborate: a table that is too busy will make readers abandon your presentation and move on to the next poster.

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Next, think about the colours that you will use. Choose a contrasting background that will make the text easy to read, and restrict yourself to a maximum of three colours.

The logo of your hospital or university will convey all the necessary information about the source of your research, so have this ready for upload, along with the title and date of the conference. Ask around to see if your colleagues have prepared a poster that they could share with you to give you some ideas about the format. Start organizing the software that you will use well in advance. Your hospital or university will have a preferred program that they can provide for you, but there are also plenty to choose from online. Finally, consult your local printer to find out how much time you will need to allow to have your poster printed: not all outlets can do this on the spot.

Getting started

Having done your planning in advance, completing the poster should be much easier. Start with plenty of time to spare. You should aim to have your first draft ready at least 3 weeks ahead of the conference so that you can run it past several colleagues to get feedback (e.g. about how easy it is to read and any typographical errors). This will give you the time you need to make amendments before printing the poster.

Every conference has its own guidelines on formatting, but the requirements for the POGP Annual Conference are as follows (POGP 2018b):

- orientation: portrait (i.e. vertical);
- size: 762 × 1016 mm (width × length);
- paper: Quad or Quad Crown;
- dots per inch/pixels per inch: 300; and
- font size: (main title) 36; (subheadings) 28; (text) 24; and (bullet points) 28 (maximum).

Content

The format requirements (POGP 2018b) demand the inclusion of:

- all authors and their institutional affiliations;
- university, hospital and/or research centre title(s) and logo(s); and
- the title and date of the conference.

The suggested word count is between 300 and 800 words [excluding the title, author(s), affiliation(s) and so on]. As a rule of thumb, it is sensible to restrict each section to approximately 100–150 words so that readers can quickly skim through the poster. Keep the text

succinct, and consider using bullet points and a larger font for your takeaway messages, particularly in the results and conclusions (ULCS 2012; NYU Libraries 2018).

The title of the poster should be short, snappy and interesting. The rest of the text should broadly follow the abstract that you have submitted, although you will have more words to play with now.

The first part of the text should deal with the background, hypothesis and aims of the study. Describe the type of study that you are presenting (e.g. experimental, case series or service evaluation), and mention whether the research is new, and what is different or exciting about it.

A section on the study design, materials and methods should come next. You need to provide basic information about the participants, the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the setting, the intervention, the outcome measures, and the statistical methods. These data can be presented in a flowchart, but if so, you should ensure that it is not too crowded and can be read from a distance of at least 1 m.

The results represent the most important section of the poster. It is worth spending more time on this part in terms of both content and layout to make your graphs and tables interesting. Once again, think about using a larger font and/or bullet points to emphasize your main findings.

The penultimate section should be dedicated to the interpretation of your results. Include only statements that are directly related to your work. Start with your overall conclusions, and then discuss any confounders, limitations and, if appropriate, suggestions for future research.

Finally, you should insert the all-important takeaway message, and ensure that this stands out.

Other tips that are worth remembering are to arrive early on the first day of Conference to put your poster up, and remember to bring your own supply of pins or Velcro pads. Although your abstract will be printed in the conference proceedings, you may also wish to attach a plastic pocket with paper copies of your poster. You will be required to stand by the display during at least one coffee break on Friday and Saturday so as to allow all one-day delegates to ask you questions. It is worth pre-empting questions in advance by preparing some stock answers. Above all, remember that you are a presenter when you are standing by your poster, and therefore, it is important to be both professional and approachable.

And last, but not least, enjoy the experience!

Conclusion

In summary:

- Prepare your poster well in advance.
- Follow the POGP formatting guidelines (POGP 2018b)
- Do not overcrowd your poster: it should be easily readable at a distance of at least 1 m.
- Always focus on your key takeaway messages.

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