

# Is there a need for uniform poster presentation guidelines across conferences?

Kunbi Ayo-Okanlawon, Amy MacLucas, Nina C Kennard

iS LifeScience, Farnham, Surrey, United Kingdom

## Abstract

**Objective:** Guidelines such as GPP and CONSORT provide researchers with overarching recommendations that ensure uniformity and consistency in the reporting of medical research. However, there are currently no overarching guidelines for poster presentations. This analysis evaluated the consistency of poster presentation guidelines across conferences.

**Research design and methods:** Conference Authority was used to identify conferences taking place within the EU between 2015 and 2017, across three therapeutic areas (oncology, women's health and vaccines). Poster guidelines were analysed for consistency between conferences. Comparisons were made based on the provision of guidelines for authorship, structure, disclosure of clinical-trial registration and trial design.

**Results:** Analysis of poster guidelines across therapeutic areas.

Congresses Identified	Oncology (n=60)	Women's health (n=22)	Vaccines (n=5)
Guidelines available, n (%)	37 (62)	15 (68)	5 (100)
n (%)	Oncology (n=37)	Women's health (n=15)	Vaccines (n=5)
Authorship requirements*	22 (59)	4 (27)	N/A
Trial registration	1 (3)	2 (13)	N/A
Trial design	1 (3)	2 (13)	N/A
Structure (eg background, methods, conclusion)	30 (81)	12 (80)	1 (20)

\*Guidelines did not define specific authorship criteria; N/A, denotes not available.

**Conclusions:** This analysis showed that many conferences do not provide detailed poster guidelines. Of the conferences that provide guidelines, there is no consistency across the board; structure appears to be the only guideline information that is consistent across conferences.

## Background

- Conference posters are an extension of the published abstract and often the first presentation of study data
- Due to congresses offering digital solutions for hosting the posters after the congress, and QR codes as well as smart phones being used, the longevity of posters has now increased
- Through online capabilities, posters are often available after the congress, even to people who did not attend
- Consistency, transparency and accuracy of posters is, therefore, now even more important, as readers can more readily base their initial assessment of a trial or research on the information reported in congress posters
- Guidelines such as GPP and CONSORT provide researchers with overarching recommendations that ensure uniformity and consistency in the reporting of medical research.<sup>1-3</sup> However, there are currently no overarching guidelines for poster presentations

## Key points

- Conference organisers are encouraged to endorse the use of CONSORT for abstracts by modifying their 'Instructions to Authors'.<sup>4</sup> This is to ensure that readers are able to use abstracts more effectively and to assess the validity of the research more precisely<sup>4</sup>
- The ease of access to posters, after a conference, begs the need for similar endorsements by conference organisers or the creation of separate overarching guidelines for poster presentation

## Objective

- To determine:
  - the level of consistency of poster guidelines across conferences
  - whether there is a need for consensus guidelines for posters across conferences

## Research design and methods

### Conferences

- Conference Authority (Sylogent) was used to identify the most recent of each conference taking place within the EU between 2015 and 2017, across three therapeutic areas:

**Oncology, Women's health, Vaccines**

### Study endpoints

- Guidelines were obtained from the website of each conference, where available, and comparisons were made based on the provision of guidelines for the following criteria:
  - Authorship requirements:** Did the poster guideline provide guidance on who should be considered an author?
  - Sponsorship/disclosures:** Did the poster guideline require authors to disclose conflicts of interest and financial relationships?
  - Trial registration:** Did the poster guideline require authors to include trial registration details for clinical trial data?
  - Trial design:** Did the poster guideline require authors to include clinical trial design details?
  - Structure (eg background, methods, conclusions):** Did the poster guideline provide guidance on structure?
  - e-Posters:** Did the poster guideline provide information and guidance on e-Posters?

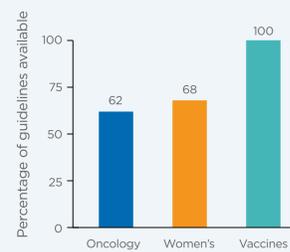
### Analysis

- Guidelines were analysed for consistency between conferences
- Some abstract guidelines provided guidance for poster presentation; therefore, these were also considered as poster guidelines and included in the data analysis
- Guidelines were analysed for authorship requirements based on criteria similar to the ICMJE recommendations for defining authors and contributors
  - Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND<sup>5</sup>
  - Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND<sup>5</sup>
  - Final approval of the version to be published; AND<sup>5</sup>
  - Agreement 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<sup>5</sup>

## Results

### Conferences

- A total of 60 oncology, 22 women's health and 5 vaccines conferences were identified
- Of these conferences, guidelines were available for 37 oncology, 15 women's health and all 5 of the vaccines conferences (Figure 1)
- Poster guidelines are sometimes sent to authors when their abstracts are accepted; therefore, these would not necessarily be available online



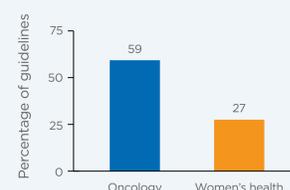
**Figure 1.** Percentage of guidelines available from websites of conferences identified within the EU

### Key points

- Of the 87 conferences for which guidelines were available, 3 (from oncology conferences) had poster guidelines separate from the abstract guidelines
- The specific poster guidelines contained information related to poster dimensions, aesthetics and instructions for display

### Did the poster guideline provide guidance on who should be considered an author?

- Specific authorship criteria, similar to the four main ICMJE authorship criteria, were not defined for any of the conferences that provided guidelines for authorship requirements (Figure 2)
- Authors were required to list their institutional affiliations; however, guidelines did not provide guidance on the role of authors or acknowledgement of contributors
- Detailed guidelines for the presenting and/or corresponding author were provided and includes the following:
  - The presenting/corresponding author:
    - Certifies to be an investigator with a substantial involvement in the clinical study presented in the abstract
    - Confirms that all authors are aware of and agree with the content of the abstract and support the data presented
    - Warrants that the data and conclusions presented in the abstract have not been presented or published at any meeting prior to the conference
    - Accepts to be the contact person for all correspondence concerning the abstract and to inform co-authors about its status



**Figure 2.** Percentage of guidelines that provided authorship requirements

### Key points

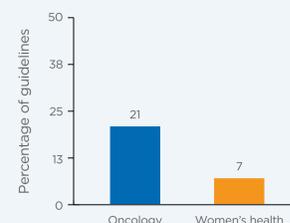
- Specific authorship criteria were not defined in any of the guidelines that provided authorship requirements
- None of the vaccines conferences provided guidance on authorship requirements

### Did the poster guideline require authors to disclose conflicts of interest and financial relationships?

- Below is an example of a guideline statement provided to authors on the disclosure of any, potential, or apparent conflict of interest and any financial relationships they may have

The presenting/corresponding author identifies any financial interest in products or processes described in the abstract: the presenting author is requested to tick the "Conflict of interest" box when submitting the abstract and to provide disclosure of interest and relationships through abstract submission program. This includes stock ownership, membership on an advisory board or board of directors, corporate-sponsored research, or other substantive relationships

- Interestingly, the number of guidelines that required authors to disclose this information was limited (Figure 3)



**Figure 3.** Percentage of guidelines requiring authors to disclose conflict of interests and financial relationships

### Key points

- The number of guidelines that required authors to disclose any potential or apparent conflict of interest and any financial relationships they may have was limited
- The guidelines for sponsorship and disclosure were clear and specific

## References

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## Acknowledgements

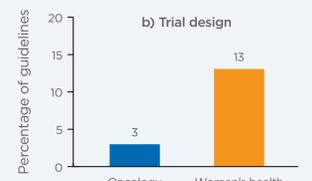
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## Disclosures

All authors are employees of iS LifeScience, a Cello Health Communications business. Amy MacLucas and Nina Kennard are active members of ISMP.

### Did the poster guideline require authors to include trial registration and trial design details for clinical trial data?

- The number of guidelines that required authors to include trial registration and trial design details for clinical trial data was limited (Figure 4)
- Of these guidelines, authors were also required to include the following clinical trial data:
  - Trial abbreviation
  - Objective
  - Population studied (including sample size)
  - Intervention
  - Outcome measures
  - Analysis
  - Trial status and sponsors



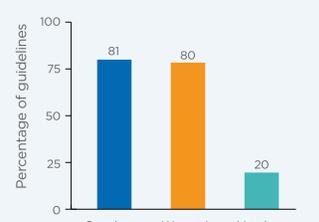
**Figure 4.** Percentage of guidelines requiring authors to include (a) trial registration details and (b) trial design details for clinical trial data

### Key points

- A limited number of guidelines required authors to include trial registration and trial design details for clinical trial data
- For those that did, the guidelines were precise and adequate

### Did the poster guideline provide guidance on structure?

- A significant number of conferences provided guidelines for poster structure (Figure 5)
- These guidelines were generally the same across the board and required each poster to contain the following:
  - Abstract title
  - Background
  - Methods
  - Results
  - Conclusion



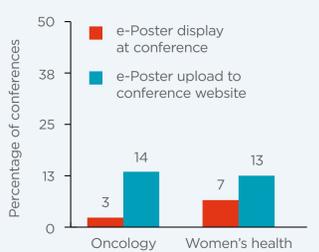
**Figure 5.** Percentage of guidelines providing guidance for poster structure

### Key point

- A significant number of conferences provided specific guidelines for poster structure, including section headings and flow

### Did the poster guideline provide information and guidance on e-Posters?

- A total of 5 oncology and 2 women's health conferences provided guidance on how authors can submit an e-Poster
- These guidelines include:
  - Dimensions
  - Templates
  - Font type and size
  - Use of videos and graphics
  - e-Poster support



**Figure 6.** Percentage of guidelines providing information and guidance on e-Posters

### Key points

- A limited number of conferences provided information and guidance for e-Posters
- For those that did, the guidelines are specific and similar across conferences

## Conclusions

- As the longevity of congress posters increases, the consistency, transparency and accuracy becomes increasingly important; however, there are no overarching guidelines for poster development
- Of the conferences identified in this analysis, there was a lack of consistency in the guidelines across the board; structure appears to be the only guideline information that is consistent across conferences
- Where separate poster guidelines were available, only guidance on poster dimensions, aesthetics and instructions for display were provided
- Criteria for authorship was not defined and there was no mention of acknowledgments of contributors in any of the poster guidelines
- This study highlights the lack of guidelines for the development of poster presentations; however, the authors acknowledge that this is a cross-section of congresses in three therapeutic areas and there is a need to expand the study to explore more therapy areas and conferences