10 tips for abstract submission

The process of submitting an abstract offers great experience, irrespective of the outcome. If successful, it is a fantastic way to have your work published, disseminated and shared. If you are not successful then any feedback you receive will help you next time (it's win win!)

1. Check the guidelines before you start

All abstract calls will have some form of guidance; this usually includes headings and layout as well as word count. The guidelines will help you know what is expected and what to focus on.

2. If this is your first abstract, ask a colleague for help

Abstract writing is a skill and if this is your first one just getting started can be a challenge. Once you're familiar with the guidance, ask a colleague for their advice on getting started; they can guide you on what to include in each section. If your colleagues do not have experience in abstract writing then consider asking someone in the wider MDT, or reach out to the RNG.

3. Look at other abstracts

Some conferences publish the successful abstracts; if the conference you are submitting to does this, have a look through last years. This can give you ideas about what makes a successful abstract, expectations, style and content.

4. The content (and word limit)

With all abstracts there's a word limit. Start by making a list of the major points in each section
you want to cover. Each sentence needs to count – if a word/sentence doesn't add anything to the information you are conveying, don't include it. Avoid repetition; if it's covered in one section then it shouldn't need covering again.

5. Be clear about ethics

Queries relating to whether work should have had ethical approval can lead to an abstract being rejected. Make sure you follow the ethics guidance provided by the conference organiser. Be prepared to provide evidence of ethical approval or why ethics was not needed. Further information can be found at: http://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/ethics/

6. Use of Abbreviations

Abbreviations have their place but do not over use them because this impacts on flow and can be annoying for the reader! Don't forget that when you do use abbreviations you must always write them out in full first.

7. Think carefully about the title

The title sets the tone of your abstract and needs to be interesting. Your title informs the abstract content so make sure it is an accurate description. Be careful not to over describe it, keep it concise.

8. Ask someone to read your abstract

Ideally choose someone who is not directly involved in your work to read your finished abstract. They may think of things that a reviewer could pick up on; this will help you make sure your abstract is clear.

9. Proof read

Always proof read your abstract for grammar and spelling; ideally when you have fresh eyes! Ideally also asking someone else to proof read prior to submission as they are more likely to pick up on mistakes than you are. Once submitted, abstracts usually cannot be amended; therefore if they are successful they may end up being published with mistakes.

10. Oral or poster

Some conferences (not all) will ask you what your preferences are for presenting your work should your abstract submission be accepted. Some work lends itself better to poster presentation and others to an oral presentation (sometimes you can choose both options). When preparing your abstract, think about the pro and cons of each presentation method and decide what would be best for your work before choosing (you may want to discuss this with others).