

Formatting Guide for Original Clinical Research Qualitative and Mixed Methods

On first review, we are very flexible about the format of the manuscript in order to facilitate reviews of manuscripts that have been prepared without our journal in mind or which have been previously submitted and declined elsewhere. If a manuscript has standard or sensible structure and meets ethical standards, we will consider it.

However, if you are preparing the manuscript specifically for CJKHD, please follow these guidelines as you develop your work.

If you receive a decision of major or minor revisions, one of the requirements at that time is to comply with mandatory formatting requirements.

Mandatory formatting requirements

- **Non-declarative title that includes the study design**
- **Structured abstract using headings below, no more than 4096 characters including spaces (about 650 words). Mixed methods studies should also include the abstract headings from Original Clinical Research Quantitative.**
- **Structured manuscript using headings below.**
- **Ethical considerations (see end of document)**

Overview

This publication type covers original clinical research using qualitative methodology.

Mixed methods studies should be submitted as Original Clinical Research Mixed Methods, and should provide a structured abstract that covers both methodologies (i.e., quantitative headings from the Original Clinical Research Quantitative formatting guide and qualitative headings from below). The introduction should justify both components of the work. The methods and results sections should report qualitative and quantitative methodologies separately, following the formatting guidelines for Original Clinical Research Quantitative and for Original Clinical Research Qualitative. The ordering of the two components should be consistent throughout. The discussion should integrate the findings from both methodologies.

Title Page

The title page should:

- Present a title that includes, if appropriate, the study design e.g.:
 - "The experience of X: An phenomenological study", "A mixed method evaluation of Y...", "A synthesis review of Z..."
 - Because the scientific process is rarely unequivocal, we do not favor declarative titles (e.g. "A reduces Y in the treatment of C"). However, if you feel your work is best served by a declarative title, you may use one and justify it in the cover letter.
- List the full names, institutional addresses and email addresses for all authors
 - if a collaboration group should be listed as an author, please list the Group name as an author. If you would like the names of the individual members of the Group to be

searchable through their individual PubMed records, please include this information in the “Acknowledgements” section in accordance with the instructions below

- Indicate the corresponding author

Abstract

The Abstract should not exceed 4096 characters including spaces (about 650 words), and will usually be less than 500 words. (PubMed truncates abstracts at 4096 characters.) Please minimize the use of abbreviations and do not cite references in the abstract. When a report is of a type for which standard reporting guidelines have been published, you may use either the guidelines’ headings or CJKHD’s own for your structured abstract.

- Background
- Objective
- Design
- Setting
- Patients or Sample or Participants
- Methods
- Results
- Limitations
- Conclusions
- Trial registration: If your article is a systematic review or reports the results of a health care intervention on human participants, it must be registered in an appropriate registry and the registration number and date of registration should be in stated in this section.

The abstract will be translated into French by CJKHD staff once the English is finalised.

Keywords

Five keywords representing the main content of the article.

Introduction

The background section should explain the background to the study, its aims, a summary of the existing literature and why this study was necessary or its contribution to the field. The following is a suggestion rather than a mandated format:

- Why did you do it? (why problem is important)
- What was there before? (and what is currently lacking)
- Research question identification

Research question identification is adapted from

<https://academic.oup.com/jpepsy/article/41/5/493/2579928>

Research question identification

a. Describe a clear and feasible research question that focuses on discovery or exploration. Consider using SPIDER format. The SPIDER tool was developed by adapting the PICODT tool, and is described in more detail here: <https://www.nccmt.ca/knowledge-repositories/search/191>.

(S) Sample: smaller samples are used in qualitative research, where findings are not intended to be generalized to the general population.

(PI) Phenomenon of Interest: qualitative research examines how and why certain experiences, behaviours and decisions are occurring (in contrast to effectiveness of an intervention).

(D) Design: the study design influences the robustness of the study analysis and findings.

(E) Evaluation: evaluation outcomes may include more subjective outcomes (such as views, attitudes, etc.).

(R) Research type: qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods research could be searched for.

b. Hypotheses: Avoid providing hypotheses

Methods

The methods section should include the following information, adapted from <https://academic.oup.com/jpepsy/article/41/5/493/2579928>. This format is a suggestion, any logical format is acceptable.

Study design and methods

a. Theory: Describe how theory informed the study, including research question, design, analysis, and/or interpretation

i. Use methodological congruence as a guiding principle

ii. If divergence from theory occurs, explain and justify how and why theory was modified

b. Sampling and sample size: Following the concept of transferability, clearly describe sample selection methods and sample descriptive characteristics, and provide evidence of data saturation and depth of categories

c. Describe any changes to data collection methods made over the course of the study (e.g., modifications to interview guide)

Data analysis

a. Document and describe a systematic analytic process (e.g., use of coding framework, development of codes—a priori codes, emergent codes, how codes were collapsed, methods used for coding, memos, coding process)

i. Coding strategy: Provide information on who comprised the coding team (if multiple coders were used), and coding training and process, with emphasis on systematic methods, including strategies for resolving differences between coders

ii. Method of organizing data (e.g., computer software, manually): Describe how data were organized. If qualitative computer software was used, provide name and version number of software used.

Rigor and transparency

a. Rigor: Describe how rigor (e.g., credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability, authenticity) was established throughout the research process

- b. Transparency: Clearly articulate study procedures and data analysis strategies

Results

The results section should include the following information, adapted from <https://academic.oup.com/jpepsy/article/41/5/493/2579928>. This format is a suggestion, any logical format is acceptable.

Presentation of findings

- a. Results, with evidence from data: Provide summaries and interpretations of the data (e.g., themes, conceptual models) and select illustrative quotes, as appropriate. Present the findings in the context of the relevant literature, as appropriate.
- b. If relevant, quantification of results along with qualitative findings: Consider whether quantification of findings is appropriate. If quantification is used, provide justification for its use.

Discussion

This section should discuss the implications of the findings in context of existing research and highlight limitations of the study. Use a logical structure that fits with the approach implemented, or consider using one of these suggestions to ensure that major points are covered in a logical way.

1. Statement of principal findings
2. Strengths and weaknesses of the study
3. Strengths and weaknesses in relation to other studies, discussing particularly any differences in results
4. Meaning of the study: possible mechanism and implications for clinicians or policymakers
5. Unanswered questions and future research

(Source: Docherty M, Smith R. The case for structuring the discussion of scientific papers : Much the same as that for structuring abstracts . BMJ : British Medical Journal. 1999;318(7193):1224-1225. Available at: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1115625/>)

1. Provide a brief synopsis of key findings, with particular emphasis on how the findings add to the body of pertinent knowledge.
2. Discuss possible mechanisms and explanations for the findings.
3. Compare study results with relevant findings from other published work. Briefly state literature search sources and methods (e.g., English-language MEDLINE search to Jan 2007) that identified previous pertinent work. Use tables and figures to help summarize previous work when possible.
4. Discuss the limitations of the present study and any methods used to minimize or compensate for those limitations.
5. Mention any crucial future research directions.
6. Conclude with a brief section that summarizes in a straightforward and circumspect manner the clinical and/or other key implications of the work.

(Source: Annals of Internal Medicine. Information for Authors.)

Conclusions

This should state clearly the main conclusions and provide an explanation of the importance and relevance of the study reported. Implications for clinical practice and for further research should be mentioned, if relevant.

Ethical considerations

This can be a separate section or integrated into methods.

- All studies that involve human investigation need to state in the manuscript that they have REB approval.