

Chapter 7.6

How to write up your research

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Learning objectives

To understand the practical steps involved in preparing a report of your research, including:

- Identifying and targeting the relevant audience for better impact, use and uptake of your research findings.
- Prioritizing what needs to be in the manuscript and identifying an appropriate journal.
- Preparing an outline of the manuscript.
- Developing the manuscript in accordance with the instructions for authors of the targeted journal and relevant reporting guidelines.
- Getting the manuscript accepted and published.

Importance of reporting research done in emergency settings

Public interests of safety, survival and well-being are often prioritized over research interests in the acute phase of an emergency, and research is more likely in the **pre- and post-emergency phases** (risk prevention, readiness and recovery). However, whenever Health EDRM research is done, it should be reported because:

- Research evidence from emergency settings is scarce.
- Evidence from research is needed to improve emergency preparedness and response systems.
- Stakeholders, donors and policy makers need to be able to access the findings and recommendations of research.

Prepare to write up your research

- Be clear about **what and how you want to publish, who you want to reach** with your findings and **how your findings might be translated into action**.
- Ideally, **choose a journal** which is
 - Open access.
 - Has an audience that will allow for effective uptake and impact of your research.
- Ensure that there is a **clear understanding among authors** on the sequencing of authorship.

First steps for planning the manuscript

- Study and follow the journal's instructions for authors (e.g. style; limits on words, tables and figures; focus areas).
- Apply the relevant reporting guidelines for the research design, which are available via the EQUATOR network's website and include
 - STROBE for observational studies.
 - CONSORT for randomized trials.
 - PRISMA for systematic reviews.
 - RECORD for studies using routinely collected health data.
- Develop a short title that reflects essence of the research.

Content of the manuscript

Main text of the manuscript is likely to include:

- Introduction and/or background
- Methods and materials
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusions
- Acknowledgements
- Conflict of interest (if any)
- References
- Annexes and supplementary material

Developing an abstract

- Follow the journal's instructions for authors and any relevant reporting guidelines (e.g. CONSORT for abstracts)
- Develop the abstract as needed, using a structured (e.g. background, methods and materials, results and conclusions) or unstructured format within prescribed words limit.
- Keep the abstract simple, interesting and informative for effective dissemination.
- Provide keywords.

Drafting and finalizing the manuscript before submission

- Prepare a first draft of the manuscript and share this with all authors for review.
- Revise the draft based on their feedback.
- Don't be in a rush to share the revised manuscript: put it one side for a week and then re-visit it with a fresh-mind.
- Agree the final manuscript with the co-authors.
- If necessary, obtain formal approvals from relevant departments engaged in or supporting the research.

Submitting your manuscript and finalizing the publication

- Decide on the corresponding author and provide their contact details.
- Carefully follow the journal's instructions for submitting the manuscript, including, if required, providing a signed statement from all authors taking responsibility for the content of the manuscript.
- Be ready to receive comments from the journal's reviewers and editors.
- Be polite and respectful in responding to these comments and provide clarifications where needed.
- Re-submit the revised manuscript within time specified by the journal.
- If the journal accepts the manuscript for publication, be diligent in checking the "proofs".

Key messages

- Preparing and publishing the findings of Health EDRM research is a valuable contribution to strengthening humanitarian action.
- When publishing your research, be clear about the new evidence you have generated and how it can make a positive difference.
- Prepare and submit your manuscript in accordance with the instructions for authors of the chosen journal, relevant reporting guidelines for the type of study you did and the expectations of your target audience.
- Ideally, submit the manuscript to an open-access journal, which will help with its wide distribution, use by others and uptake of your findings.

Further readings

Booth WC, Colom GG, Williams JM. The craft of research (2nd edn). University of Chicago Press; 2003

This describes the complexity of refining research ideas, translating them into studies and reporting these studies. It will provide early-stage researchers with in-depth knowledge of problems they might face and how to deal with these..

The WHO strategy on research for health. WHO: Geneva, Switzerland. 2012

WHO has long given high priority to research. Evidence from research is critical for improving global health, health equity and economic development. This WHO strategy should help readers to understand the importance of conducting and reporting research that can influence policy and practice.

References

- This chapter:** Ofrin RH, Bhola AK, Buddha N. Chapter 7.6: How to write up your research **Guidance on managing ethical issues in infectious disease outbreaks.** WHO (2016): <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/250580>
- Conducting research in the context of global health emergencies: identifying key ethical and governance issues.** Nuffield Council on Bioethics, 2016
- Indexed Journal: what does it mean?** Lung India: 2012: 29: 193
- Reporting guidelines for various types of research study:** www.equator-network.org
- Predicting publication long-term impact through a combination of early citations and journal impact factor.** Journal of Informetrics. 2019: 3: 32-49
- How to write your first research paper?** Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine 2011: 84: 181-90
- How to write a scientific article.** International Journal of Sports Physical Therapy. 2012: 7: 512-7

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