

EDITORIAL

Abstract thoughts of hemostasis

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As we enter mid-winter in North America, the minds of hemostasis investigators across the globe will be focused on 5 pm Eastern Standard Time on Monday February 4th. This is the deadline for on-line submission of abstracts for the upcoming 27th Congress of the International Society on Thrombosis and Haemostasis (ISTH) to be held in Melbourne in July.

The ISTH Congress has always played a key role in the organization's showcasing of all that is new and exciting in our discipline, and with the upcoming conversion to annual congresses, there is every likelihood that this impact will be further enhanced. The benefits of our congress are multiple, but central to the success of every congress is the selection of scientific abstracts that provide insights into the new discoveries that will add new knowledge to the field of hemostasis and thrombosis.

Scientific abstracts usually represent the first step in the journey of new information through the peer review process and in many instances, they are also the first time that more junior researchers are presenting their results to a well-informed audience, that of course at ISTH is internationally representative.

The generation of the best abstract submissions requires thoughtful planning well in advance of the deadline submission date. A key component to abstract development is the timing of the abstract presentation in the overall evolution of a research project. This requires the identification of projects that will have matured sufficiently to deliver informative results in the abstract text, will still have time to add to the data by the time of the chosen congress, but will not have appeared as a completed peer-reviewed manuscript by the time of the congress. Finding projects that fit into this window of presentation opportunity will significantly enhance the element of novelty that always plays a critical part in capturing abstract reviewers' attention.

Another major challenge in the generation of an abstract text is the severe limitation of space to adequately describe the details of study rationale, design, results and conclusions. For the more junior researchers, who are often the presenting authors of these abstracts, this requirement for text limitation can be especially demanding. Nevertheless, this is yet another reason why scientific abstract generation is an important element in the early stages of career development, as even the most generous peer-reviewed journals demand word limits that require succinct and precise study descriptions as opposed to disordered, rambling narratives.

Two final components of the abstract submission process merit further comment: choice of the appropriate session for presentation and choosing the format for the presentation (oral platform vs. poster). As the abstract session titles at each congress differ, an initial overview should be undertaken to identify the optimal groupings that most clearly match the abstract title and content. At ISTH congresses, this will usually involve weighing basic science vs. clinical content and relevance to the specific session theme.

Lastly, the choice between an oral and poster format of presentation should be carefully considered in the context of the abstract content, and particularly the type and complexity of the study results. Even the personality of the proposed presenter might factor into this decision. While the typical 15-min oral presentation may provide the opportunity to simultaneously showcase the study findings to a large audience, the potential for in-depth explanations and emphasis on key methodologic details and results is severely limited. In contrast, in the hands of a confident presenter, a poster presentation delivered to a much smaller but probably more engaged audience will enable more meaningful discussion about study details.

Good luck with your abstract generation and remember that the key to success is to make the reviewer desperate to hear the completed story in Melbourne in July!