Foundation pillars: building up a case report

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Abstract
The medical field is being brushed with various researches which provide us novelty in the specific field. Observational studies or incidental findings are accepted as case reports for publication. These findings are encountered during clinical and surgical practice, diagnostic procedures and dissection. A well-designed case report can easily cross all the barricades on the way of publication procedures. Hence, it is important to conceptualise and design a case report. This article highlights the basics requirements to construct the case report.

Conclusion
Case reports are indispensable resources in the medical literature. Case report serves not only to publish rare or unusual observation, but also, essential, to report frequency of rare occurrence.

Editorial
Case reports have substantial contribution in the advances in the field of medicine/medical career and has become an integral component of research. A case report, of various kinds, emphasises on findings that have not been reported before, resulting from keen observation in clinical practice, surgical intervention, treatment innovation or cadaveric dissection. Thus a case report is a distinctive medium to convey strange or rare, unpublished details to the medical populace; furthermore, they enhance our understanding and foster the knowledge profoundly. Case reports provide valuable information either, it may be novel and beneficial so that it triggers others to quest for similar findings to arrive at new speculations or provide a cautionary note about sabotage to the health care professionals'. Though case reports have an equivocal reputation, but, these are about structural variations or unusual untoward treatment effects, which lead the health care professional to proceed in a new direction that ensures safety1. Many journals do not accept case reports for various reasons; however, a journal like Open Access Case Reports (OA publishing London)2, is devoted to publishing case reports and have laid their specific instruction for authors regarding the structure, content, format and acceptance of manuscript1. This article aims to provide general essential guidelines and scientific tips to prepare a manuscript in an orchestrated pattern and publish a case report.

Mosaic of a case report
Generally, a case report is limited to 1500–2000 words with references about 20–30 in number as recommended by Cohen1. Unlike a research article, case reports do not abide by IMRAD format3,4. The skeleton of a case report includes: title, abstract, introduction, case report or case description, discussion with in-depth literature review, conclusion, acknowledgement and references1. In addition to these, the tables, figures or photographs and illustrations enhance the quality of the case report.

The title
Presently, every reader/researcher searches the internet for required articles by using provisional phrases as a title. The title of the article informs the reader about whether the article relates to his/her literature quest4. A well-written title draws the attention of a reader; further drives them to peruse the entire article (case report). Hence an accurate, well-phrased/framed and vivid title is an indispensable part of the case report.

Abstract
An abstract is a standard requirement for a research paper, including a case report, in almost every journal. Abstract is classified into structured and non-structured. A non-structured abstract is sufficient to publish a case report in several journals; however, journals like Open Access Case Reports publishes a case report with a structured abstract7 that includes introduction, objective, methodology, result and conclusion. Utmost care must be taken to prepare an abstract, since it indicates the content of the article with exquisite precision. The abstract of a case report is brief than that of a research article, words range from 100 to 250 depending on requirement of a journal.

Keywords
A careful selection of unique keywords facilitates the case report to be found out by increasing number of readers or researchers during literature survey of their manuscript preparatory stage. It is wise to use words or terms documented in Index Medicus—Medical Subheadings (MeSH) which can be noticed in the PubMed webpage9,10.

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Introduction
In the introduction section, author/s should justify, by emphasising evidences from the literature to demonstrate, why the case report is essential and suitable for publishing. Also, it is important to highlight the contribution of this case report to the literature, along with some background information. Though there are certain case reports with very brief or no introduction noticed in the literature, a well-organised introduction section further aggravates the curiosity of the reader to march into the core content of the case report.

Case report/case description
The case description/report is the cardinal part of the report. If an author/s' report includes events observed in clinical practice, the detailed description of cases such as clinical history, findings of physical and laboratory examination, assessment of patient, diagnosis (provisional and final), intervention (medical or surgical), drug effects (adverse or beneficial) and follow-up, should be pellucid in chronological sequence. On the other hand, if the report is based on cadaveric finding, the details like age, sex, purpose of dissection (academic teaching or autopsy), type of preservation or dissection (academic teaching or clinical sequence) should be pellucid in chronological sequence. It is advisable to provide a detailed description, if provided by a particular journal on their web page.

Patient consent
In order to publish a case report of a patient and to prevent confidentiality breach, a written consent should be obtained from the patient. It is advisable to download the consent details, if provided by a particular journal on their web page.

Conclusion
The conclusion note must be in simple language, devoid of reinstating the findings/observations or discussion. It should summarise the take-home message. Thus a few words, sentences or a short paragraph that reflects the core essential feature of the case report can be supported as a summary.

Acknowledgement
Briefly acknowledge all the individuals who extended their assistance, but did not participate directly, in preparation of the manuscript.

References
As suggested by Cohen, references can be included in the case report. The style of a reference (Harvard, Vancouver, etc.) varies among different journals; thus, based on instruction to authors provided by a particular journal, references should be arranged. Author should try to include the latest (possibly last 10–15 years) and relevant references in the body of the text. At present, availability of citation/reference manager software makes the laborious task of arranging the references easy and comfortable.

Figure
Depending on the requirement of a specific journal, format of figure varies either from .tif or .jpeg. Author/s can also support their case report with representative manually drawn interpretable pictures, which is one of the suitable modes especially while reporting an anatomical case report. Figures must be self-contained.

Legend
Each figure/photograph must be provided with a caption and detailed legend explaining the findings as well as elaborate the abbreviations, if any, labelled in the picture.

Table
Table/s can be included to highlight the findings in an easily comprehendible way. Further caution must be taken to avoid reinstating the data shown in tables in sentences in the case report. Utmost care must be taken to confirm that the data in rows and columns of the table are related to each other.

Conclusion
Case reports are indispensable resources in the medical literature. Case report serves not only to publish rare or unusual observation, but also, essential, to report frequency of rare occurrence. The skill of writing a case report manuscript is more contenting in combination with practice and patience.


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