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## Osteopathic Medical Network of Excellence in Education

*Promoting excellence in osteopathic medical education and research*

### General Guidelines for Scientific Poster Presentations

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#### Objective

To provide guidelines for the content, format, and presentation of a scientific poster.

#### Background

The purpose of scientific posters is to present work in the form of statement of the research problem, brief description of the approach and summary of (any) results obtained to date (what was done, why it was done and what happened). The poster should communicate these ideas in a way that stimulates one-on-one discussion. Generally, at conferences, the presenter stands next to the poster; the audience is walking through a hallway or exhibit. In other situations, such as the hallways of laboratories, universities, and corporations, posters are stand-alone presentations. For a poster to communicate the work, the poster has to orient an audience that is not seated, but one that is standing, and more likely walking by. In addition, audiences vary from discipline to discipline.

#### Five Essential Questions to Answer

1. What is the problem that is being addressed?
2. What is the current state-of-the-art? (what are the current ideas/technologies on the topic/concept being presented)
3. What is the key concept or technology (that will make a difference)?
4. What has been accomplished?
5. What is the plan for (future) success (summary and conclusion)?

NOTE: Identifying a problem is not so much of a challenge; few come up with a feasible/logical approach to solving the problem. The conceptual breakthrough (slide) is really the most important part of the five questions (assuming that an identified problem is worth solving or that is not already solved).

#### Content

Determine the one essential concept that needs to get across to the audience.

- In an early stage project (i.e., pilot studies), the focus might be more on a conceptual/technological element to convince readers that the research has a chance to be successful.
- A more mature project would not have to convince the viewer that the approach is promising; but should contain more accomplishments.
- If a project is part of an overall project, a single graphic for the overall project should be made that shows other members' contribution to the that project.

## Poster Layout

### *Title*

The title of the poster should quickly orient the audience. It should include the title of the work, the authors' names, the institutional affiliations, and the poster number.

- Make the title the most prominent block of text on the poster—either center or left justify at the top.
- The title banner should be readable from 15-20 feet away.
- Do *not* typeset the title in all capital letters—such text is difficult to read.
- Use small words such as: *of, from, with, to, the, a, an, or and* to separate details in the title.

### *Sections*

Specific sections should be easy to locate on the poster. Once readers recognize what the work is, they decide how much energy to invest into the poster. One good test is whether the audience recognizes the *subject and purpose within 20 seconds of seeing the poster*. Usually a poster accomplishes this goal with a well-crafted title and with supporting images. The type should be large enough to be read with enough contrast between the color of the type and the poster's background (black text is ideal, font 16-30 pt, headings should have larger fonts). Use a colored background to unify the poster.

### *Section Layout*

- Background/purpose (states research problem and should quickly address the subject matter).
- Methods (description of the approach).
- Arrange the material into columns.
- Data/Results (summary of findings, if unique state so).
- Conclusions and implications for the future.

Other concepts to remember when designing the poster:

- Design individual sections so that they can be quickly read (use numbers or bullets).
- The poster should not contain large blocks of text or contain long sentences (limit text to between 500 and 1500 words).
- Whenever possible, the sections should rely on images such as: photographs, drawings, and graphs.
- Do not cram the poster full of information.
- Blank space is good as it makes the poster seem less complicated and more approachable.
- Select dark color (black/blue) for main text, select red for important text, use fill color for identifying group, or entire element, or use one color to indicate importance of your headings.

## Poster Submission Specifications

Know the specifications for poster submission and follow those guidelines—size, formatting, etc. Use a PowerPoint® template (see examples), preview the layout as colors may not be exactly as you envision. Print the poster using a universal plotter, which is able to print panels measuring approximately 2x3 feet on one sheet of paper. VCOM's plotter prints posters from a PowerPoint® slide.







## References

1. Day, R.A. How to Write & Publish a Scientific Paper (4th ed.). Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press; 1994. How to prepare a poster; p 148-151. (SEL T11.D33 1994).
2. Rogers, P. Historical perspective of poster presentations [Internet]. University of California, Santa Barbara. 2004. Available from:  
[http://www.uweb.ucsb.edu/~paul\\_rogers/annotatedbibliography.htm](http://www.uweb.ucsb.edu/~paul_rogers/annotatedbibliography.htm)
3. <http://www.pop.psu.edu/info-core/library/posters.htm> (accessed: March 2008).
4. Briscoe, M.H. Preparing Scientific Illustrations: A Guide to Better Posters, Presentations, and Publications, (2nd ed). New York: Springer; 1996. Posters; p 131-149. (SEL REF Q222.B75 1996).