Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

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Submitting a FNCE® Abstract

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Introduction

Use this guide as a reference to help you write your abstract. This guide reviews the types of abstracts, their components, and how they will be reviewed, while also providing tips for success!

This document was created from a webinar titled “Submitting a FNCE Poster Abstract: Strategies for Success,” which was created and presented by Robin Tucker, PhD, RD, FAND, Mary-Jon Ludy, PhD, RDN, FAND, and Shannon Robson, PhD, MPH, RD. A special thank you to them for their time and expertise in creating this material, as well as their contributions to the abstract review process.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Erin Powell at epowell@EatRight.org.

What is an Abstract?

An abstract is a brief, written summary (no more than 250 words) of specific ideas or concepts to be presented, and a statement of the relevance to practice or research. This could include program descriptions, methods, results, conclusions, and/or applications.

The goal of the abstract is to:

- Present your research, program, or innovation in a clear, concise manner.
- Serve as a condensed summary or report.
- Effectively communicate your work to others.

An abstract is a brief, written summary (no more than 250 words) of specific ideas or concepts to be presented, and a statement of their relevance to practice or research. This could include program descriptions, methods, results, conclusions, and/or applications. The goal of the abstract is to:

Research Abstracts

Research abstracts present the outcomes of a research study. They should include a brief description of the authors' original objective or hypothesis, research methodology (including design, participant characteristics, and procedures) major findings, and conclusions or implications for dietetics practice.

Components of a Research Abstract

Background or statement of problem

This is the introduction to the problem. Outline the content or expectations of the work being presented.

- What is the problem? Why do we care about the problem?
- What practical, theoretical, or scientific gap is your research filling?
- What is your objective and/or hypothesis? Use action words and make it measurable.

Suggested length: 2 sentences.

Methods, design, or approach

A clear concise description of methods used.

- What did you do to get your results?
- Include research design (such as intervention, comparison group, sample size) and appropriate analysis approach.
- Must relate to the purpose/objective of the presentation or project.

Suggested length: 4 sentences.

Results

Clearly state the data gathered and the findings from the analysis.

- What did the study find?
- Align with methods and objectives.
- Results should be included in the abstract.
- Statistical analysis will strengthen the results (p-values, CIs, etc.).

Suggested length: 4 sentences.

Conclusions

Reflection of the data provided in the results.

- Supported by appropriate statistical analysis.
- Aligned with study objectives.
- Partial implications.

Tip: Reminder that conclusions are based solely on results. Make sure your conclusions fit your findings and are not overstated.

Suggested length: 2 sentences.

Research Abstract Example

Title

Muscle Assessment Through the Nutrition Focused Physical Exam Compared to Skeletal Muscle Index Measured by CT Imaging

Learning Objective

Describe how muscle assessment through the nutrition focused physical exam compares to muscle mass measured by CT imaging.

Background

The Nutrition Focused Physical Examine (NFPE) is a tool, primarily used by Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs), to assess subcutaneous fat and muscle stores to aid in the diagnosis of malnutrition. The overall goal of this study was to compare and contrast muscle assessment from the NFPE to skeletal muscle index (SMI) measured by CT imaging.

Methods

SMI was calculated from single cross-sectional CT scans of the 3rd lumbar in 14 oncology and 12 organ transplant patients. Mid upper-arm circumference (MUAC) was also measured in all participants. We described the relationship between SMI, MUAC and muscle status using unpaired t-test. Cohen kappa was used to evaluate inter-rater reliability of muscle assessment from the NFPE.

Results

Participants with moderate and severe muscle loss had significantly lower SMI compared to individuals with normal or mild muscle loss (unpaired t-test; p-value: 0.0126). MUAC was also significantly lower in those with moderate and severe muscle loss (unpaired t-test; p-value: 0.0180). There was substantial agreement between observers for the NFPE (Cohen kappa: 0.649; SE: 0.111).

Conclusion

Muscle status evaluated by NFPE strongly correlates with SMI and MUAC. Results from this study suggest that NFPE is an effective tool in capturing broad muscle status in patients. Furthermore, our results demonstrate that those competent in NFPE assessment procedures demonstrate good inter-rater reliability. Future studies are needed to determine if SMI and NFPE can delineate more specifically between normal, mild, moderate and severe muscle loss and how accuracy is impacted by adiposity.

Project or Program Report Abstracts

Project or program report abstracts contain information about a program, project, or tool development.

Components of a Project or Program Report Abstracts

Project or program report abstracts don't have to follow the research abstract format, but this may provide a useful outline. Generally, they should include:

- Information about the need or purpose.
- Theory or previous research which is relevant to the project, program, or tool.
- Unique characteristics of the project, program, or tool.
- Characteristics of study participants or target audience involved.
- Evaluation or proposed use for the tool or instrument.

Project or program report abstracts don't have to follow the research abstract format, but this may provide a useful outline. Generally, they should include:

Suggested components and length:

- Learning outcome: 1 sentence.
- Relevance: 2 sentences.
- Priority: 6 sentences.
- Results: 3 sentences.
- Synthesis: 2 sentences.
- Total: 14 sentences.

Outcomes are important and should be addressed.

- How were outcomes measured?
- Describe how outcomes helped to guide program development and/or improve the program/project.

Project/Program Report Example

Title

Incorporating Sustainability into the Introductory Foods Lab: Impacts on Dietetics Students' Attitudes, Knowledge, and Personal Integration of Sustainable Practices

Learning Objective

Upon completion, participants will be able to list sustainable practices and compostable food items, improve confidence in educating others about sustainability, and integrate sustainable practices into daily life.

Abstract

Since the addition of sustainability-focused knowledge requirements by ACEND, dietetics educators are tasked with developing an evidence-based sustainability curriculum. Little research is available to guide educators towards effective pedagogical practices to prepare students for work in sustainability. Furthermore, approaches to sustainability curriculum have not been evaluated in the Introductory Foods Lab course. The purpose of this study is to understand if hands-on sustainability experiences yield greater impact on dietetics students' attitudes, knowledge, beliefs, and students' personal integration of sustainable practices. Learning modules were created, focusing on sustainable practices and the RDN's role in promoting sustainability. The experimental group participated in these modules during the lab, followed by composting experiences. The comparison group participated in online modules only. Both groups completed pre- and post-tests measuring knowledge and attitudes related to sustainability, in addition to a reflective writing assignment. Both groups experienced increased confidence to teach others about sustainable practices and the environmental benefits of composting and other sustainable practices ($p < 0.05$). Qualitative analysis revealed consistent statements across both groups: high-value learning experience; curriculum increased my knowledge; recognized my role in the health of the environment; RDNs should be educating communities about sustainability. The experimental group made more consistent statements related to personal integration of sustainable practices and the value of hands-on composting and sustainability education. This suggests both methods may improve sustainability-focused student learning outcomes, but practical, hands-on experiences may have a greater impact on students' integration of sustainable practices and desire to pursue a career in sustainable food systems.

Future Practice Abstracts

Future practice abstracts offer a unique opportunity to present an abstract which describes an original or new idea, method, or tool that applies the change drivers/trends identified by the Council on Future Practice. Change drivers are external and internal factors that will affect the preferred future of the profession of nutrition and dietetics. Each future practice presenter will provide a 5-minute oral presentation, followed by 5 minutes of Q&A.

For these abstracts we are specifically looking for them to be about one of the Change Drivers. Change Drivers are external and internal factors that will affect the preferred future of the profession of nutrition and dietetics. These have been identified in the 2017 Visioning Report published in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* or may be documented in a Change Driver Brief such as VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity). The briefs are available on the Council of Future Practice website.

Future Practice Abstracts Change Drivers

Examples of identified Change Drivers include:

- VUCA
- Aging Population Dramatically Impacts Society
- Embracing America's Diversity
- Consumer Awareness of Food Choice Ramifications Increases
- Tailored Healthcare Fit My Genes
- Accountability and Outcomes Documentation Become the Norm
- Population Health and Health Promotion Become Priorities
- Creating Collaborative-Ready Health Professionals
- Food Becomes Medicine in the Continuum of Health
- Technological Obsolescence is Accelerating
- Stimulations Stimulate Strong Skills

Future Practice Abstracts Formatting

Future Practice Abstracts can be formatted as a Research Abstract or Project/Program Report Abstract, given that change drivers are topics where the type of work can vary.

During the submission of a Future Practice Abstracts three additional questions must be answered:

- What Council on Future Practice change driver/theme is reflected in the abstract?
- Why did you select the change driver?
- How do you think this information will affect future practice?

Future Practice Abstracts Uniqueness

What is unique about Future Practice Abstracts?

- A limited number of Future Practice Abstracts will be selected for an oral presentation that is judged.
- Each presenter will provide a 5-minute presentation followed by a 5-minute Q&A from judges/audience.
- Abstracts that are not selected for the Future Practice may be considered for Research Abstract or Project/Program Report Abstract. This is not guaranteed and will be dependent upon the timing of review, as they potentially will need to be reviewed by a different peer expert group.

Future Practice Evaluation Criteria

Given Future Practice Abstracts are driven by change drivers and trends which include external and internal factors that will affect the preferred future of the profession of nutrition and dietetics, there are unique evaluation criteria for this abstract type. The four domains for evaluation include alignment with change driver or future trend, potential to advance future practice, education and research, demonstrate processes and outcomes, and scalability in terms of the program and within communities. A 5-point Likert scale is used within each domain.

Alignment with Change Driver or Future Trend

The first domain, alignment with change driver or future trend*,* is where evaluators are looking for specific mention of the change driver, but also an indication or description of the problem.

Potential to Advance Future Practice, Education, and Research

The second domain of evaluation is understanding how the research, project, or program has the potential to advance future practice, education, and research. Specifically, the work needs to indicate future trends in education/practice and how RDNs/NDTRs can be prepared.

Demonstrates Process and Outcomes

The third domain, demonstrates process and outcomes, is essential for all abstracts. This can be quantitative or qualitative processes and outcomes, but these components are required with the highest points awarded for excellent process and outcomes and lowest points for no processes and outcomes.

Scalability (In Programs and Communities)

The last evaluation domain is scalability in terms of the research or program itself, but also within a community. Specifically, the information in the abstract needs to indicate if the process can be used or produced in a range of capabilities, dissemination usability, and/or the ability of

others to gain and/or learn from it. Highly scalable will receive more points as compared to something that is not scalable.

Future Practice Abstract Example

Title

Course-Based Strategies for Addressing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Dietetics Education

Author(s)

M.J. Ludy, C.M. Hamady, M.J. Diller, C. McGill, K.M. Lacey, B.N. Kryling; Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH

Learning Outcome

Identify 1-2 strategies for addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion topics in dietetics education.

Background

Diversity is lacking in the dietetics profession. According to the CDR, RDNs are 93.9% female and 81.1% white. Action related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in dietetics education is crucial to meet the unique social and cultural needs of dietetics students and the populations RDNs serve.

Methods

To improve DEI awareness, myriad course-based strategies were initiated in a junior-level nutrition-focused research methods course (n=30, 96.7% female, 86.7% white). Students read "The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks," watched "Three Identical Strangers," completed Implicit Association Tests, engaged in professional readings, viewed Academy webinars, and examined popular press sources. Culminating activities involved collaborative revision of our Dietetics Program's mission statement and creation of individualized DEI-focused SMART goal commitments. Student themes for programmatic DEI enhancements were determined using the Delphi technique.

Results

Common themes generated by students related to advising, recruitment, and cross-curricular linkages. Targeted guidance about courses that improve awareness of cultural differences, structural discrimination, and health equity for general education was desired. Community-based projects/outreach were suggested to increase current students' engagement with and recruitment of diverse populations. Broadening the mentoring program between first-year and upper-level students and expanding courses across the curriculum to include more DEI experiences was recommended.

Conclusions

DEI activity expansion aligns with ACEND's Proposed 2022 Standards and the "Embracing America's Diversity" and "Navigating Future Practice" change drivers. Implementation of DEI training in dietetics education provides tools for the next generation of dietetics professionals to gain skills in providing culturally competent, patient-centered care and addressing health disparities.

Connecting the Example to the Criteria

Alignment with change driver or current trend

In the background, the authors made it clear this Future Practice Abstract was focused on "Embracing America's Diversity," and it was also explicitly stated in the Conclusion.

Potential to advance future practice, education and research

This work is focused on dietetic education and advancing it which was highlighted in the background and conclusion.

Demonstrates process and outcomes

This abstract certainly included process information in the methods indicating specifically how the students engaged but also how information was collected. There are also outcomes in the results section. In this case, the outcomes were themes based on the qualitative data collection.

Scalability (in programs and communities)

Scalability was indicated in the results section based on outcomes showing next steps, and also in the conclusion.

Common Pitfalls

Common Error 1: The objective is unclear or lacking a clear purpose.

Make sure your objective is clear and defined. Reviewers need to understand the question which is being answered by the objective to be able to accurately evaluate the abstract.

Examples of Feedback from Reviewers

- “There may be wonderful applications, however, the abstract is missing description of how this research can be applied.”
- “Methods unclear. Lacking any information about outcomes.”
- "The role of the author(s) in creating this project/program is unclear. It seems that the author(s) are summarizing/highlighting the recommendations/guidelines of others.”
- “Are results for general “health” students applicable to nutrition and dietetics students?"

Tips to Avoid this Pitfall:

- If your research or innovation is more theoretical, be sure to explain how the ideas represented can be applied in practice.
- Sell your research or program. Your intent should be made clear within the first few lines of your abstract.

Common Error 2: Incomplete research/program description or lack of results/evaluation.

If data is incomplete, it is difficult to glean outcomes and quality. Consider submitting at a later time if the data is incomplete.

Examples of Feedback from Reviewers

- “This abstract is missing important details regarding the program and its evaluation… appears it has not been evaluated.”
- “Abstract lacking any information about outcomes. If this project hasn't happened yet, then authors still need to present what data will be collected/how they will know if they met learning outcomes.”
- "The late-breaking nature of this abstract is unclear."
- ”Plan to replicate with nutrition and dietetics students, but pending. Submit in subsequent year.”
- “Vague results, presented as generalizations. No statistics.”

Tips to Avoid this Pitfall:

- An outsider with no understanding of your research or program should be able to understand what you did.
- Evaluation should be included in the abstract.

Common Error 3: Conclusions not valid or consistent with results.

Ensure the conclusions presented align with the results.

Examples of Feedback from Reviewers

- Authors do not provide enough data to support their results/conclusion statement. …there are not numbers provided for the reader to assess these statements against."
- "Conclusion seems narrow. Not sure how author came to the conclusion in the final sentence."
- "Goals seems to be university focused, rather than professionally focused on nutrition and dietetics."

Tips to Avoid this Pitfall:

- Make sure your conclusions are backed up by facts or data included in your abstract.
- Conclusions should be related to the research, program, or innovation. Avoid overgeneralizations.

Common Error 4: Not original or relevant to nutrition field.

FNCE® is a nutrition and dietetics conference, and attendees expect to gain information that is relevant to their field of practice. Accepted abstracts are also printed in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, and the content needs to be relevant to the journal mission. The abstract should also present new ideas and add to the body of research and programs which exists.

Examples of Feedback from Reviewers

- "The relevance of this topic to attendees of FNCE® and the practice of nutrition and dietetics is unclear."
- "Not new information. Not innovative."
- "Just too few participated for this to be meaningful. In fact, the low attendance might suggest it is not feasible."
- "Program was conducted in health students. Discipline(s), numbers, and demographics are unclear."

Tips to Avoid this Pitfall:

- Ask yourself: Would this topic interest the food and nutrition professionals who attend FNCE®?
- Your research, program, or idea should advance the field of dietetics.

Common Error 5: Grammatical / spelling errors.

Spelling and/or grammatical errors can be difficult to read and potentially make it difficult to understand the information. It could also give the impression that care is not put into the work.

Examples of Feedback from Reviewers

- “Very hard to read due to the grammar.”
- “There are typographical errors.”
- “There are significant spelling/grammar errors.”
- “Several errors that spell check would not detect.”

Tips to Avoid this Pitfall:

- Use spellcheck *and* proofread. However, do not rely solely on integrated tools.
- Read the abstract aloud. This can help you slow down and avoid missing things your brain skipped over when skimming.
- Ask a colleague to review your submission for clarity.
- Make sure you perform a word count before uploading your abstract. Too long abstracts are cut off after 1800 characters (with spaces)—approximately 250 words.

Abstract Evaluation

Abstract review process

1. Abstracts are submitted.
2. Reviewers are assigned abstracts which align with their practice area and expertise. Authors and affiliations are hidden from the reviewer for anonymous scoring. The system identifies potential conflicts, and the reviewers have the option to opt-out if they deem necessary. Each abstract has a minimum of three reviewers.
3. After all abstracts have been peer-reviewed and scored, the highest-scoring proposals are selected for presentation at FNCE®.

Scoring

All reviewers' scores are averaged for a final score of the abstract. The exact score for acceptance varies each year. Each category for abstract type is graded on a five-point scale for the following criteria per abstract type.

Research Abstract Review Criteria

- Research outcome (focus, clarity, justification of the research question)
- Methods (adequate description of design and appropriateness to the research question)
- Analysis (analytic procedures appropriate to the data collected and the research question)
- Results (scientifically sound, valid presentation and interpretation of the results consistent with the research question)
- Conclusions (appropriate representation of the results consistent with the research question)
- Overall scientific quality merit of the research and contribution to the science

Project or Program Report Abstracts Review Criteria

- Relevance (clear purpose of project/program, appropriateness, timeliness, audience)
- Priority (recognized precedent; cutting-edge concern)
- Originality (uniqueness of format)
- Synthesis (evaluation and summary of report findings or application)

Future Practice Abstracts Review Criteria

As outlined above:

- Alignment with a change driver or future trend
- Application of the change driver to advance future practice, education, and/or research
- How it demonstrates favorable outcomes, process data, and/or participant feedback
- Scalability: dissemination, usability, focus on long-term goals