ALiEM Blog: New Author Guide for Clinical Posts

Welcome! We're thrilled to review your submission to the ALiEM blog. This guide will introduce you to our basic writing and design standards.

Inverted Pyramid Style: Approach to Blog Writing

There are a number of similarities between writing for a medical education blog and an academic journal. However, unlike journals, blogs are not bound to the traditional Introduction-Methods-Results-Discussion format. Instead, a classic journalism technique - the inverted pyramid - will help you structure your post and prioritize your learning points.

Imagine your post is an inverted triangle. The beginning of your post is the widest part at the top of the pyramid and represents your most important learning points. State these early. As you write, the blog post becomes more "narrow," represented by the bottom of the pyramid. Here you provide supporting evidence, data, and detail. You may apply this technique to each individual section within your post too.

Unlike academic publications, in which the clinical implications are presented at the end of the study, blog posts are structured in a way that highlights the take-home points early, allowing readers to "scan" and gather the most important information.

Title

Your title should be unique, descriptive, and specific. Avoid abbreviations and colloquial language. You can, however, get creative. For example, if your content answers a specific clinical question, you can incorporate that question into your title (e.g. "How Competitive was EM in the 2018 Match? The answer might surprise you"). Notice how this title instills curiosity, without giving away the answer to the question. Be sure to include the key term(s) that you want discoverable by Google search engines within the title.

First Paragraph

The first paragraph introduces your topic and tells the reader why it is important to their clinical practice. The best introductions spark curiosity, inform readers of a knowledge gap, and set the expectation that reading further will fill this void.

Take a moment to [look at the blog](#), and you'll see that the first paragraph sits on the homepage for several days. It functions as a "teaser," providing the reader with some background information and outlining the learning objectives.

A few guidelines:

1. Length: 4-6 sentences.
2. Avoid headers, hyperlinks, or formatting in the first paragraph.

3. Make sure the first paragraph is related to your post's main message.
4. Avoid unnecessarily long sentences, lists, or highly-detailed information (inverted pyramid!).
5. Please provide us with a high-resolution image related to your topic; we will right-align and embed this into the first paragraph.

Provide small bites of information. A high density of text does not favor readability and limits comprehension.

Headers

The rest of your text will be divided by 3-4 section headers. Think of these headers early when writing your post; this will help the rest of your writing unfold. Headers provide focus points for the reader and direct their attention to the information you want them to learn. Consider headers with words like "How" and "Why" (these have been shown to snag readers' attention) and don't be afraid to make a main point in the header itself.

Spelling, Grammar, and Formatting

Some rules to keep things consistent:

- Use American English spellings.
- Be careful about using non-traditional abbreviations for the sake of brevity. When in doubt, spell out the word in its first instance.
- Use serial commas.
- Use only 1 space after periods, not 2.
- Be sure to place a period at the end of a bullet if it is a complete sentence.
  - Period? YES: There is a 25% chance of perforation.

- - Period? NO: 25% chance of perforation
  - As long as the sentence doesn't start with a number, use the actual numeric form (1, 2, 3).
  - Include units after numbers. Stick with the metric system. Make sure to include a space.
    - YES: 45 mg/dL
    - NO: 45mg/dL
  - Avoid underlining text (this implies a hyperlink).

Tone

For most submissions, your target audience is your politically correct friend from medical training. You are a content expert, and your friend from medical training is asking you to bring them up to speed. Your friend will appreciate direct, succinct explanations with punchy descriptions and memorable examples. Ensure that your post welcomes all readers and promotes inclusive learning.Overall tone should be professional, friendly, and engaging.

Pro-Tips: Bulleted Lists & Tables

If you find yourself listing ≥3 items, consider bullet points or numbers. This improves readability especially for digital media. If you have a dense paragraph with data or research numbers, you may also consider a bulleted list.

If you identify a common denominator or theme across multiple sections or your post or paragraphs within a section, consider presenting the information as a table instead of text. We don't expect you to develop this table - we'll help you with that! But as you write, always be on the look-out for opportunities to present your content as an organized graphic (e.g. table, graph, or bulleted list), and if it crosses your mind, reach out to us

and pitch the idea. This will save all of us time later when we copy-edit your work.

References

In your post, number your references and place these numbers within brackets at the end of a sentence, before the period.
- YES: Most aneurysms have a SBP goal of <140 mmHg [1, 2].
- NO: Most aneurysms have a SBP goal of <140 mmHg. (Brown, Anderson).

At the end of your post, list your numbered references in order of appearance in the post. Please use AMA citation format and put the PMID or DOI next to each citation with a hyperlink to the associated web page. If there is no PMID/DOI, please write the reference in AMA format.

Example:

1. Kraus CK, Weaver KR. Traumatic Dislocation of the First Carpometacarpal Joint. Am J Emerg Med. 2014;32(12):1561. PMID: 24993682
2. Lahiji F, Zandi R, Maleki A. First Carpometacarpal Joint Dislocation and Review of Literatures. The Archives of Bone and Joint Surgery. 2015;3(4):300-303. PMID: 26550598
3. No PMID; Anderson, C. The impact of blood pressure on stroke risk. N Eng J Med. 2016;(368)25:1453-1458.

Images

Try to use high resolution copyright-free images. If you have a question about this, let us know. We take all HIPAA violations very seriously, so please try to remove all potential identifiers before submitting your post. These are often hiding in the corner of Ultrasound videos or ECGs.

Pictures of a physical exam finding may include identifies such as tattoos or name bands - these must be cropped out.

Last Edited 12/30/19, LMS