

Writing A Case Study

A case study or report describes a condition, diagnosis, and/or treatment for a specific clinical case. According to the Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics, case reports are “accounts of the diagnosis and treatment of usual, difficult, or otherwise interesting causes that may have independent educational value or may contribute to better standardization of care for a particular health problem when correlated with similar reports of others”

Case studies provide the beginning of all clinical trials and may suggest that a particular diagnosis or treatment is effective for a particular condition. Case studies help to educate the public and document information for future use.

The format of a case study depends upon the information gathered. The following items may be included in a case study:

1. **Abstract** – a summary of the paper. Use keywords so that an indexer can cross reference the study. Include:
 - Description of the condition
 - Diagnosis
 - Treatment
 - Results
 - Conclusions

2. **Introduction** – provides a general background for the study, but not details of the subjects, condition, or problem. Include:
 - Topic of the paper
 - Hypothesis being tested
 - Purpose for the case study
 - Importance of the study
 - Reference chiropractic research supporting the paper from medical search databases, peer reviewed studies, books proceedings from conferences, etc.
 - Reference articles or medical literature on allopathic or traditional treatment methods (a document search can be performed online using PubMed at www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)

2. **Case Report** – a chronological description of events. Include:
 - Description of the patient
 - Patient’s presenting symptoms
 - Exam findings
 - Treatment rendered
 - Results of treatment
 - Results of treatment
 - Patient’s previous health care
 - Follow up studies

3. **Discussion** – a thorough and adequate documentation of the study and data collected. Identify strengths and weaknesses of the study to avoid criticism of the work. Demonstrate that all aspects of the work have been considered. Include:
- Detailed description of the design, procedures, and variables of the study
 - Discussion of x-rays, muscles tests, physical exams, pain assessments, lab reports, etc.
 - Interpret and discuss the data collected
 - Graphs, tables, and charts if created
 - Provide the rationale for the method of treatment and support it with protocols and research on that method
 - References to publications used in the study, especially literature describing the technique or method of treatment.

Consider the following questions for the discussion section:

- Why was the particular technique used in treating the patient?
 - Was the technique appropriate?
 - Was the treatment or management programs successful? How do you know?
 - Could better results have been obtained by other methods? Why?
 - Were appropriate objective measures used in this study? If not, what should have been done?
4. **Conclusion** – summarize the paper and discuss the results. Include:
- Avoid drawing conclusions to anything that was beyond the scope of the treatment rendered
 - Present other positive or negative outcomes (side effects) resulting from the treatment
 - Identify future research possibilities
5. **References** – include all research material used to perform the study. Supporting reference for the method of treatment are imperative to lend credibility to the study. Submission requirements for over 3000 journal submission can be found online at www.mco.edu/lib/instru/libinsta.html. This site also contains links to chiropractic, health and life science sites.

Peer reviewed journals are excellent resources for current research and can be found online at:

- www.mosby.com/jmpt for JMPT
- www.datatrace.com/medical/JNMS_body.htm for the Journal of Neuromusculoskeletal System
- www.spinejournal for Spine

Writing a case study not only provides a legacy for the author, but assures that their accomplishments are shared and not lost. Appendix A contains additional articles on writing case studies. Appendix B contains samples of published case studies.

References

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