

Preface

Why write a book about writing case reports? One very practical reason is to bridge the gap between aspiration (“we ought to write this up”) and publication. Despite the increasing numbers of case reports published each year, we suspect that this gap remains wide, especially for medical trainees and physicians practicing in the community. Consequently, interesting and potentially important cases that ought to be in circulation are going unpublished. Second, although there are many fine articles on how to write case reports, and one excellent book – Milos Jenicek’s *Clinical Case Reporting in Evidence-Based Medicine* – we think that prospective case report authors need a practical, single-source guide to the whole process, from case selection through publication. In the twenty-first century, this guide must go beyond the traditional case report to instruct potential authors on its many modern variants: clinical vignette abstracts, case series, clinical images, clinical quizzes, adverse drug reaction case reports, n-of-1 trials, and clinical problem-solving cases. Today’s case report author needs to be versatile; that classic case of Mirizzi syndrome may not work as a straight case report, but it could be a superb clinical image or clinical reasoning case. Our aim is to help authors navigate these many options, select the form and venue that works best for their case, and then write it up in a concise, informative, and publishable style.

But perhaps the best reason for writing this book is simply that case reports are fun to write, fun to read, great for teaching, and useful in our clinical practices. I am extremely lucky to have found two co-authors, Gabrielle N. Berger and

Somnath Mookherjee, who not only feel the same way about case reports but have been willing to devote considerable time and energy to writing about them.

Over the course of our collaboration, what started out as a simple case reporting handbook has evolved into something more – a handbook with supplemental essays on the history, educational value, career enhancements, scholarly opportunities, social media aspects, and future prospects of the case report. A major goal of any case report is to put the case in context; our parallel goal is to put the art and science of case reporting in context for our readers. Case report authors should understand that they are part of a great historical tradition, that case reports can be powerful educational tools, and that writing case reports can lead to exciting scholarly opportunities, new collaborations, and useful clinical insights. Writing case reports, in other words, can help to make us better teachers and physicians.

If even a few medical students, residents, and practicing physicians publish their first case reports with the help of this book, it will have served its purpose.

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