

# “ABSTRACTS 101”

*A handbook for individuals writing an abstract  
for submission to a CANNT national symposium*

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**This handbook offers practical information about writing  
and submitting an abstract for oral or poster presentation  
at a Canadian Association of Nephrology Nurses  
and Technologists (CANNT) national symposium.**

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## 1. What is an abstract?

### *An abstract is a statement of intent*

Submitting an abstract lets the symposium planning committee know that you are interested in presenting at the national symposium, the topic you propose, and your preferred presentation format. Once accepted for presentation, the general idea described in your abstract, your “intended presentation,” is what you will present at the symposium.

### *An “abstract” is a brief communication of key points*

- Enables the national symposium planning committee and its abstracts committee to make informed decisions about proposed presentations.
- Helps the symposium planners organize logical and relevant sessions for the program.
- Communicates about the presentation to individuals who cannot attend it in person — CANNT abstracts are published in the symposium syllabus and the **CANNT Journal**.

### *CANNT symposium abstracts include*

- Title of the presentation
- Author(s) and institution
- Brief statement of the problem, situation, or subject to be presented
- Approaches used
- Outcomes/findings
- Relevancy of the topic to nephrology.

## 2. What does a “Call for Abstracts” for the CANNT national symposium involve?

*A “Call for Abstracts” is an invitation extended to CANNT members and other professionals in the renal community to share their expertise by giving a presentation at the CANNT national symposium*

The symposium planning committee extends the invitation, receives all abstracts that are submitted, and reviews them to choose the abstracts that will be presented.

- Abstracts in all fields of nephrology are encouraged.
- Presentations can be given in either oral or poster format. Individuals submitting an abstract identify their preferred presentation format (i.e., oral or poster). Every effort is made to honour the presenter’s preferred format, although this cannot be guaranteed. Individuals submitting abstracts *not* selected for verbal presentation are usually given the option to give a poster presentation.
- Presenters are responsible for expenses incurred related to their presentation, including hand-outs, and must register for the symposium.

**The CANNT national symposium “Call for Abstracts” is published in the CANNT Journal and is posted on the CANNT website: [www.cannt.ca](http://www.cannt.ca)**



### 3. How does one proceed to write an abstract for submission to the CANNT national symposium “Call for Abstracts”?

Writing an abstract involves a

#### PROCESS

Planning Research Outline Create Edit Shine Submit

*Zilm & Entwistle (2002)*

#### 3.1 PROCESS – Planning

##### *The first step in planning — finding a topic*

A key purpose of the CANNT national symposium is to share nephrology clinical, educational, administrative, and research expertise through presentations in oral or poster format. So, if you have something to say in any of these areas — now is your chance! CANNT welcomes first-time presenters as well as those who have presented before.

##### *When thinking of a topic, keep in mind*

- The audience — that is, the CANNT membership of nephrology nurses and technologists, and other members of the nephrology community. Oral presentations are usually short (i.e., 15 to 25 minutes) and may be concurrent (i.e., occur at the same time as other presentations in other rooms). The number of people in the audience varies, ranging from 20 or less to 100 or more. Posters are an excellent way to “present” your topic to a large number of people, some of whom you can speak with individually during the “meet the presenter” periods.
- Symposium theme — each year a theme is chosen for the national symposium. Weaving that theme into your abstract helps keep your presentation consistent with the overall symposium focus.

### 3.2 PROCESS - Research

#### *The first step in writing an abstract — gathering information*

Before you begin to write your abstract, you will need information about both the content of your presentation, and how to write and submit your abstract.

#### *Researching information to support the content of your presentation*

Keep in mind that fundamental to sharing your professional expertise through your presentation is the commitment to base your presentation on information that is current and accurate. To that end, some strategies to gather information are:

- Reviewing written information about your topic in journal articles and other printed material.
- Talking with others about your presentation to clarify your thoughts and gather the perspectives of others.
- To find information about writing and submitting your abstract, it is critical that you read and follow the directions provided in the “Call for Abstracts” form:
  - What to include in your abstract
  - How to format your abstract
  - Where and how to submit your abstract
  - And other information the abstracts committee would like you to have, as well as information the committee requires from you.



### 3.3 PROCESS - Outline

#### *Using the “required abstract format” outline approach*

Breaking down the “parts” of an abstract as listed in the “abstract format” or “abstract content” section of the Call for Abstracts form, identifies what to include in your abstract and provides an outline for your abstract. Once you have “filled in the content” related to each heading, the heading words can be deleted. The “parts” include:

- Title
- Author’s name & first author’s institution
- Body of the abstract:
  - Problem, situation, or subject
  - Approach used
  - Outcomes/findings/conclusions
  - Relevancy to nephrology practice.

**Title.** The abstract title is an advertising tool identifying the topic in a way that attracts interest. An interesting way to think about abstracts and titles is: the abstract as “bait and hook” and the title as the “sharp point.” The title can be a statement or a question.

**Author.** The author who will make the presentation is usually listed first, followed by co-presenters and others who contributed on the topic or project being presented. Consult the “Call for Abstracts” for instructions about how and where to record and submit this information.

#### **Body**

**Problem/situation/subject.** This is a key part of the abstract as these two or three sentences “catch” the reader’s interest, establish the importance of the problem, situation, and/or subject, and entice the reviewer to read further.

**Approach used.** Describe in just enough detail to enable the reader to understand what was done.

**Conclusion.** Briefly summarize the conclusion, outcomes, or results.

**Relevancy to nephrology practice.** State the relevance of the conclusion, outcomes, or results to nephrology nursing or technology practice, education, administration, and/or research. See Appendix A for a sample of an abstract broken down into the “required content” outline.

### 3.4 PROCESS - Create

*Approaches you might use to get started writing your abstract include – reading examples of previously submitted CANNT abstracts, “telling a friend”, and “required-content outline” (Evans, 1994)*

*Read examples of abstracts previously submitted to CANNT*

Abstracts from each CANNT symposium are printed in the **CANNT Journal**. Reading several abstracts will give you an overview of the types of presentations given in the past and other abstracts that have been written.

*“Tell a friend”*

It may be helpful to get started writing your abstract by telling a friend about your idea OR “dictating” your idea to a tape recorder, then writing down the conversation as the first draft of your abstract. Your draft abstract can be refined later.

- Think of two or three, but usually no more than four, key points to emphasize in your presentation.
- A clear purpose facilitates selection of material for inclusion in your abstract.
- If you plan to give an oral presentation, limiting content so that the presentation can be covered in 15 to 25 minutes is vital and often one of the most challenging aspects of writing an abstract.

*“Required-content outline”*

Break down the “parts” of an abstract as described above.



### 3.5 PROCESS - Edit

*Editing is a process that can involve several steps — preliminary review, peer review, and full editing*

***Preliminary review — the “first pass” in the review process***

Don't worry about “perfection” at this stage — simply review the content to ensure that:

- All required content is included (as outlined in the “Call for Abstracts” form)
- The content flows smoothly from beginning to end
- Major points are emphasized
- There is consistency between purpose and conclusion
- The abstract does not include names of products or companies, or compare companies or products for purposes of product marketing or discrediting of companies or products.

Putting the draft “on ice” for at least three days before reviewing it allows you to create some distance from what you have written.

Letting time pass between writing and reviewing allows you to see your work with fresh eyes when you sit down to review it.

***Peer review***

Once you have done your preliminary review, ask two or three peers to review your draft and give you feedback. Choose reviewers for their knowledge and ability to provide constructive feedback. If the draft comes back with lots of comments, you have a good reviewer — one who has given you the benefit of their attention, time, and ideas.

Keeping in mind that your first draft is not perfect when you ask for peer review makes it easier to accept suggestions without taking them personally. When you have your peer reviewer's comments and suggestions, highlight the helpful ones and refine your abstract accordingly. Now is also the time to delete unnecessary detail.

***Editing***

At this point, asking someone with editorial experience to review your abstract can help increase clarity, delete unnecessary content, and check flow and readability of your abstract. If you have identified one, this would be a good time to discuss your abstract with an “abstracts mentor” (someone with experience writing and submitting abstracts and an interest in mentoring others in those endeavours).

The final edit checks for:

- Spelling, typing, and punctuation errors
- Format accuracy (that “Call for Abstracts” thing again)
- Logical flow
- Technical accuracy.

Use the “spelling and grammar” tool on your computer to check for spelling errors. As this tool may miss errors, you can do a manual spelling check by starting at the last word and reading backwards.

By this stage, it is common to be so close to your writing that you may not be the best person to proofread your abstract. Ask the best proofreader you know to do a final edit after you have reviewed all the details on the “Call for Abstracts” form.

### **3.6 PROCESS - Shine**

*Key points to consider when “formatting” your abstract – computer work, abbreviations, and abstract length*

#### *Font and computer program*

Consult the “Call for Abstracts” form for the required font and program. CANNT abstracts generally require that abstracts be submitted in 12pt Arial or Times New Roman font in Word or Word Perfect.

#### *Use of abbreviations*

Use of standard abbreviations is allowed. Place unusual abbreviations in parenthesis after the full word the first time the word appears in the abstract, e.g. hemodialysis (HD).

#### *Length of the abstract*

Your abstract can include up to, but not more than, the number of words specified in the “Call for Abstracts” form.



### 3.7 PROCESS - Submit

*The “Call for Abstracts” tells you*

- **Deadline date for abstract submissions.**
- Whether faxed and/or online submissions will be accepted by the deadline date, and if hard copies must follow by mail or courier within a defined period of time.
- The address to which you mail, courier and/or e-mail your abstract.

**Ensure that your abstract submission is neat, accurate, and includes all requested information — and that you meet the abstract submission deadline.**

## 4. What happens once an abstract is submitted?

*Author notification*

- An e-mail will be sent acknowledging that the abstract has been received.
- A second e-mail will be sent following the review process. This e-mail provides the outcome of the review process and, if your abstract has been accepted, the format of your presentation (oral or poster).

*Abstract review process*

The abstracts committee reviews all submitted abstracts. These individuals are CANNT members who are appointed by the CANNT national symposium abstracts chairperson in consultation with the symposium planning committee.

*The abstract review process is a “blind” review*

- A “blind” review means that the abstract reviewers do not know who submitted the abstract, as the name and institution of the presenter are removed from the abstract prior to submitting it to the reviewers.
- A “blind” review is a fair and unbiased review process — that is, a professional commitment to reviewing the “presentation” rather than the “presenter.”

### ***Publication of abstracts***

All accepted abstracts are published in the symposium syllabus and in the **CANNT Journal**. Presenters have the option of writing an article from their presentation for submission to the **CANNT Journal**. Authors whose abstracts are selected for presentation are requested to authorize publication of their abstract in the national symposium syllabus and the **CANNT Journal**. Should authors choose to write an article from their presentation and it is accepted for publication in the **CANNT Journal**, authorization for this publication will also be requested.

## **5. Who is available to help?**

### ***Abstract mentors***

Mentors can be individuals within your renal program who are identified as resources to assist with writing abstracts and presenting at conferences (e.g., clinical nurse specialist and/or nurse educator). Also, you may know of someone within or outside of your program who has experience writing abstracts and presenting at conferences, and who is interested in supporting others in these endeavours.

### ***Peer reviewers***

Reviewers can be people you work with. Alternately, if you are studying toward a degree or certification in nephrology nursing, you may wish to ask a fellow student to act as a peer reviewer. If you are new at abstract writing, a good strategy is to seek out mentors and peer reviewers to support you as you write and submit your abstract. Making this contact as early as possible allows you to avoid being rushed and to be respectful of your mentor's time and energy.

You may be interested to know that the 2003 abstracts committee found that every abstract submitted to CANNT 2003 "Call for Abstracts" was a pleasure to read, largely because of the wonderful work each abstract described. So, if you too have something to say — thoughts, expertise, or questions to share at a CANNT national symposium, submitting your abstract for presentation is a great forum for you to do so!

## **References**

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## Appendix A: Sample Abstract – “Required Content” Outline

### *Sample Abstract* **Notice boards get noticed**

Use of a highly attractive, three-dimensional “display board” to help provide ongoing patient education about hemodialysis has proved an effective and inexpensive tool in our centre. This presentation will use slides to show 12 educational displays mounted during the last year that have helped alert patients about everyday care (e.g., daily fistula care, fluid intake, medications, and dietary tips). We will share our experience in setting up the display area and making it a focus for ongoing education. For example, it is essential that the area be well-lit, use strong, bright, colourful objects, and be changed frequently to make the displays constantly noticeable and appealing. Use of a “tool box” of materials (e.g., plastic shelves and fishing twine to hold objects) is one of the helpful hints we can share based on our experience. We will give some information on costs. Patients have reacted well to this educational tool since it was introduced and, recently, have begun to suggest ideas for new displays.

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Sue Specialist, RN, MN, and Glennis Glib, BSN, MA  
*St. Anywhere Hospital Renal Program, Beautiful City, BC*

### *“Required Content” Outline*

**Title:** Notice boards get noticed

**Author:** Sue Specialist, RN, MN and Glennis Glib, BSN, MA  
*St. Anywhere Hospital Renal Program, Beautiful City, BC*

**Body:**

- a. This presentation will use slides to show 12 educational displays mounted during the last year that have helped alert patients about everyday care (e.g., daily fistula care, fluid intake, medications, and dietary tips).
- b. We will share our experience in setting up the display area and making it a focus for ongoing education. For example, it is essential that the area be well-lit, use strong, bright, colourful objects, and be changed frequently to make the displays constantly noticeable and appealing. Use of a “tool box” of materials (e.g., plastic shelves and fishing twine to hold objects) is one of the helpful hints we can share based on our experience. We will give some information on costs.
- c. Patients have reacted well to this educational tool since it was introduced and recently have begun to suggest ideas for new displays.
- d. Use of a highly attractive, three-dimensional “display board” to help provide ongoing patient education about hemodialysis has proved an effective and inexpensive tool in our centre.