

# Guidelines for Authors: CATs

## Mission

The *International Journal of Athletic Therapy & Training (IJATT)* publishes peer-reviewed reports pertaining to clinical applications of research findings, procedures that been found effective for the prevention and treatment of sports-related injuries, and professional practice issues. *IJATT* will publish original research reports, but the content must have strong relevance to clinical practice.

## Format

Manuscripts (main document file) must be double-spaced and in a single column with 12-point font, 1-inch margins, and numbered lines, and text should not exceed 7 pages (not including title page and references). Concise presentation of content (1,200–2,000 words; 4–7 pages) is required for publication. Author name(s) and/or affiliations should not appear within the manuscript file.

## Critically Appraised Topics (CATs)

A critically appraised topic (CAT) is essentially a brief systematic review and critique of the most current and best available evidence to answer a focused clinical question. These questions should be related to the recognition, rehabilitation, and prevention of sport-related injuries. While large-scale systematic reviews and meta-analyses involve an exhaustive search of the literature, CATs involve similar elements but on a smaller scale (typically 3–8 sources of peer-reviewed evidence). Our overall goal for these manuscripts is to provide readers the opportunity to glimpse critiques of the sports medicine research evidence that can be readily incorporated into clinical practice. In the continuously evolving information world we live in, it is important to note that each CAT has a shelf-life of approximately 2 years. Further, studies that are included in CATs should be recent (usually published within the last 5 years). Therefore, to keep pace with ever-changing evidence, there will be opportunity to revisit previously published CATs online and provide updates to the questions answered. The specific *IJATT* guidelines for CAT submissions and manuscript headings are as follows:

- Introduction/Clinical Scenario
- Focused Clinical Question
- Search Strategy
- Evidence Quality Assessment
- Results of Search: Summary of search, “best evidence” appraised, and key findings
- Results of Evidence Quality Assessment
- Clinical Bottom Line: Strength of recommendation
- Implications for Practice, Education, and Future Research

**Introduction/Clinical Scenario.** It is important to clearly establish the background information to drive the need for the CAT. This can be in the context of a clinical scenario or a general introduction for a need to evaluate the evidence pertaining to a particular clinical question. The Introduction should be focused and limited to ~2–3 paragraphs.

**Focused Clinical Question.** For the development of a focused clinical question, *IJATT* recommends the use of the PICO format. However, not all questions need to follow this exact format. For more information on the PICO format, see the guide from the Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine ([www.cebm.net/index.aspx?o=1036](http://www.cebm.net/index.aspx?o=1036)). Please refer to a previous *IJATT* editorial<sup>1</sup> for more information regarding the PICO model.

**Search Strategy.** A clearly described search strategy of peer-reviewed evidence. The elements included in this section should be:

- Criteria for a source of evidence to be included in the CAT
- Search strategy (clear description of the online databases used, hand search, etc.)
- Search terms within the databases, the combination of terms used, and the number of hits from each database

**Evidence Quality Assessment.** The method used to appraise the quality of the evidence found through the search strategy should be reported. This assessment addresses issues related to the internal (the ability to determine cause and effect) and external (the ability

to generalize) validity of the evidence. We recommend authors use established guidelines/scales for evidence appraisal as follows for questions related to:

- The effectiveness of an intervention: PEDro scale based on the CONSORT statement ([www.pedro.org.au/](http://www.pedro.org.au/))
- The diagnostic accuracy of a clinical test: QUADAS scale based on the STARD statement ([www.quadas.org](http://www.quadas.org))
- Observational studies for sport-related conditions: STROBE statement and associated checklists ([www.strobe-statement.org/?id=available-checklists](http://www.strobe-statement.org/?id=available-checklists))

Please refer to the following *IJATT* manuscripts as guides for aiding in the development of evidence appraisal:

- Hierarchy of Research Design in Evidence-Based Sports Medicine<sup>2</sup>
- Rating the Levels of Evidence in Sports-Medicine Research<sup>3</sup>
- Assessment of the Quality of Clinically Relevant Research<sup>4</sup>

**Results of Search.** This is a synthesis of the findings from the evidence to answer the focused clinical question. Summarize and report the results of the search strategy and the key findings from the “best” evidence appraised.

**Results of Evidence Quality Assessment.** A brief review of the strengths and weaknesses (based on validity) of the evidence used to answer the clinical question must be included.

**Clinical Bottom Line.** What is the answer to the clinical question synthesized from the evidence appraised? Please indicate clearly the strength of recommendation for the answer found and how readily it should be incorporated into clinical practice.

**Implications for Practice, Education, and Future Research.** Based on the answer to the question from the available evidence and the strength of recommendation from the evidence quality assessment, discuss the implications of this CAT for clinical practice, education, and research.

**Additional Information for CATs Required for Each Submission.** Please include a summary table of the evidence included in the CAT to answer the question.

This summary table should include the following elements:

- Study authors
- Study title
- Participants
- Inclusion/exclusion criteria
- Outcome measures
- Results
- Evidence quality score
- Support for the answer (yes/no)

Additionally:

- Each CAT should include an expiration date (year) and recommended renewal of the answer to your question
- There is a 3,000 word limit for CATs

## References

1. Medina McKeon JM, McKeon PO. **PICO: A hot topic in evidence-based practice.** *Int J Athl Ther Train.* 2015;20(1):1–3.
2. McKeon PO, Medina JM, Hertel J. **Hierarchy of research design in evidence-based sports medicine.** *Athl Ther Today.* 2006;11(4):42–45.
3. Medina JM, McKeon PO, Hertel J. **Rating the levels of evidence in sports-medicine research.** *Athl Ther Today.* 2006;11(5):38–41.
4. Medina McKeon JM, McKeon PO. **Assessment of the quality of clinically relevant research.** *Athl Ther Today.* 2009;14(3):4–9.

For an example of a well-designed and reported CAT, please refer to the following: Facchini SJ, Ferguson BA, Hoch JM. **Outcomes following ACL reconstruction utilizing the quadriceps tendon autograft: a critically appraised topic.** *Int J Athl Ther Train.* 2014;19(4):3–9.

## Submission and Review Policies

**Submission:** All materials must be uploaded to the following website: [mc.manuscriptcentral.com/hk\\_att](http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/hk_att). A **single file containing the title page (without author identification), text, and reference list** should be submitted, along with the separate file containing author information. Also include the title as the first element of the blinded manuscript, followed by the abstract (if it is a research report), and/or key points (which should be included with all manuscripts). Tables, graphs, photographs, and figures should be submitted in separate files.

**Review policy:** An editor and at least 1 other reviewer will assess the content of each manuscript. A topic that requires more than 1,200–2,000 words

might be approved for publication as a 2-part report (which may be published together in the same issue or separately in 2 successive issues). A 2-part report must be presented in 2 separate manuscripts (1,200–2,000 words each) that are submitted together. A manuscript submitted to *IJATT* must **not** be submitted to any other journal while under review. When a manuscript is accepted for publication, an editorial board member will work with the author to improve the presentation of the work. *IJATT* editors reserve the right to edit all

content to correct grammatical errors, to ensure accuracy of the information presented, and to fit space restrictions.

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