

# Guidelines for Authors: CASE Reports

## Mission

The *International Journal of Athletic Therapy & Training (IJATT)* publishes peer-reviewed reports pertaining to clinical applications of research findings, procedures that have 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.

## Clinical Contribution to the Available Sources of Evidence (CASE) Reports

Through collaboration between the *Journal of Athletic Training* and the *International Journal of Athletic Therapy & Training*, an endeavor to revitalize clinical case studies was undertaken. The resulting model vastly improves the utility and meaningfulness of the case study by creating an overall two-part functional division: the Exploration Case and the Validation Case.

*Exploration Case Reports* are those which present novel insights into conditions and/or management strategies at the individual patient level that can be reported. *Validation Case Reports* are those which test the results of previously published research. These reports can serve to instigate a course of scientific exploration into the underlying factors related to the recognition, rehabilitation, and prevention of the condition. There are four evidence levels for clinical cases based on the evidence generated and the case design (refer to a previous *IJATT* editorial <http://dx.doi.org/10.1123/ijatt.2015-0067>). Please read the following guidelines carefully to determine the most appropriate format for cases to be submitted.

**Title Page.** The title page should include the title of the report and three or four “key points” (12 words

or less per point). Further, the title page should also include three to four key words that do not appear in the manuscript title.

**Abstract.** For Clinical CASE Reports, *IJATT* uses an unstructured abstract of approximately 100 words in length. The abstract should follow the PICO (Patient characteristics, Intervention, and Comparative Outcome) format for the information that is included. Included information should be:

- 1–2 sentences presenting the clinical case, including primary patient characteristics (age, sex, sport if appropriate) and diagnosis.
- 1–2 sentences that describe the intervention—this is the independent variable and can be epidemiologic, etiologic, diagnostic, prognostic, or therapeutic in nature.
- 1–2 sentences that give an overview of the comparative outcome—these are the most important results. For Validation Cases, this should focus on outcomes of the current study in comparison to the outcomes of the previously reported comparison study.
- 1–2 sentences of interpretation. For level 1 studies, this should include a commentary on the feasibility, practicality, and efficacy of implementing the tested factor “in real life”. For level 2 and 3 studies, this should include a commentary on the uniqueness of the case compared to other health care literature. For level 4 studies, this also should include a commentary on interprofessional collaboration utilized in managing the case, when appropriate.

**Introduction.** The introduction should build the argument for the importance of the case study. Authors are encouraged to use available sources of evidence to support the presentation of the case report. For level 1 Validation Case studies, this should be a focused review of the literature in which the interventions/assessments/exposures and outcomes used in the presented case were consulted in guiding clinical decisions. The introduction must highlight the following:

- An overview of the condition of interest using available epidemiological or etiological evidence, where appropriate. *How prevalent is the condition? What are the major factors that contribute to its development?*

- Background in regard to what is known about the condition of interest. Consider reporting characteristics related to diagnosis, prognosis, etiology, and/or therapy. *What are the most important key features for the recognition of this condition? What is known about the natural history of the condition? Are there any intervention strategies that have shown promise in altering the natural prognosis?*

*Specific Guidelines for the Level 1 Validation Clinical CASE Report Introductions:*

- The authors should provide a clear description of the previously reported comparison study (well-conducted systematic review, meta-analysis, individual study) and highlight the most important findings. Included in this section should be a brief description of the relevant outcome measures used in the study.
- Using the previously reported comparison study, authors should develop a very clear clinical question based on the PICO format in which the external evidence was used to make a clinical decision on an actual case. An assessment of evidence quality for the previous study should be included in this paragraph in order to make a determination of the internal and external validity for that study.

*Specific Guidelines for the Level 2 and Level 3 Exploration Clinical CASE Report Introductions:*

- The purpose of the Exploratory Case series/study is to clearly describe alternate or irregular presentations of **either** common (highly prevalent) **or** uncommon conditions when compared to the available evidence. A clear description about how the case series/study will potentially make a meaningful contribution to the literature should be the focus of the last paragraph of the introduction.

*Specific Guidelines for the Level 4 Rare Events Clinical CASE Report Introductions:*

- The purpose of the Rare Events Case study is to clearly describe a typical case presentation that is not commonly found in the athletic training or sports medicine literature, and to present evidence generated in other health care professions. A clear description about how the case study will potentially make a meaningful contribution to the athletic training and sports medicine literature should be the highlighted in the introduction.

**Case Presentation.** Use PICO as a guide to the case presentation.

Patient (**P**).

- Provide a description of the patient, including the following where relevant: The patient's characteristics (sex, age, sport, etc.). For level 2 Exploration CASE Series, a description of the case similarities should be included.
- The chief complaint and relevant clinical events that led the patient to seek out the care.
- The process that led to the diagnosis of the condition. This should include relevant findings from the clinical examination, any diagnostic imaging, and other relevant tests that were used to form the basis of the differential diagnosis and, ultimately, the diagnosis. For level 2 Exploration CASE Series, evidence that all included patients did (if fact) have the same diagnosis should be presented.

Intervention (**I**). Describe the case management. Report the assessment or intervention strategies used, the timeline for progression to final outcome in the case, and the specific time points when the outcomes were assessed.

Comparative Outcome (**CO**). Describe the primary outcomes or results of the case.

*Specific Guidelines for the Level 1 Validation Clinical CASE Report Case Presentation:*

- Include a full description of assessments or intervention used from the previously reported comparison study.
- Comparative Outcome (CO): Compare and contrast the outcome from the current case to the outcome of the previously reported comparison study. Did the patient respond similarly to the participants within the study? It is important to utilize the exact or very similar outcome measures of the study in order to make these comparisons. Provide an estimate of the minimum clinically-important difference (MCID) for the outcome measures, if appropriate. The MCID, if not established in the literature, can be considered a change in either the same or greater magnitude than what was reported in the previously reported comparison study.

*Specific Guidelines for the Level 2 and Level 3 Exploration Clinical CASE Report Case Presentation:*

- Compare and contrast the interventions used in the level 2 and level 3 Exploration CASE Studies/CASE Series with the typical presentation of the condition as described in the literature.

- Compare and contrast the outcomes used in the level 2 and level 3 Exploration CASE Studies/CASE Series with the typical presentation of the condition as described in the literature. For Case Series, report on whether all patients responded similarly to each other. For this, it is important to ensure that similar outcome measures were used across the board.

*Specific Guidelines for the Level 4 Rare Events Clinical CASE Report Case Presentation:*

- Describe the interventions used in the present case to emphasize the typical presentation, as described in the literature from other health care professions. Highlight the role of the athletic trainer or sports medicine clinician as part of the interprofessional group that worked toward the identification and/or management of the condition, as appropriate.
- Describe the outcomes used in the present case to emphasize the typical presentation, as described in the literature from other health care professions.

**Discussion.** Interpret the findings of the study. This is a section that has the greatest number of variations based on the study type. Please review these major discussion points that should be included relative to the CASE study type.

*Specific Guidelines for the Level 1 Validation Clinical CASE Report Discussion:*

Interpret the findings from the current case in context with the previously reported comparison study. How do the findings of this case contribute to what is known about a condition or treatment? Major elements of the discussion should include:

- A discussion of the agreement of the outcomes in the case with the outcomes of the comparison study (external validation).
- A discussion of the similarities/differences of the patient in the case to the patients/participants in the comparison study.
- A discussion of the challenges associated with implementing the intervention from the comparison study “in real life”. This may include, for example, a discussion of *population validity* (Was the case patient similar to participants in the comparison study?) or *ecological validity* (Was the clinical environment conducive to implementing the intervention?). Other issues that may have affected the outcomes (e.g., compliance) can also be discussed here.

- A discussion of the recommendations for the continued use of the assessment or intervention tested in the case for the recognition, rehabilitation, or prevention of the condition.
- Commentary on considerations for future research and practice based on the current findings of the case.

*Specific Guidelines for the Level 2 and Level 3 Exploration Clinical CASE Report Discussion:*

Compare and contrast the atypical presentation of the cases within the series with what has been established in the literature as typical presentation or intervention. *How do the findings of this case study/case series contribute to the literature? What can be gained from the similarities among the atypical presentations from these cases?* The major elements of the discussion that should be answered include:

- A discussion of the similarity of the patient(s) in the patients typically described in previous reports or literature.
- A discussion of challenges associated with the case(s) due to the atypical presentation.
- Recommendations for whether the atypical presentation reported in the case study/case series should be considered as an alternative presentation or outcome for the condition, highlighting recommendations for recognition, rehabilitation, outcome measures, and so on.
- A discussion of considerations for future scientific investigation and practice-based recommendations based on the current findings.

*Specific Guidelines for the Level 4 Rare Events Clinical CASE Report Discussion:*

The discussion should highlight the information that can be gained from the presentation of a rare condition to the athletic training professional community. *How do the findings of this case study contribute to the literature?* The major elements of the discussion that should be answered include:

- A discussion of the patient characteristics as typically described in previous reports or literature, including key features from the literature for the recognition and diagnosis of the condition.
- Challenges associated with recognition or treatment of the case due to the rare presentation in the athletic population.

- Recommendations for whether the rare presentation should continue to be investigated at the level of case series, and if so, highlight the recommendations for recognition, rehabilitation, outcome measures, and so on.
- A discussion of the importance of understanding the possible morbidity or mortality associated with the condition.
- A discussion of interprofessional collaboration in the successful treatment of the patient.

**Clinical Bottom Line.** Provide an overall statement of the most important clinical points that can be gleaned from the current CASE study.

*Specific Guidelines for the Level 1 Validation Clinical CASE Report Clinical Bottom Line:*

- Provide an overall statement about the effectiveness of utilizing the evidence to guide clinical decision-making. What do the authors recommend for use?

*Specific Guidelines for the Level 2 and Level 3 Exploration Clinical CASE Report Clinical Bottom Line:*

- Provide an overall statement about the inconsistency of the case study/case series presentation when compared to what is typically described in the literature, and how the present case study/case series advances assessment or intervention in clinical practice. Further, *do the authors recommend further scientific investigation into the clinical condition?*

*Specific Guidelines for the Level 4 Rare Events Clinical Case Report Clinical Bottom Line:*

- Provide an overall statement about the necessity for the evidence from this case to be incorporated into the athletic training body of knowledge. *Do the authors recommend further scientific investigation into the clinical condition within sports medicine?*

## 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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