

A STRUCTURED APPROACH TO FOSTERING A HEALTHY PUBLISHING CULTURE FOR CASE REPORTS IN THE DERMATOLOGY DEPARTMENT AT MBARARA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: BRIDGING THE PUBLICATION GAP.

Dr. Mundeli Simon Peter*, Dr. Abdirahman Mohamed Salad

Postgraduate student, Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST), Department of Dermatology, Mbarara City, Uganda.

Page | 1

Abstract

Established in 1998, the Georg Klingmüller Clinic at Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital (MRRH) is Uganda's only center for specialized dermatology training. Despite its role as a center of excellence in specialist dermatologic care and training, there is a notable lack of published case reports from the dermatology clinic at MUST, creating a knowledge gap with resulting diagnostic challenges, particularly in the rare presentation of some dermatoses.

This article guides how dermatology postgraduate students at MUST can publish their case studies. It outlines the process from case presentation to drafting and submitting manuscripts, emphasizing the importance of selecting suitable journals and adhering to publication guidelines.

The article also highlights the benefits of a robust publication culture, including improved diagnostic accuracy, career advancement opportunities, and enhanced global collaboration. By fostering a healthy publication environment, students can contribute valuable knowledge to the field and advance their professional development.

Keywords: Healthy Publishing culture, case reports, Dermatology, Mbarara University of Science and Technology.

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Corresponding Author: Dr. Mundeli Simon Peter*

Email: mundelisimon@gmail.com or 2022mmed078@std.must.ac.ug

Department of Dermatology, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, P.O. Box 1410, Mbarara, Uganda.

Introduction

Established in 1998, the Georg Klingmüller Clinic, Department of Dermatology at Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital (MRRH), is Uganda's sole center for specialized dermatologist training (1), serving over 6,000 new patients annually (2). Despite being a center of excellence in dermatologic care in the country, there is a paucity of published data in the form of case reports, case series, and systemic reviews on cases diagnosed and managed at the MRRH skin clinic.

Dermatologic conditions present major public health challenges, especially in areas with limited access to specialized care. Currently, in Uganda, only 12 specialist dermatologists serve a population of over 45 million people(3) and the department currently has only 16 post-graduate students(4) who run the skin clinic that serves over 4 million people and more than 10 districts in southwestern Uganda. Insufficient documentation of cases managed by this small pool of specialist healthcare providers results in a knowledge gap and poses significant diagnostic challenges, especially in the rare presentation of some dermatoses.

A healthy publication culture ensures transparency, integrity, and fairness in research, recognizing all contributors and promoting reproducibility. It emphasizes rigorous peer review, supports professional development, and values accessibility and accountability (5). This fosters

reliable, high-quality research and an equitable academic environment.

This article aims to provide clear guidance for dermatology postgraduate students at MUST on how to publish cases managed in the clinic in suitable and reputable journals.

Main body

Case presentation at the department

This is the starting point where post-graduate students are encouraged to identify rare cases while seeing patients in the clinic. Fully clerk the patient while documenting adequate history and a full clinical examination in the presence of a chaperone of the cutaneous surface (scalp and rest of the skin), mucous membranes (oral cavity and genitalia), and nails. On obtaining informed consent and assent in the case of minors, for photography and publication, take appropriate patient photographs focusing on the lesions of interest. In case a biopsy is to be done, ensure it is taken from the appropriate biopsy site and follow up with the Pathology Department to obtain the patient's histology slides. Compile the case for presentation and review at the department. After the case presentation, make the suggested corrections and then proceed to draft a paper for publication.

Drafting the article

The next step is to identify an appropriate journal where the paper is to be published. In selecting a journal, look out for the following.

1. impact factor that measures the average number of citations its articles receive, indicating the journal's influence and relevance in its field.
2. Open access refers to the free, unrestricted online availability of research publications, allowing anyone to read, download, and share the content.
3. Article Processing Charge (APC) waivers, which are reductions or eliminations of fees required to publish in open-access journals and are often granted to researchers from low-income countries or those with limited funding.
4. Article rejection rate refers to the percentage of submitted manuscripts that a journal declines to publish, indicating the selectivity or competitiveness of the journal.
5. Author guidelines are a set of instructions provided by journals or publishers detailing the requirements for manuscript submission, including citation standards and formatting for the title, authors, corresponding author, keywords, key message, abstract, introduction, main body/case presentation (history, examination, histology, pictures, diagnosis, differential diagnosis, management, and follow-up), discussion, conclusion, recommendations, statement of the funding, statement of consent, conflict of interest, data availability statement, acknowledgments, author contributions, and references.
6. Maximum word count
7. Number of issues per year.
8. Pre-print offer that allows researchers to share their manuscripts publicly before it has been peer-reviewed and published in a journal, facilitating early dissemination and feedback.

Examples of journals dermatology residents can consider submitting their manuscripts to include: Student's Journal of Health Research Africa, Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology (JAAD), International Journal of Dermatology (IJD), SKIN The Journal of Cutaneous Medicine, Community Skin Health Journal-ILDS, Clinical Case reports, International Wound journal and the Tropical Medicine and Health Journal. Post-graduate students are encouraged to utilize referencing tools like EndNote and citation sites like Google Scholar. After the paper is drafted, the student should submit the paper to the lecturers at the dermatology department, MUST, for review.

Manuscript submission process to an appropriate journal

After the student has responded to concerns and corrections from lecturers, they should then access the journal portal and create an account/password. Follow the steps on the journal portal and submit all required documents, including the manuscript, informed consent forms, figures, tables, letters to the editor, etc. Students are encouraged to select a waiver of APC during the submission process. The paper will then undergo a peer review process by the journal and will be sent back to the student via their email for final corrections. The student then has to resubmit the final corrected manuscript and then await the final publication volume, issue, and the Digital Object Identifier (DOI) for their article.

Collaborations

Teamwork amongst postgraduate students is encouraged since all authors are recognized under the Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT) system. Additionally, students are encouraged to collaborate with lecturers from other departments like pathology, pediatrics, and internal medicine among others.

Benefits of a healthy publishing culture.

Enhancing access to knowledge can ultimately assist clinicians, particularly in resource-limited settings, in improving their diagnostic accuracy and delivering appropriate management for patients with unusual skin diseases. Postgraduate students can gain from mentorship programs such as those offered by the International Alliance for Global Health (GLODERM) since one of the prerequisites for joining this program is having at least two first-author publications(6). Some international dermatology conferences e.g., the European Association for Dermatology and Venereology (EADV)(7), and the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) conference, offer support to postgraduate students from Lower- and Middle-Income Countries (LMIC) and publications are a requirement in the application for these conferences. Career development in research, including writing and securing grants, is often a focus for Ivy League universities that provide research funding, and additionally, these institutions also require first-author publications.

Conclusion

This article provides a detailed guide for dermatology postgraduate students at Mbarara University of Science and Technology on how to publish their case studies effectively. By following the outlined steps and adhering to a transparent and rigorous publication process, students can address the current knowledge gap in dermatologic care at Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital. Embracing a healthy publication culture will enhance research quality, support

professional development, and improve patient care, ultimately benefiting both the academic community and healthcare in Uganda.

Data availability statement

Data sharing does not apply to this article, as no new data was created or analyzed in this study.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no competing interests.

Limitations

This article is focused on students publishing novel findings in the department, but this process can take away time to focus on patient care and other academic work. Considerations should be made so as not to hinder other departmental activities.

Originality and impact

Novelty

This article on the structured approach to fostering a healthy publishing culture for case reports in the dermatology department at MUST is the first paper written in the department about this topic and it provides guidance and the starting tools that a student can utilize to get their work published and recognized.

Impact

This paper has a significant impact on the field of dermatology in Uganda since many of the difficult cases we manage are not published.

Author contributions

S. P. Mundeli conducted a literature search on the topic and drafted the paper. M. S. Abdirahman did a literature search on the topic.

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