

EDITORIAL

Clinical case reports and the key clinical message

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The mission and aim of *Clinical Case Reports* “...is to use clinical case reports to disseminate best clinical practice, to examine important common as well as uncommon clinical scenarios, and to illustrate and inform the use of important clinical guidelines and systematic reviews” [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/\(ISSN\)2050-0904/homepage/ForAuthors.html](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/(ISSN)2050-0904/homepage/ForAuthors.html). From this statement, it is clear that to be considered for publication in *Clinical Case Reports*, not all reported cases need to be unusual or uncommon. However, all do need to have a *key clinical message* – that is; all need to have a clear statement about the important lesson learned or significant information revealed through this particular clinical case.

At *Clinical Case Reports*, we consider the key clinical message to be a very important part of the case report. It should summarize the central, take-home clinical message authors are seeking to impart in writing up and looking to publish their report.

The key clinical message is intended to capture and reflect the crucial and central meaning of each case report. While there are some similarities with a traditional abstract, the key clinical message is more focused and concise, and does not contain the same amount of background information. At *Clinical Case Reports*, we require that the key clinical message of the report is summarized into a maximum of 50 words.

This key clinical message has several important functions. Its major role to capture and reflect the crucial and central

meaning of each report. It also in a sense justifies why the case report is worthy of being published; why it is that authors think the case they are reporting might be useful for others to read – or, to answer the question ‘what is it that other clinicians can learn from this case?’. Once the report is accepted for publication in *Clinical Case Reports*, this short (but informative) key message appears in the table of contents of the journal. In reading the key clinical message, readers should be able to grasp the value or importance of the paper and make a decision about whether or not this particular report might be useful for them.

In addition, the key clinical message can help authors to decide what details of a case should and should not be included in the case report. The *Clinical Case Reports* author guidelines highlight that while the reporting of the case should be sufficiently detailed to explain the case, extraneous information should not be included. Therefore, if particular information is not relevant to the key clinical message, then it should not be included in the published case report.

When preparing a key clinical message as part of a case report for submission to *Clinical Case Reports*, it can be helpful to browse through some of the published case reports on the *Clinical Case Reports* website, to see how other authors have presented their key clinical messages. During submission of the case report, the key clinical message should be entered in the ‘abstract’ field of the *Clinical Case Reports* submission site.