



## Misplaced Modifiers and Verbal Phrase Danglers Quiz by Laura King, MA, ELS

Directions: Identify and correct the problems with misplaced modifiers and verbal phrase danglers in the following sentences based on the information outlined in sections [7.4.1](#) and [7.4.2](#) of the [AMA Manual of Style](#). For further explanation of the correct answers, refer to the cited section of the online or print version of the [AMA Manual of Style](#).

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1. Using a cutoff of 13.5 on the Advanced Dementia Prognostic Tool, which also had specificity of 0.89, the area under the receiver operating characteristic curve was 0.58 and the sensitivity was 0.27.

**ANSWER:**

Using a cutoff of 13.5 on the Advanced Dementia Prognostic Tool, which also had specificity of 0.89, the investigators determined that the area under the receiver operating characteristic curve was 0.58 and the sensitivity was 0.27.

**Editor's Note:** The area under the receiver operating characteristic curve did not use the cutoff of 13.5, the investigators did ([§7.4.1](#), Misplaced Modifiers, pp 322-323 in print).

## LEARNING RESOURCES

2. After performing tracheotomy, the patients were found to have a reduced incidence of pneumonia and an increased number of ventilator-free days.

### **ANSWER:**

After undergoing tracheotomy, the patients were found to have a reduced incidence of pneumonia and an increased number of ventilator-free days.

**Editor's Note:** The patients did not perform tracheotomy; the patients underwent tracheotomy. This could also be rephrased to "After performing tracheotomy, the physicians found the patients to have a reduced incidence of pneumonia and an increased the number of ventilator-free days" (§7.4.2, Verbal Phrase Dangers, pp 323-324 in print).

3. On the basis of the preliminary results of their study, the tumors were classified into 3 different staging groups.

### **ANSWER:**

On the basis of the preliminary results of their study, the investigators classified the tumors into 3 different staging groups.

**Editor's Note:** The phrase "On the basis of the preliminary results of their study" does not modify "the tumors"; it modifies whoever performed the study (ie, "the investigators") (§7.4.2, Verbal Phrase Dangers, pp 323-324 in print).

4. After adjusting for characteristics of the experimental trials and the investigational agents, the odds of a patient dying from an experimental treatment while participating in a trial during the most recent 4-year period were less than one-tenth those of a patient participating in a trial during the first 4-year period.

### **ANSWER:**

After the investigators adjusted for characteristics of the experimental trials and the investigational agents, the odds of a patient dying from an experimental treatment while participating in a trial during the most recent 4-year period were less than one-tenth those of a patient participating in a trial during the first 4-year period.

**Editor's Note:** The odds did not adjust for characteristics of the experimental trials and the investigational agents, the investigators did (§7.4.1, Misplaced Modifiers, pp 322-323 in print).



## LEARNING RESOURCES

5. Using retrospective medical record review, the patients were organized into groups based on age, sex, and ethnicity/race.

**ANSWER:**

Using retrospective medical record review, investigators organized the patients into groups based on age, sex, and ethnicity/race.

**Editor's Note:** The patients did not use retrospective medical record review, the investigators did ([§7.4.2](#), Verbal Phrase Dangers, pp 323-324 in print).

6. After deciding to perform hemodialysis, the patient was referred to a vascular surgeon for creation of a native arteriovenous (radiocephalic) fistula.

**ANSWER:**

After deciding to perform hemodialysis, the physician referred the patient to a vascular surgeon for creation of a native arteriovenous (radiocephalic) fistula.

**Editor's Note:** The patient did not decide to perform hemodialysis, the physician did ([§7.4.2](#), Verbal Phrase Dangers, pp 323-324 in print).

7. Using the original case as a springboard, the diagnosis, natural history, and treatment of herpes zoster and postherpetic neuralgia in immunocompetent older adults are reviewed.

**ANSWER:**

Using the original case as a springboard, we review the diagnosis, natural history, and treatment of herpes zoster and postherpetic neuralgia in immunocompetent older adults.

**Editor's Note:** The sentence needs to be revised to indicate who used the original case as a springboard (eg, we, the investigators, the authors) ([§7.4.2](#), Verbal Phrase Dangers, pp 323-324 in print).



## LEARNING RESOURCES

8. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation only using chest compressions is an option in the management of sudden cardiac arrest when rescuers are unable to provide standard cardiopulmonary resuscitation that combines chest compressions with rescue breathing.

### **ANSWER:**

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation using chest compressions only is an option in the management of sudden cardiac arrest when rescuers are unable to provide standard cardiopulmonary resuscitation that combines chest compressions with rescue breathing.

**Editor's Note:** The word *only* (and *just*) must be placed immediately before the word or phrase it modifies for the meaning to be clear. The original sentence could be misinterpreted to mean only cardiopulmonary resuscitation rather than chest compression–only cardiopulmonary resuscitation (§7.4.1, Misplaced Modifiers, pp 322-323 in print).

9. According to their response to corticosteroid therapy, the investigators divided the patients into 2 groups.

### **ANSWER:**

The investigators divided the patients into 2 groups according to patient response to corticosteroid therapy.

**Editor's Note:** The phrase "According to their response to corticosteroid therapy" does not modify the noun phrase "the investigators." The phrase should modify "the patients." To clearly specify who is responding to therapy, "their response to corticosteroid therapy" has been changed to "patient response to corticosteroid therapy" (§7.4.1, Misplaced Modifiers, pp 322-323 in print).

10. Of the 32 patients with AIDS, the investigators were able to follow up 30 through completion of the 2-year study.

### **ANSWER:**

The investigators were able to follow up 30 of the 32 patients with AIDS through completion of the 2-year study.

**Editor's Note:** The phrase "Of the 32 patients with AIDS" relates to the patients not the investigators. The sentence should be rephrased so that the number 30 clearly derives from the number 32 (§7.4.1, Misplaced Modifiers, pp 322-323 in print).

