



Titles and Subtitles Quiz by Laura King, MA, ELS

Directions: Writing and editing titles and subtitles requires a delicate balance. Titles should be concise but must contain the key points of the work. Subtitles should expand on and complement the title but should not be overly detailed. The following are examples of titles that require editing. The answers given are suggested revisions for the titles and subtitles based on the views of a small group of *JAMA/Archives* editors, who recognize that other choices might be defensible.

1. Sleep Patterns: Differences Between Elderly Men and Women

ANSWER:

Differences in Sleep Patterns in Elderly Men and Women

Editor's Note: For scientific manuscripts, overly general titles are not desirable (§2.1, Titles and Subtitles, pp 8-11 in print). Often the editor will have to combine the title and subtitle to accurately reflect the main point of the work.

2. The Role of Physician Continuity in the Treatment of Substance Abuse

ANSWER:

Physician Continuity in the Treatment of Substance Abuse

Editor's Note: Phrases such as “Role of,” “Effects of,” “Treatment of,” “Use of,” and “Report of a Case of” can often be omitted from both titles and subtitles (§2.1, Titles and Subtitles, pp 8-11 in print).

3. A Prospective Study of Chronic Cough: Diagnosis and Treatment in Older Adults

ANSWER:

Diagnosis and Treatment of Chronic Cough in Older Adults: A Prospective Study

Editor's Note: Aspects of study design or methods may be included in the title or subtitle (§2.1, Titles and Subtitles, pp 8-11 in print). In this example, the authors want to identify their work as a prospective study; however, the phrase *From a Prospective Study of Chronic Cough* cannot stand alone as a title, so the prospective study classification should be moved to the subtitle. Randomized controlled trials should always be identified in either the title or subtitle.

4. Patients With Epilepsy Who Die Suddenly Have Cardiac Disease

ANSWER:

Fatal Cardiac Disease in Patients With Epilepsy

Editor's Note: Declarative sentences are used frequently as titles of news stories and opinion pieces. However, declarative sentences in scientific article titles tend to overemphasize a conclusion and are best avoided (§2.1, Titles and Subtitles, pp 8-11 in print).

5. Use of Warfarin Sodium for the Prevention of Stroke

ANSWER:

Use of Warfarin for the Prevention of Stroke

Editor's Note: If drug names appear in the title or subtitle, (1) use the approved generic or nonproprietary name, (2) omit the nonbase moiety unless it is required, and (3) avoid the use of proprietary names unless (a) several products are being compared, (b) the article is specific to a particular formulation of a drug (eg, the vehicle, not the active substance, caused adverse reactions), or (c) the number of ingredients is so large that the resulting title would be clumsy and a generic term, such as “multivitamin tablet,” would not do (§2.1.2, Numbers, p 11 in print). In this example, *sodium* (the nonbase moiety) should be deleted.

6. Outbreaks of *C. pneumoniae* in Nursing Homes

ANSWER:

Outbreaks of *Chlamydia pneumoniae* in Nursing Homes

Editor's Note: Genus and species should be expanded and italicized in the title or subtitle and an initial capital letter should be used for the genus but not the species name, just as in the text ([§2.1.4](#), Genus and Species, pp 11-12 in print).

7. *Helicobacter pylori* Infection in Dyspeptic Adults in New York City

ANSWER:

Helicobacter pylori Infection in Dyspeptic Adults

Editor's Note: Include cities, states, counties, provinces, or countries in titles only when essential, especially for results that may not be generalizable to other locations (eg, unique to that site) ([§2.1.7](#), Names of Cities, Counties, States, Provinces, and Countries, pp 12-13 in print). In this example, unless the study results are specific to New York City, delete the phrase *From New York City*.

8. Avoidable Delays? Factors That Affect Physician Wait Times in Inner-City Clinics

ANSWER:

Factors That Affect Physician Wait Times in Inner-City Clinics OR Factors That Affect Physician Wait Times in Inner-City Clinics: Avoidable Delays?

Editor's Note: Generally, questions should not be used for titles of scientific manuscripts; however, they are often appropriate for titles of editorials, commentaries, and opinion pieces. In either case, in this example, the phrase *Avoidable Delays?* cannot stand alone as a title and should either be deleted or made the subtitle ([§2.1](#), Titles and Subtitles, pp 8-11 in print).

9. Propagation of Human Spermatogonial Stem Cells in Vitro

ANSWER:

Propagation of Human Spermatogonial Stem Cells In Vitro

Editor's Note: Capitalize the first letter of each major word in titles and subtitles. Do not capitalize articles (eg, *a, an, the*), prepositions of 3 or fewer letters, coordinating conjunctions (*and, or, for, nor, but*), or the *to* in infinitives. Do capitalize a 2-letter verb, such as *Is* or *Be*. Exceptions are made for some expressions, such as compound terms from languages other than English and phrasal verbs ([§2.1.6](#), Capitalization, p 12 in print). Common exceptions include *In Vitro, In Vivo, In Situ*, and *De Novo*.

10. 6-Year Follow-up of a Preventive Intervention for Parentally Bereaved Youths: A Randomized Controlled Trial

ANSWER:

Six-Year Follow-up of a Preventive Intervention for Parentally Bereaved Youths: A Randomized Controlled Trial

Editor's Note: If numbers appear at the beginning of a title or subtitle, they—and any unit of measure associated with them—should be spelled out. Exceptions may be made for years (eg, 2009-2010) ([§2.1.2](#), Numbers, p 11 in print).

11. Predictive Value of CMV Retinitis for CMV Encephalitis in AIDS

ANSWER:

Predictive Value of Cytomegalovirus Retinitis for Cytomegalovirus Encephalitis in AIDS

Editor's Note: Avoid the use of abbreviations in titles and subtitles, unless the abbreviation is not expanded at first mention (eg, AIDS) ([§14.11](#), Clinical, Technical, and Other Common Terms, pp 501-519 in print), unless space considerations require an exception, or unless the title or subtitle includes the name of a group that is best known by its acronym ([§2.1.5](#), Abbreviations, p 12 in print).

12. Risk Factors for Stroke in Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus: United Kingdom Prospective Diabetes Study (UKPDS) 29

ANSWER:

Risk Factors for Stroke in Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus: United Kingdom Prospective Diabetes Study (UKPDS) 29 OR Risk Factors for Stroke in Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus: UKPDS 29 (as long as UKPDS is expanded at first mention in the abstract).

Editor's Note: Sometimes a subtitle will contain the name of the group responsible for the study, especially if the study is large and is best known by its group name or acronym or if it is a part of a series of reports from the same group ([§2.1](#), Titles and Subtitles, pp 8-11 in print). In these instances, it is acceptable to place the acronym in parentheses after the group name is spelled out or to let the acronym stand alone as long as it is spelled out in the abstract.