

AMA Manual of Style

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Types of Articles

Richard M. Glass

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Effective written communication requires the author to consider the intended message and audience and use a form appropriate to both. Medical journal articles usually fit into one of the following 7 main types. Published reports of original research are the backbone of medical and scientific communications. Critical evaluation and replication of the findings of such reports are key aspects of quality control and progress in science and medicine; the clinical applications of original research are a major source of benefits for patients. Journals often categorize reports of original data as Original Articles, Original Communications, or Original Reports, section headings that emphasize the new findings such articles intend to communicate. Short articles reporting original data may be called Brief Reports. Studies that address basic issues of physiology or pathology may be called Research Reports or Clinical Investigations. In JAMA, articles that report preliminary findings are called Preliminary Communications...

Articles of Opinion

Richard M. Glass

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Editorials are short essays that usually reflect the views of the editor or the policies of the journal. Editorials may be written by the editor, a member of the editorial staff or editorial board, or an invited author. Editorials may comment on an article in the same issue of the journal, providing additional context and opinion regarding its implications, or may deal with a separate topic of interest to the journal's readers or editors. In the past, it was common for authors of medical journal editorials not to be identified, as is still the usual practice for newspaper editorials. This

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Letters to the Editor are an essential aspect of postpublication review. The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors has recommended that all biomedical journals provide “a mechanism for submitting comments, questions, or criticisms about published articles, as well as brief reports and commentary unrelated to previously published articles. This will likely, but not necessarily, take the form of a correspondence section or column. The authors of articles discussed in correspondence should be given an opportunity to respond, preferably in the same issue in which the original correspondence appears.” Published letters usually comment on an article previously published in the same

Reviews of Books, Journals, and Other Media

Richard M. Glass

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Readers of such reviews seek both an overview of the product and an assessment of its quality relative to similar works. Thus, these reviews usually include description and opinion, both of which may extend to broader issues raised by the work. There is often considerable room for individual style and expression in these critiques, but supporting evidence for the reviewer’s praise or criticism is essential. |

Other Types of Articles

Richard M. Glass

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Journals publish other items and articles that do not fit into any of the major categories. Examples include personal reflections and essays (eg, A Piece of My Mind in JAMA), news articles, poetry, obituaries, reports on conferences, and articles based on clinical photographs. Authors should examine several issues of a journal to make sure that a submission is appropriate and read the journal’s instructions for authors to determine requirements regarding various types of articles. |

Reports of Original Data

Richard M. Glass

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Published reports of original research are the backbone of medical and scientific communications. Critical evaluation and replication of the findings of such reports are key

aspects of quality control and progress in science and medicine; the clinical applications of original research are a major source of benefits for patients. Journals often categorize reports of original data as Original Articles, Original Communications, or Original Reports, section headings that emphasize the new findings such articles intend to communicate. Short articles reporting original data may be called Brief Reports. Studies that address basic issues of physiology or pathology may be called Research Reports

Review Articles

Richard M. Glass

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Review articles collate and summarize the available information about a particular topic, in contrast to reports of original data. Review articles have great practical importance because clinicians often use them as guides for clinical decisions. This use highlights the importance of ensuring that reviews are systematic, include all relevant data, and are not overly influenced by the opinions and biases of the authors. Thus, review articles should specify the methods used to search for, select, synthesize, and summarize the information. Some reviews employ meta-analysis, statistical techniques that combine quantitative results from independent studies. (See , Study Design and Statistics, Meta-analysis.)

Descriptive Articles

Richard M. Glass

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Descriptions, summaries, or observations that lack the systematic rigor of original research or systematic reviews may be published as Case Reports (for patient descriptions), Clinical Observations, Special Articles, or Special Communications. To merit publication, such articles should make novel observations that can stimulate research or should provide useful information about topics of particular interest to a journal's readership. Since the scientific value of single case reports is often limited, many journals prefer to consider them as Letters to the Editor and publish them only if they make a unique observation that merits more systematic investigation. Some medical journals publish case

Consensus Statements and Clinical Practice Guidelines

Richard M. Glass

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Governmental and private organizations often develop recommendations for the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of various disorders. These recommendations regarding appropriate clinical decisions are usually made by a group of experts after they assess the available evidence. Recommendations may be published as consensus statements developed at a conference or as clinical practice guidelines (sometimes called practice parameters) developed over time. In either case, publication of the recommendations should identify the sponsor and the participating experts, explain how the participants were selected, describe the evidence that supports the recommendations, and explain the process for achieving consensus in reaching the conclusions. Structured abstracts