

## Abstracts of Case Reports

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Sir William Osler described case reports as "scientific observations..... carefully documented so that they may be a valuable education and research resource".<sup>1</sup> In today's world of evidence-based medicine, case reports have a significant role to play and have led to a variety of important developments.<sup>2</sup> Primarily, case reports serve the following purposes of: (a) recognition and description of new cases, (b) detection of side-effects of drugs, (c) mechanisms of disease, (d) medical education and (e) recognition of rare manifestations of disease. Their significance may reflect from the fact that a MEDLINE search, using the medical subject heading term "case reports" retrieved more than 250,000 citations for the years 1997 to 2002.

The Journal of Pakistan Medical Association (JPMA) is the oldest and most prestigious medical journal in Pakistan. Case reports constitute a regular feature of its editions. A cause of concern is that JPMA does not publish abstracts of case reports. This potentially leads to under utilization of the publication. Abstracts should be included so that more information can be retrieved from electronic databases such as MEDLINE. Without an abstract available in an electronic database, the probability that physicians will be able to appreciate the relevance of the report stands diminished.<sup>3</sup> The

information that can be detected from the title is inherently limited. Abstracts allow the readers to quickly scan the content and gauge its suitability for their search. If this is not done, many pertinent articles will be overlooked and available knowledge will remain unused.

It is my opinion that JPMA should incorporate abstracts of at least 50 words for its case reports. This can be achieved by reducing the word limit of the case reports from 1250 to 1200. Case report abstracts will not only improve the frequency of the journal's citations but will help further the cause of research both nationally and internationally.

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## References

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