Avoiding Simple Mistakes Commonly Seen in JSGS Manuscripts (Part 1)

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In this article, we, as the English editors of the journal, will address some of the mistakes that we commonly find in the Japanese Journal of Gastroenterological Surgery (JSGS journal) abstracts.

**Title**

- *Unnecessary use of “a case of”, “a case report of” and “a report of”*
  
  Many authors include these phrases in the title. However, these should be avoided when possible. Since titles should be brief but informative, it is important for the name of the disease being treated and the type of treatment that is used to appear in the title. However, a phrase such as “a report of” does not give the reader any further significant information except the fact that it is simply a report. Furthermore, unless a case is extremely rare and this point needs to be emphasized, the phrase “a case of” should not be included. In other words, “a rare case of x cancer” would be acceptable but “a case of x cancer” would not be, as it does not add any significant information. However, it is important to indicate, perhaps by use of the article “a” within the title that this is one patient and not a review of the topic.

- *Punctuation*
  
  We often see periods at the end of a title. Periods are usually used as an end-of-sentence punctuation mark. However, since a title is not a sentence, it is not necessary to have a period at the end of it. In addition, authors should be careful about other punctuation and spacing, for example, in the Key Words, where many authors make the mistake of putting a space before a colon when there should not be. Avoid placing spaces between words and punctuation marks such as commas and colons etc.

  Correct Key Words:
  Incorrect Key Words :

- *Capitalization*
  
  In general, authors should not capitalize entire words, e.g. PANCREATIC HEAD CANCER, in a title, or in the text. However, journals may have their own policy on the use of capitalization or may follow different guidelines on style, so it is important to check with the Instructions to Authors of your target journal. Furthermore, many authors capitalize the word JAPAN when providing their contact information. Again, there is no reason to use capitalization for the entire word.

**List of authors/corresponding author**

- *Check spelling of author names*
  
  Sometimes we see Japanese names being spelled with a mixture of different types of alphabetic transliteration (e.g. Takasi or Takashi). We have no way of knowing what the individual’s preference is. Once a manuscript is published using the wrong spelling, it may be problematic for the author with the misspelled word, and in some cases may later lead to problems surrounding authorship. For example, if an author’s prefers their last name to be spelled
“Simidu” instead of “Shimizu”, or “Katoh” instead of “Kato”, they could be mistaken for different people. People could also question their list of publications on their curriculum vitae (C.V.) if papers contain their non-preferred spelling in the list of authors. It is therefore important to remember to check and confirm the spelling of names with individuals, especially of coauthors, before submission, to avoid any problems later on.

• Corresponding author

Many authors fail to include all contact information. You should include the affiliation, mailing address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address of the corresponding author. The role of the corresponding author is important, as they will be the first to be contacted regarding the manuscript, therefore providing all their contact information is essential for the smooth processing of the paper.

Main Text

• Use of ‘male/female’

We often see sentences such as, “A 65-year-old female was referred to our hospital.” The American Medical Association Manual of Style (AMA) states that “whenever possible, a patient should be referred to as a man, woman, boy, girl, or infant.” Patients aged 18 and older are “men” and “women”. Therefore, the above should be written as “A 65-year-old woman was referred to our hospital.”

Of course, it is possible to say “a 65-year-old female patient” however, as with all manuscripts, it is better to “omit needless words” especially as manuscripts have word limits. Since it can be understood that the ‘woman’ or ‘man’ is a patient, it is not necessary to mention the word ‘patient’. However, the AMA states that in cases where there is a group of patients which include both sexes, or patients both under 18, and 18 or over, it would be appropriate to use ‘male’ and ‘female’ as nouns. For example, “the control group consisted of 10 males and 20 females aged 16 to 28.”

• Use of ‘diagnose’

This is a mistake that even many native English speakers, and some Western journals, make. For example, the following 2 sentences misuse the word ‘diagnose’ and are therefore incorrect:

“the patient was diagnosed as pancreatic head cancer”
“the 66-year-old man was diagnosed with pancreatic head cancer”

Both are incorrect because a disease can be diagnosed, or a person can be given a diagnosis, but a person cannot be diagnosed. Therefore, the sentences should be corrected as “the patient was given a diagnosis of pancreatic head cancer” or “pancreatic head cancer was diagnosed in a 66-year-old man”.

• Use of ‘for’

The misuse of ‘for’ is also common. The following sentences both use ‘for’.

“a 54-year-old woman was admitted for further examination of a hepatic mass”
“a 54-year-old woman was admitted for a hepatic mass”

However, the second sentence is incorrect because it could imply that the woman was admitted in order to receive a hepatic mass, which of course is impossible. Therefore, this sentence could be corrected as “a 54-year-old woman was admitted because of a hepatic mass” or “with a hepatic mass” by using ‘because of’ or ‘with’ instead of ‘for’, to avoid ambiguity.

We hope that by pointing out the common mistakes encountered in the editing process and providing clear explanations will help authors with future manuscript preparations. More examples of common mistakes will be introduced in the next article.

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1) American Medical Association. AMA manual of style: a guide for authors and editors. 10th ed. New York: Oxford University Press; 2007. Chapter 11, Age and Sex Referents; p. 410.
2) Strunk, W Jr., White, EB. The Elements of Style. 4th ed. New York: Pearson Education, Inc.; 2000. 105 p.