



## TIPs for a Successful **Oral Poster** Presentation

Dynamics enables critical care nurses to share important knowledge and practice strategies with their colleagues. It also provides nurses with opportunities to enhance their presentation skills. The following tips have been included in all speaker kits to provide suggestions/support for presenters who are developing their public speaking skills. If you are an experienced speaker, you may wish to pass these tips along to colleagues who are interested in developing their own presentation skills. You might encourage them to submit abstracts for next year

### **The Presentation:**

- ✿ Aim to make complex ideas simple, instead of simple ideas complex
- ✿ Focus on a manageable amount of information and avoid cramming too much information into your presentation
- ✿ Consider incorporating case scenarios or pose clinical queries that help to engage the audience and maintain their interest
- ✿ Know your subject material well; the more confident you are with your material the easier it is to discuss and present
- ✿ Practice your presentation with a critical audience who will be willing to give you honest and constructive suggestions
- ✿ Practice until you are comfortable and need minimal notes
- ✿ Concentrate on pacing your presentation; most presenters speak faster when they are nervous - you have to consciously slow your rate of speech down
- ✿ Structure your presentation by telling the audience what you plan to discuss (review your objectives), present your content, then summarize the key “take home points” at the end of your presentation
- ✿ Avoid excessive use of jargon or large polysyllable words; language should be simple and easy to follow
- ✿ Dress in business attire; wild colours, prints or fashion fads can distract the audience away from your presentation or cause them to pre-judge your credibility as an expert role model
- ✿ Avoid dangling jewellery or bracelets that may be noisy or distracting
- ✿ Don't chew gum

- ✿ Keep a glass of water handy in case you are overcome with a tickle in your throat or dry mouth; avoid drinking carbonated drinks immediately prior to speaking
- ✿ Inspect the room before your presentation and arrive well in advance of presentation time to avoid last minute rushing
- ✿ Bring business cards to allow interested delegates to contact you at a later date
- ✿ Handout material can augment your presentation and increase the satisfaction of participants
- ✿ Practice, edit, practice and edit

### **How to Effectively Handle Questions:**

- ✿ Anticipate the types of questions your presentation might generate and be prepared to respond to them
- ✿ Always repeat a question into the microphone to confirm that you understood it correctly and ensure that other members of the audience heard it
- ✿ Keep answers brief; participants wanting extensive responses should be encouraged to come and speak to you after the presentation
- ✿ Always recognize delegate's questions and respect their participation
- ✿ Never display indifference or disrespect for a question; even if you think it is very inappropriate
- ✿ If you are unable to answer a question, don't be afraid to admit it
- ✿ For questions you are unable to respond to, it may be appropriate to ask the audience; often, questions that speakers are unable to answer have either deviated from the topic presented or are rhetorical
- ✿ Never make a participant feel foolish for not knowing an answer
- ✿ When you ask the audience if they have questions, be sure that you pause long enough for questions to come in before concluding your presentation
- ✿ Time remaining in the presentation will limit the number of questions; if several questions are still unaddressed, identify where the next 2 or 3 questions will be taken from and indicate that they will be the last
- ✿ Let participants know that you will be glad to answer remaining questions after the session

## Visual Presentations

- ✿ Slides and visuals should be used to emphasize, reinforce and highlight a presentation; they should never be the presentation
- ✿ Use minimal information on slides
- ✿ Visuals are useful to help organize your presentation and provide "prompts" for what you want to say
- ✿ The quality of your visuals provide the "first impression"; well organized, clear, visually appealing, and professional looking slides lead the audience to a first impression of a presenter "who has it together"
- ✿ The audience should be able to tell at a quick glance the intended message on a given slide
- ✿ Slides must be typed using a font of at least 18 point size
- ✿ Courier font is too small for slide visibility
- ✿ Use no more than 2 styles of font per slide
- ✿ Leave space between lines of at least the height of one upper case letter
- ✿ Keep text to top half of slide; often participants at back of room are unable to see the bottom half of the screen
- ✿ Restrict slides to 10 words per visual
- ✿ Aim to allow each slide on the screen for 45 - 60 seconds
- ✿ Avoid vertical lettering; it is too hard to read
- ✿ Colour can improve the visual appeal of a slide
- ✿ Restrict use of color to not more than 3 per slide; colors should be complimentary when combined together on one visual
- ✿ Avoid using red or green for critical points - a significant number of people are red green color-blind
- ✿ Restrict slide's content to one idea or concept per visual
- ✿ Use bullets and point forms rather than full sentences on slides
- ✿ Use lower case letters with capitals at start of words only; it is much easier to read than all upper case

- ✿ Eliminate overly complicated data and concepts that offer little importance to the overall presentation
- ✿ Do not show slides or data unless they are valuable to the presentation; audiences get annoyed if told to ignore a slide because it is "complicated" or not important
- ✿ When presenting research data, use graphs and charts only to highlight critical data; overuse of graphs and irrelevant statistics will lose your audience's attention
- ✿ Cartoons, scenery, pictures or quotes can be used to add variation to your presentation and emphasize points
- ✿ Humour must be used carefully; do not use jokes that have racial or gender overtones or are insensitive to audience's values
- ✿ When using cartoons or humour slides, be sure to pause long enough to allow participants to interpret and read jokes (you can read punch lines out loud to ensure adequate time has passed and give everyone a chance to enjoy the caption)
- ✿ Jokes must be relevant to the presentation; identify how the joke "theme" emphasizes key points of a talk
- ✿ Be sure to reference any quotes or research findings
- ✿ If using slides, run through any slides in the speaker room prior to presenting to ensure that none are upside down etc.
- ✿ Slides used in rooms with rear projection (usually large plenary rooms) must be reversed and inserted backwards into carousels
- ✿ Prepare in advance for possible adverse scenarios (e.g. audience larger or smaller than planned, audio-visual problems)
- ✿ Have a contingency plan prepared in advance in case your visuals fail
- ✿ Carry your presentation in your carry-on luggage
- ✿ Ensure that all visuals/handouts are free from grammatical or spelling errors

*\*\*\*most hospitals have an audio-visual department that can offer excellent suggestions to help make your visuals interesting and professional*

## **Presenters**

- Anticipate the types of questions your poster might generate and be prepared to respond to them
- Know your subject matter well; you will feel much more confident responding to questions
- Focus on a manageable amount of information and avoid cramming too much information into your poster
- Handout material can augment your presentation and increase the satisfaction of participants
- Dress in business attire; a professional image gives you that first impression advantage
- Keep a glass of water handy in case you are overcome with a tickle in your throat or dry mouth
- Wear comfortable shoes
- Bring business cards to allow interested delegates to contact you at a later date

## **Interacting with Delegates**

- Poster presentations provide superior opportunity for networking and dialogue
- Always recognize questions as legitimate, and respect the participation of interested delegates
- Never display indifference or disrespect for a question; even if you think it is very inappropriate
- If you are unable to answer a question, don't be afraid to admit it
- Shake hands and make eye contact when responding to questions
- Smile; warmth and friendliness goes a long way in opening up conversation
- If you are uncomfortable initiating conversation, begin by welcoming individuals who stop at your poster and ask them where they are from
- You may continue a conversation by either asking if they are familiar with your study etc or by briefly describing an aspect of the topic presented (e.g. why you asked the question, what you found)

## **Poster Preparation**

- Most hospitals have audio-visual departments that can assist you to prepare a professional poster
- Talk to people who have presented posters to get ideas for structure and format; if you get a chance, attend other poster presentations

## **Organizing Content**

- A poster should take no more than 5 minutes for a reader to comprehend
- Your goal is to be brief, concise and appealing
- Aim to make complex ideas simple, instead of simple ideas complex
- Plan your poster by identifying the purpose of your presentation (e.g. do you want people to use your strategy, learn a procedure, change their practice)
- Consider how advertisers grab your attention and think of ways to attract delegate's interest to your poster by incorporating your purpose into a catchy heading
- Try to answer the 6 questions of journalism: who, what, when, where, why and how
- Organize your content into groupings that follow a logical sequence
- Introduce groupings by sub-headings using bold/larger size font
- Utilize point or bullet form instead of sentence/paragraph structure
- Incorporate diagrams, graphs, or pictures to emphasize or complement content
- Avoid excessive use of jargon or large polysyllable words; language should be simple and easy to follow
- Maintain gender and racial neutrality
- Identify all of the critical points that you feel should be included, then edit, review and edit again

## **Visual Appearance**

- A professional looking poster leaves a positive first impression regarding the quality of the content

- The goal of a successful poster is to make it eye catching and visually appealing
- Keep content simple and uncluttered
- Colour adds important visual attraction and can be added in background mounts, text, pictures, diagrams or charts
- Avoid text in red or green - it can be used for non-essential highlighting; a significant portion of the population is red/green colour-blind
- Ink jet printers provide high quality colour presentations if printed on photography paper (printer settings should be set according to the paper quality)
- Coloured foam mattes purchased from art supply stores provide professional backgrounds.
- To plan your poster, mark out an area equal to the size of the poster board on a piece of paper (newsprint picnic table paper from a party supply store is ideal); use this as a background to keep the space for your poster in mind
- Use your background to practice different display combinations
- Font size should be at least ½" - 3/4" high for text, 2" - 3" for headings
- Aim to keep columns 3" - 4" wide and ensure sufficient "white space"
- Use upper and lower case lettering rather than all upper case
- Do not use more than 2 different fonts on one poster
- Text that is written on white is much easier to read; mount pages that contain text onto contrasting background
- Don't be afraid to experiment with different shapes e.g. mounting a pie chart onto a round matte
- List text in point form

## **Assembly**

- Posters can be blown up professionally onto very large boards or divided into several smaller sections; sections can be assembled at the conference
- Professional looking posters can be prepared for minimal cost if you do most of the work yourself and have access to an ink jet or laser printer, high quality printing paper and a few art supplies
- Avoid pastes or glues on backgrounds that might wrinkle or appear bumpy

- You can mount pages of text onto cardboard poster board and tape the outside edge of the text page to the background; to conceal the taped edges, lay a cardboard matte over top "windowing" the text - glue can be carefully applied between the cardboard matte and background

## **Transporting**

- Carry your poster onto the plane rather than sending it through the regular baggage where it may become damaged or lost
- Posters that consist of several small pieces can be assembled at the conference; these are often lighter, less expensive to produce and easier to carry
- Large poster valises are available; your hospital visual services may have one to loan (if other presenters are coming from your hospital you may be able to fit more than one poster into a valise)
- Large posters can be rolled into cardboard tubes (available from office supply stores)
- Protect corners of your poster from curling or becoming bent; add a rigid background into the poster carrying bag to keep it flat