

EDITORIALS

Video abstracts

The latest in a series of initiatives to increase the accessibility and visibility of *BMJ* research

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The *BMJ* continues to explore new ways of disseminating the results of research. For several months now, we have been inviting authors of research articles to submit video abstracts for publication alongside their papers. Authors have been filming short videos that summarise their studies, which are published on bmj.com with their articles and on our multimedia (www.bmj.com/multimedia) and YouTube (www.youtube.com/user/BMJmedia) channels.

Video abstracts enable authors to explain their research findings in person, increasing the reach and understanding of their work. Authors can present the background to their research question, explain why it is important, and discuss their findings, often using animation and infographics. As the social web becomes an increasingly important medium for conversations about research, video abstracts offer a format that is friendly to blogs, Twitter, and Facebook. Studies are therefore made accessible to a wider audience and can be easily shared. We hope that some of the debate that these videos provoke will take place on bmj.com, where “rapid responses” (electronic letters to the editor) have been thriving since their introduction 15 years ago.¹

How have authors been using video abstracts? At their simplest, video abstracts can be as straightforward as a researcher giving an account of his or her study directly to the camera. However, adding “bells and whistles” of additional audio and visual material can make for a more engaging video abstract. So far, we have posted videos that cut through jargon to explain the wider relevance of a research question,² videos that use animation to show how the research was conducted,³ and even ones that show musical depictions of migraines.⁴ Our resources for authors give further guidance for filming and submitting a video abstract.⁵

Video abstracts continue the *BMJ* tradition of innovation in sharing research. We are committed to publishing research that can influence clinical practice and health policy, and we want that research to be as widely read as possible. The new video abstracts are just the latest of several steps that we have taken to increase the reach of the studies we publish.

All research is published online with full open access.⁶ Since 1998, the full text of every *BMJ* research article has been available to anyone with an internet connection, anywhere in the world, at no charge, from its day of publication.

Five years ago we introduced *BMJ* pico—a one page abridged format for all research papers featured in the print journal.⁷ *BMJ* picos aim to provide an accessible and concise summary of the study design and key findings.⁸ With subheadings including “what is known and what this paper adds,” “main results and the role of chance,” and “bias, confounding, and other reasons for caution,” *BMJ* picos serve as an evidence based medicine tool, highlighting areas that will help readers appraise studies.⁹

We actively press release many of our research articles and work hard with our authors to ensure that these releases are as accurate and informative as possible. Work by Dartmouth researchers Schwartz and colleagues has shown that the quality of press releases affects how well science is reported in the media.¹⁰

We are keen to embrace new and emerging technologies to bring research to our readers. In 1995, we were the first general medical journal to have a substantial presence on the internet (www.bmj.com/about-bmj), and in 2011 the first to provide an electronic print edition on the iPad.¹¹

Are these electronic means of communication having an impact on the dissemination of research published in the *BMJ*? Traditionally, the impact factor has been the only way to measure a journal’s influence, but it’s an incomplete and inaccurate measure, counting only formal citations.¹² To measure the influence of a paper beyond academia, mentions in social media and news media need to be taken into account, and one tool that attempts to do this is Altmetric.¹³ In future, journals will probably be ranked by a combination of informal interactions and traditional citation. In the meantime, we are happy that Altmetric ranks the *BMJ* relatively highly, when compared with the other general medical journals,¹⁴ and that the journal’s impact factor is at an all time high.

An increasing array of tools is now available to improve our communication and understanding of science. The *BMJ* continues to develop new ways to share research, and we welcome your feedback on our efforts and further suggestions for the future.

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