

INSTRUCTIONS FOR AUTHORS

Guidelines on crafting good titles and subtitles for articles in *American Family Physician*

Background: many search engines limit the display of titles to the first 55 characters (including spaces). To maximize and promote search results, we want to **put key words first** in titles.

Strategies for highlighting key words:

1. Use **only keywords in the title**

Examples: Diabetic ketoacidosis, Rhabdomyolysis, Acute respiratory distress syndrome

2. **Put keywords first, followed by a subtitle**

Note: many authors use variations of “diagnosis and treatment.”

2a. Important: if the focus is limited to diagnosis OR treatment, then it’s important to indicate that in the title:

Examples:

Chest pain: evaluation and differential diagnosis (treatment not discussed)

Acute coronary syndrome: initial management (diagnosis not discussed)

Heart failure: treatment strategies (diagnosis not discussed)

2b. If desired, it’s fine to include variations of “diagnosis and treatment” in a subtitle, as well as “screening” and/or “prevention”:

Example: Acute coronary syndrome: evaluation and treatment

Synonyms to consider:

Diagnosis: assessment, detection, evaluation, identification, recognition

Treatment: management, therapy

2c. Use custom subtitles to convey the focus of your article and attract reader interest.

Examples for various titles/conditions, depending on the focus of the article:

Diagnosis

A diagnostic challenge

Diagnostic approach

Initial evaluation

Treatment

A practical approach

Contemporary management

Treatment strategies

Drug and non-drug therapy/surgical and non-surgical therapy

Non-drug therapy

Pharmacologic therapy

Non-surgical management

Overview

(In addition to the many variations of “diagnosis and treatment,” consider these):

A comprehensive review

How to recognize and treat

Common questions and answers

[Note: we have a special format for this type of article; see]:

<http://www.aafp.org/content/dam/AAFP/documents/journals/afp/QASample.pdf>

Primary care approach

A primary care approach

In office practice (e.g. Aesthetic Procedures in Office Practice)

Role of the family physician

Risks and benefits, Complication

Weighing the risks and benefits

3. Finally, here are some examples of **value-added descriptive titles** that don't use stock phrases, and add to the article's concept:

Using titles like these are helpful because 1) they would be more informative, engaging, and unique; 2) they would avoid the usual “diagnosis and treatment” stock phrasing.

Pharmacogenetics: Using Genetic Information to Guide Drug Therapy

Disability Evaluations: More Than Completing a Form

Pertussis: A Reemerging Infection

Diagnostic imaging: appropriate and safe use

End-Stage Renal Disease: Symptom Management and Advance Care Planning

Systemic Sclerosis/Scleroderma: A Treatable Multisystem Disease

Hidradenitis Suppurativa: A Treatment Challenge

Iliotibial Band Syndrome: A Common Cause of Knee Pain

Hepatitis C: Evaluating Suitability for Drug Therapy

Vaccine Adverse Events: Separating Myth from Reality

Travel Medicine: Helping Patients Prepare for Trips Abroad

Subclinical Hypothyroidism: Deciding When to Treat

4. Words to avoid in titles:

An Update (because to a certain extent, almost all of our articles update previous ones).

An Evidence-based Approach (because we restrict the use of “Evidence-based” to high quality systematic reviews and sources of pre-appraised evidence).