

## 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).