LOUISIANA ACADEMY *of* FAMILY PHYSICIANS

Hints for an Effective Poster

Posters are a key method for physicians and health professionals to communicate to colleagues about their scholarly, clinical, community and/or quality improvement work. For residents, fellows and students, posters are also important steps in a successful educational career.

Best regarded as a snapshot of your work, a poster is intended to engage colleagues in dialog about the work, or, when online only or if you are not able to be present, to serve as a summary and encourage others to learn more. The following are some simple guidelines on preparing and presenting an effective poster.

1. **SELL YOUR WORK IN 10 SECONDS** – There will be many things – other posters, booths, people – competing with your poster, so your poster will need to *fight for attention*. The first impressions of your poster as people pass by, as well as what you say when standing next to it, are crucial. So:
   a. **Choose a catchy title that is also a key message** – Somewhat like a newspaper headline, the title needs to capture attention. It, for example, might pose a question, define the scope of your project, or hint at a finding, but it needs to be short, captivating and compelling.
   b. **Place the 'big takeaway' prominently in the center** – Consider using a single, bold sentence in the middle of the poster to communicate the main finding. A format that is being used more and more, referred to as #BetterPoster, is a good model of this approach. See this video to learn more about #BetterPoster
   c. **Understand your audience** – Identify the audience for the poster to cater to the appropriate scope and depth of the poster's content.
   d. **Spark a Conversation** – Design the poster as a discussion starter, not as a written paper or report crammed on the poster. Some projects, including case reports, may be best for other reporting methods such as written articles.

2. **LAYOUT AND COLOR ARE IMPORTANT** – Attention to word density, white space, use of color, flow and layout are strategic to engaging those passing by and not just to make the poster look pretty. A clutter-free design makes it easier for attendees to focus on the key message. Hence:
   a. **Use a Visual-First Approach** – Do not produce a text-dense poster! Replace text-heavy sections with graphs, icons, or illustrations to convey information faster.
   b. **Prioritize White Space and Use Minimal Text for Maximum Impact** – Reduce word count with bullet points and simple short key phrases instead of full sentences or paragraphs. Say only the key points and keep it concise.
   c. **Plan for Left-to-Right Flow** – Organize supporting sections (such as Background, Methods, Data) in a clear, easy-to-follow sequence, from upper left, down, then across and down again.
   d. **Assure Readability from 6 Feet Away** – Use text that is large enough (As examples, Title: 100+ pt, Body: 36+ pt) and avoid small, dense blocks of text. You don't need to list every reference- only the most important - or place them in a handout or online via a QR code.

3. **ENGAGE FOR FOLLOW-UP**
   a. **Be Present and Approachable** – Your poster should support, not replace, you. Be ready to explain or highlight your work in a few sentences, with the poster as a visual tool.
   b. **Use a QR Code** – Link to your full paper or results, a dataset, your contact information, and/or detailed references using a QR code instead of cramming everything in.

c. **Consider a handout** – Some conference participants will prefer a handout. So, consider placing details in a one-page handout to give after talking with someone or in case you step away.

Once your poster has been drafted, review it, asking yourself these questions:

👉 Title
- Have I created intrigue or taught something to the audience?
- Do I need to consider using more casual language to help draw people in?

🔍 Problem/Question/Hypothesis/Endpoints
- Did I briefly explain the relevance, or a problem or gap in family medicine that is addressed by my project?
- Is it short, in just 2-3 bullet points?

Methods
- Have I summarized the methods in a visual way (e.g., with icons, flowchart, etc.)?
- Is there a focus on what's innovative or unique about my approach?

📊 Data/Key Results
- Did I limit to 1-2 major findings and use easy-to-read photos, graphs or infographics?
- Have I avoided excessive statistical detail and highlighted what's most relevant?

📢 Conclusion/Big Takeaway
- Is there a single-sentence summary of a key finding(s) in simple, impactful language?

Recommendations/Implications
- Have I addressed what clinicians, researchers, or policymakers might do with the findings?
- Are the recommendations actionable and practical?

📞 Connect with Me (Bottom Right, in a QR Code Box)
- Have I included a QR code linking to a full paper, dataset, references and/or contact details?
- In addition, have I created a handout to use with poster browsers or to leave at the poster if I am absent?

Now, review it *AGAIN!* And remember – you do not have to include all the above sections if they do not enhance your poster!

☘️ Good luck and have fun! 🧲
The LAFP Poster Committee