

## The Case Report I

### Task 1

Download the example from my website and read it:

McNeil, J., 2016. Complete heart block in a Caucasian woman with Behçet's disease: a case report. *Journal of medical case reports*, 10(1), pp.1-3.

### Definition and structure

This is how Venes defines the Case Study or Case Report

*"A formal summary of a unique patient and his or her illness, including the presenting signs and symptoms, diagnostic studies, treatment course and outcome"* (Venes D: Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary. 21st edition. Philadelphia: F.A. Davis Company; 2009.)

This type of publication is situated at the bottom of the pyramid showing the hierarchy of scientific articles (*figure 1*), and is often regarded as unimportant, owing to the fact that there is only one participant, although some case studies are in fact a series.

Sometimes called case studies, and sometimes case report, like any other scientific publication, they have a standard format.



Figure 1 : levels of evidence

They do not follow the IMRaD structure since there is no initial research question from which the methodology is derived because the publication is opportunistic in that it originates in the day to day medical practice of the author. Instead, the case report's body text begins with an introduction, in order to inform or remind readers of the broader context. Then the main section, which is often entitled "case presentation" will set out the complete history of the case, often, but not systematically, in chronological order. The discussion section often contains a review of the literature and ends in a conclusion which underlines the originality or importance of the case, often accompanied by a clinical recommendation.

Although the case report is on the lowest stratum of the pyramid (*figure 1*), it is nonetheless interesting for a number of reasons.

These short reports allow the author to highlight new observations or a surprising discovery about a known pathology. They are also the perfect opportunity to present findings in emerging diseases. Indeed, HIV, Lyme disease, and more recently Zika were all mentioned first of all in case reports. This aspect makes case reports a precious source of historical documentation.

While it is not possible to draw wide-reaching conclusions from a single case, it can be a source of hypotheses which can then be tested using another study design with a larger sample.

Case studies are also an important source of information on rare pathologies. Indeed, it is seldom possible to organise a study on such diseases since the cases are often scattered across the globe. However, the arrival of the internet, and the opportunities it affords for international collaboration

have improved the situation through the creation of networks, and other types of studies are now possible.

Case studies also have educational value, shedding new light on a given subject, and authors often conclude with implications for clinical practice.

Single author studies are extremely infrequent and regarded with suspicion in most scientific fields. However, the case report is the exception where it is perfectly normal for there to be a single author, who also happens to be the practitioner who cared for the patient. This makes the publication less costly than all other types of studies.

Publication times are also shorter, since the review process is less complex than for original research articles or reviews, and therefore it becomes a question of weeks rather than months from submission to publication.

There are, however, as many disadvantages, and Nissen and Wynn discuss them in their article which you can download via the university portal:

Nissen, Trygve, and Rolf Wynn. "The clinical case report: a review of its merits and limitations." *BMC research notes* 7.1 (2014): 264.

## Task 2

Using the case report you have downloaded, reformulate it in simple English in about 600 words, which is approximately four minutes of spoken English. Aim to make it understandable for a 14 or 15-year-old with no medical knowledge. You may work in pairs or groups of three, if you wish.

### Suggested methodology

1. Make sure you understand everything. Check anything you're not sure about.
2. Start rewriting at the case presentation section, so that you avoid superfluous repetition.
3. Identify all the medical words you think need explaining. Simple words like 'blood' need no explanation, but 'presyncope' and 'troponin' will
4. Find their definitions or equivalents in plain English.
5. Make sure no additional complex terms are introduced
6. Rewrite the report in plain English, making sure that you conclude properly

As usual, feel free to contact me with any questions you might have.

A simplified version will be published on my website by the end of the week for you to compare your work with.