

How to Write an Abstract

Problem Statement, Background, or Significance

What was the reason you performed this project?

Provide background context for the problem at your institution and, if relevant, in the greater context of nursing.

- **Example:** One in four adults over 65 fall each year, with nearly 40% resulting in an injury. Our geriatric clinic does not currently have a screening tool in place to assess for falls risk in the home, or a standardized way of providing falls prevention education to patients at risk for falling.
- **Example:** Preventing 30-day readmissions through safe discharge planning is a key performance indicator for hospitals. Through routine monitoring of quality data, we observed that our 30-day readmission rates had fallen below benchmark for a six-month period from July through December 2021. Discussions with staff and leaders revealed that current discharge planning processes did not include an assessment of caregiver support at home.

Writing tip: Keep the scope of the problem specific to your project. For example, if your project is about preventing falls in the home, do not cite background information about falls in acute care.

Purpose, Aims, or Objective

What is the main question you are trying to answer?

State the specific goal of the project.

- **Example:** The purpose of this project was to increase the number of patients who are screened for depression and determine whether increased screening resulted in more referrals to mental health providers.

Writing tip: Keep the purpose or objective statement focused on your intervention(s) and the outcome(s) you measured. Avoid using broad statements such as “the purpose of this project was to improve care for patients with a history of depression.” Instead, be specific about what particular aspect of the broader problem your intervention addresses and how you are evaluating its impact.

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Approach or Methods

What was your project design?

State this clearly in the opening sentence.

- **Example:** We implemented and evaluated a quality improvement initiative using a pre/post design.
- **Example:** We delivered an evidence-based educational intervention to nurses in the ICU and evaluated their knowledge before and after the intervention.

What was your project design?

Describe the type of unit, type of hospital, type of practice, type of educational setting.

- **Example:** This project took place in a 16-bed ICU within a 900-bed tertiary care hospital in New York City.
- **Example:** This project took place in an outpatient pediatric clinic with a volume of 60 patient visits per day.

What were the details of the intervention? How was it developed and delivered?

- **Example:** We adopted the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's evidence-based falls prevention bundle and rolled it out to staff during in-services and huddles over a one-month period in February 2023.
- **Example:** We developed a new documentation field in the electronic health record to capture patients' caregiver support at home and required nurses to complete this field upon discharge beginning in March 2023.

Who were the staff or patients who received the intervention?

Provide specifics about inclusion and exclusion criteria, time periods, locations.

- **Example:** All patients 65 years and older who were admitted to the emergency department from April through June 2022 received the intervention.
- **Example:** All nurses with less than five years of experience who were hired onto the unit after January 2021 received the education as part of their onboarding.
- **Example:** All patients who began a new chemotherapy regimen beginning in June 2023 received the follow-up telephone intervention after their first infusion.

How did you measure the impact of the intervention?

Provide specifics about any survey instruments, data collection tools, or EPIC queries.

- **Example:** We used the Confusion Assessment Method tool to measure post-operative delirium before and after the intervention.
- **Example:** We collected the number of falls with injury per 1,000 patients during the pre and post intervention periods from National Database of Nursing Quality Indicators (NDNQI) reports.

How did you analyze the data?

If you are reporting results of statistical tests (e.g., p-values) provide detail on which tests were performed. If you have not already done so, specify the pre-intervention period (or other relevant comparison group) to which you are comparing.

- **Example:** We used paired t-tests to compare nurses' Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practice Survey scores one week before and one week after the educational session.
- **Example:** We evaluated differences in the proportion of patients who were screened for depression in the pre-intervention period (May-June 2022) versus in the post-intervention period (July-August 2022) using chi-square analysis.

Writing tip: Anything that you plan to bring up in the findings section should be mentioned first in the approach section.

Findings or Results

What were the characteristics of the people included in your project?

Give any relevant demographic information and the number of people included.

- **Example:** Nurses in the pre-intervention group (n=34) had an average of 8 years of experience (standard deviation: 2.5) and nurses in the post-intervention group (n=38) had an average of 9 years of experience (standard deviation, 2.1).
- **Example:** Fifty-six patients met the inclusion criteria for the intervention. Thirty percent met the eligibility criteria for COPD and 70% met the criteria for asthma.

What are the results that answer your main question?

Provide rates, proportions, or incidence in the pre and post intervention periods, and the results of any statistical tests.

- **Example:** Falls decreased from 4 per 1000 patient days in the pre intervention period to 1 per 1000 patient days in the post intervention period ($p<0.001$).
- **Example:** Documentation of dementia screening increased from 46% to 78% following the intervention.
- **Example:** Nurses' knowledge scores increased by 2.7 on the Knowledge Scale after completing the educational intervention ($p<0.001$).

Writing tip: Provide results only about the specific question and analyses you proposed earlier in the abstract. Do not include findings, results, or answers to questions or analyses that you have not already laid out in the previous sections of the abstract. Refrain from interpreting or applying the findings in this section—just present the facts.

Conclusion and Implications for Clinical Practice

How are your findings similar or different to what others have reported in the literature?

Explain whether your findings highlighted anything new or unexpected, or whether they support what is already known.

- **Example:** Similar to the experiences of other stepdown units reported in the literature, we found that adding a delirium assessment allowed us to identify patients whose pharmacy orders warranted provider review.
- **Example:** While other institutions have reported significant fall reduction following adoption of the falls prevention bundle, we found no impact. This may be due to a high prevalence of delirium among patients on our unit.

What do you recommend as a next step?

Explain whether you intend to keep, expand, or refine the intervention, and whether you might recommend it to other clinical areas.

- **Example:** Our results support the expansion of this pilot intervention to other medical/surgical units in the hospital.
- **Example:** The intervention had a small impact on increasing the number of referrals to social work. We plan to increase the frequency of our interdisciplinary team meetings to further increase the number of referrals.

Writing tip: Conclusions should be drawn directly from your study findings. Avoid drawing sweeping conclusions that are not supported by the data you collected. For example, if your study evaluated whether an educational program increased nursing knowledge about naloxone administration, you can say that your educational program was effective for increasing knowledge. You cannot say that your educational program will reduce overdose deaths, although you may list that as a long-term goal, for example, "This educational intervention was effective for increasing knowledge about naloxone administration after one month. We anticipate that increased knowledge may lead to fewer opioid-related deaths, but we did not evaluate this in our project. We plan to examine the impact of the education on opioid deaths in a future project."