Jan 16, 2024

Julia Robinson,
Executive Editor,
PLOS Global Public Health

Agenda

1 Opening and Introductions

3 Writing the Cover Letter, Title, and Abstract

4 Writing the Intro and Methods

5 Writing the Results and Discussion

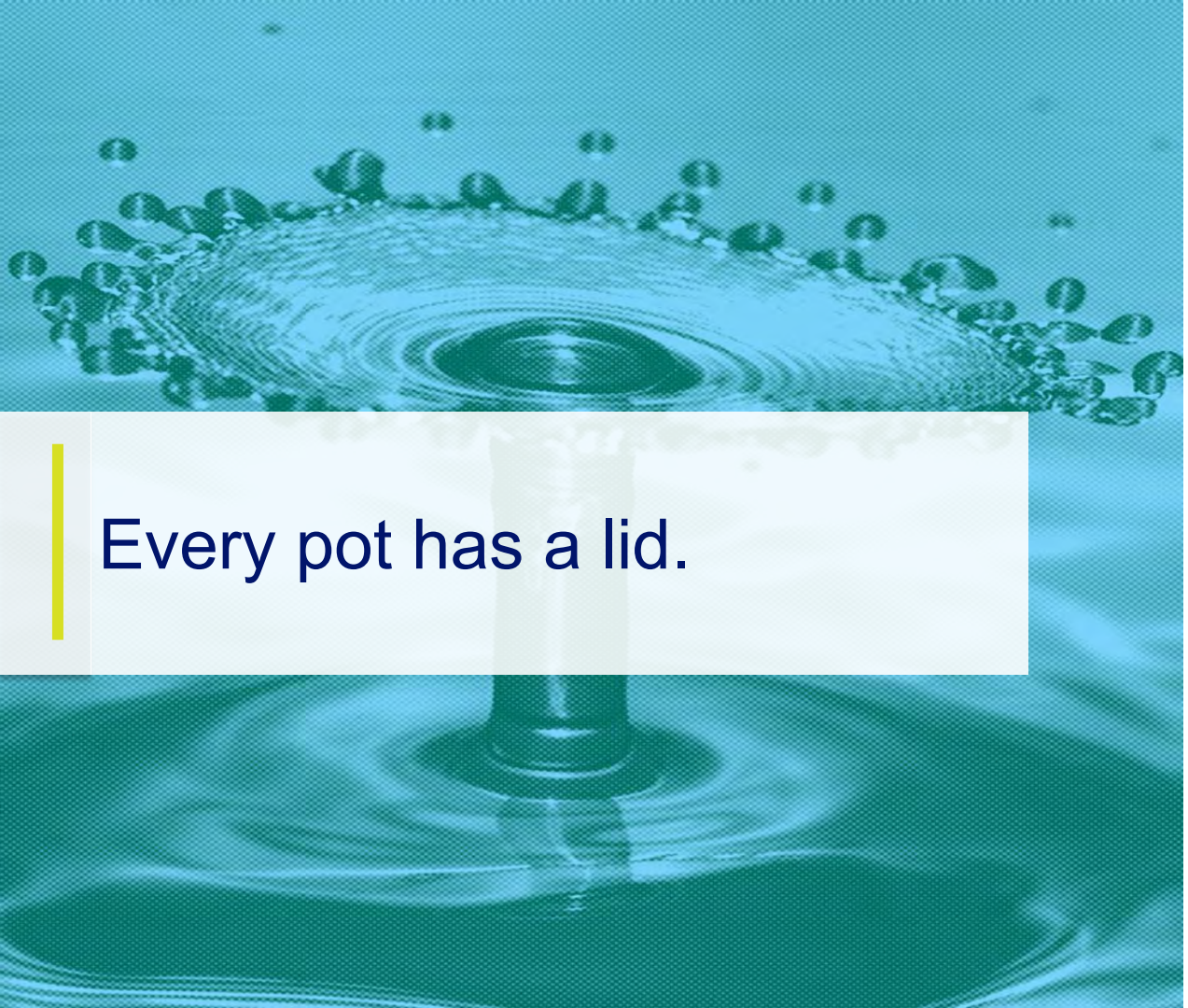
6 Q&A

Introductions

PLOS GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH

Catherine Kyotobungi and Madhukar Pai,
co-Editors-in-Chief

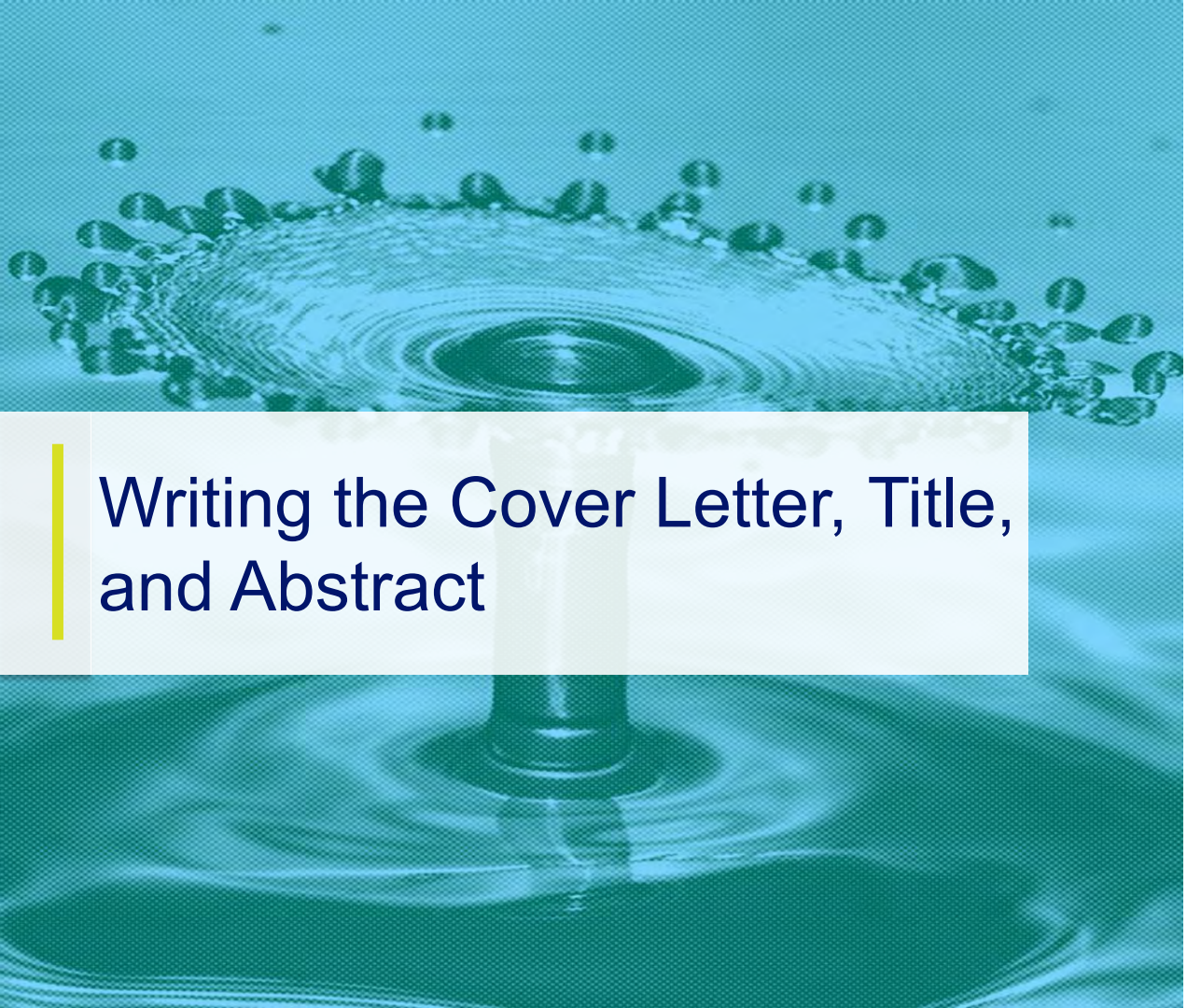
PLOS Global Public Health addresses deeply entrenched global inequities in public health and makes impactful research visible and accessible to health professionals, policy-makers, and local communities without barriers. We will amplify the voices of underrepresented and historically excluded communities and prioritize equity, diversity, and inclusion at all levels – editors, editorial boards, peer reviewers and authors – to broaden the range and diversity of perspectives at the forefront of public health and advance the health of all humankind.



Every pot has a lid.

There are so many venues for your work, think about:

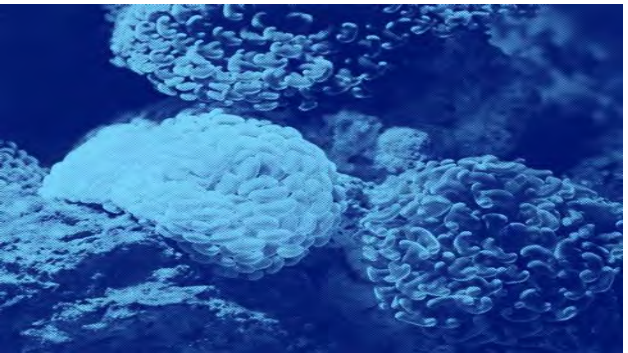
- Who will read this?
- Who will use this?
- Accessibility concerns (open access, language, etc)
- More considerations?

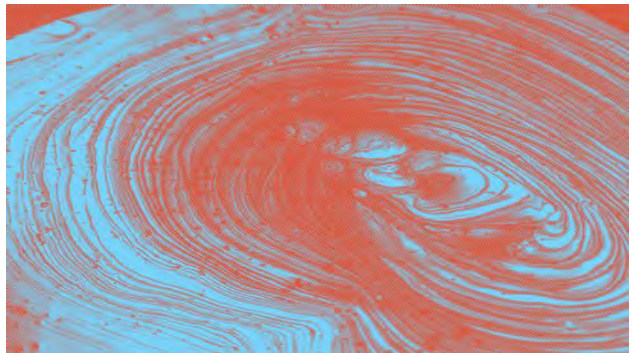


Writing the Cover Letter, Title, and Abstract

Before You Start Writing, Ask:

1. What is my message?
2. How will I pitch my research?





What is My Message?

Review your results to determine what your message will be.

If the editors cannot work out your single take-home message, they will reject your paper.

They will also reject it if you haven't convinced them of your study's importance.

How will I pitch my research?

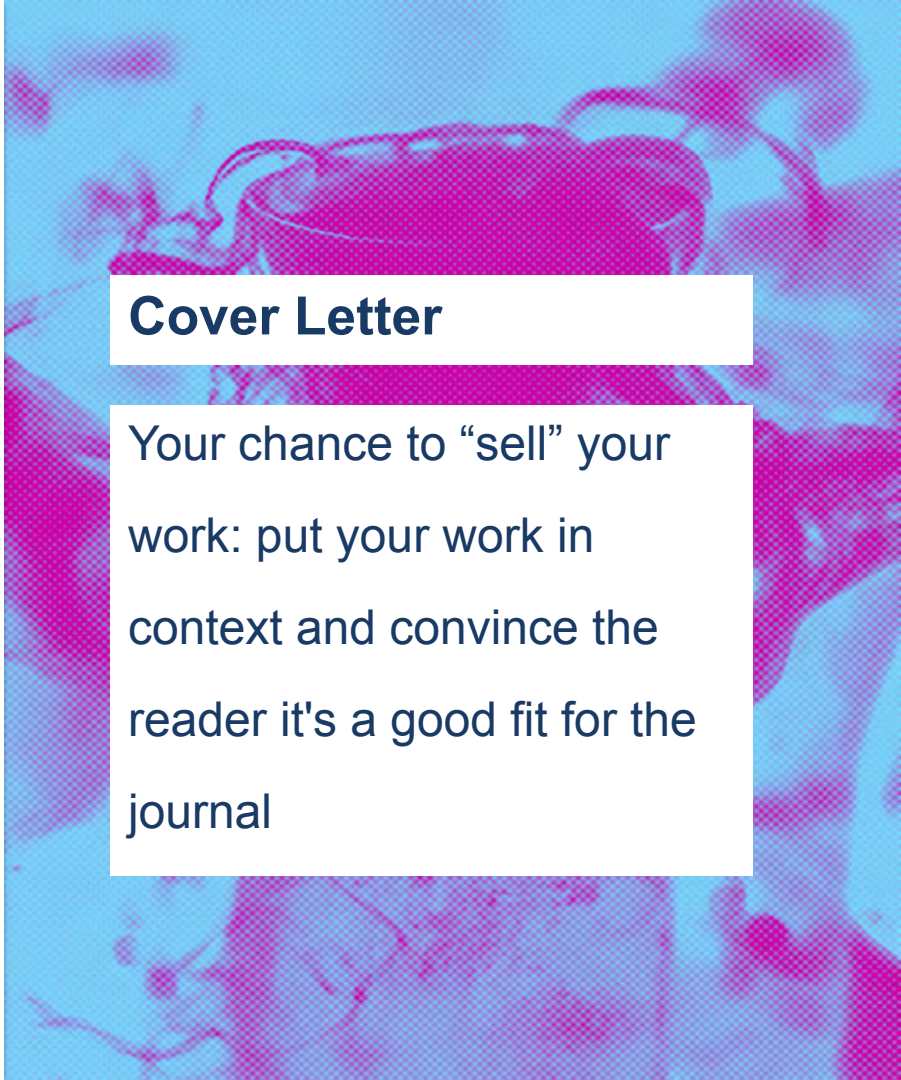
Cover letter

Title

Abstract

Introduction

1. What is your **scientific question**?
2. What is your **key finding** that answers the question?
3. What is the **nature of the evidence** that supports your conclusion?
4. What **significance** do your results have for the field and the broader community?
5. Is there **additional information** they should take into account?



Cover Letter

Your chance to “sell” your work: put your work in context and convince the reader it's a good fit for the journal

Cover Letter: Top Tips

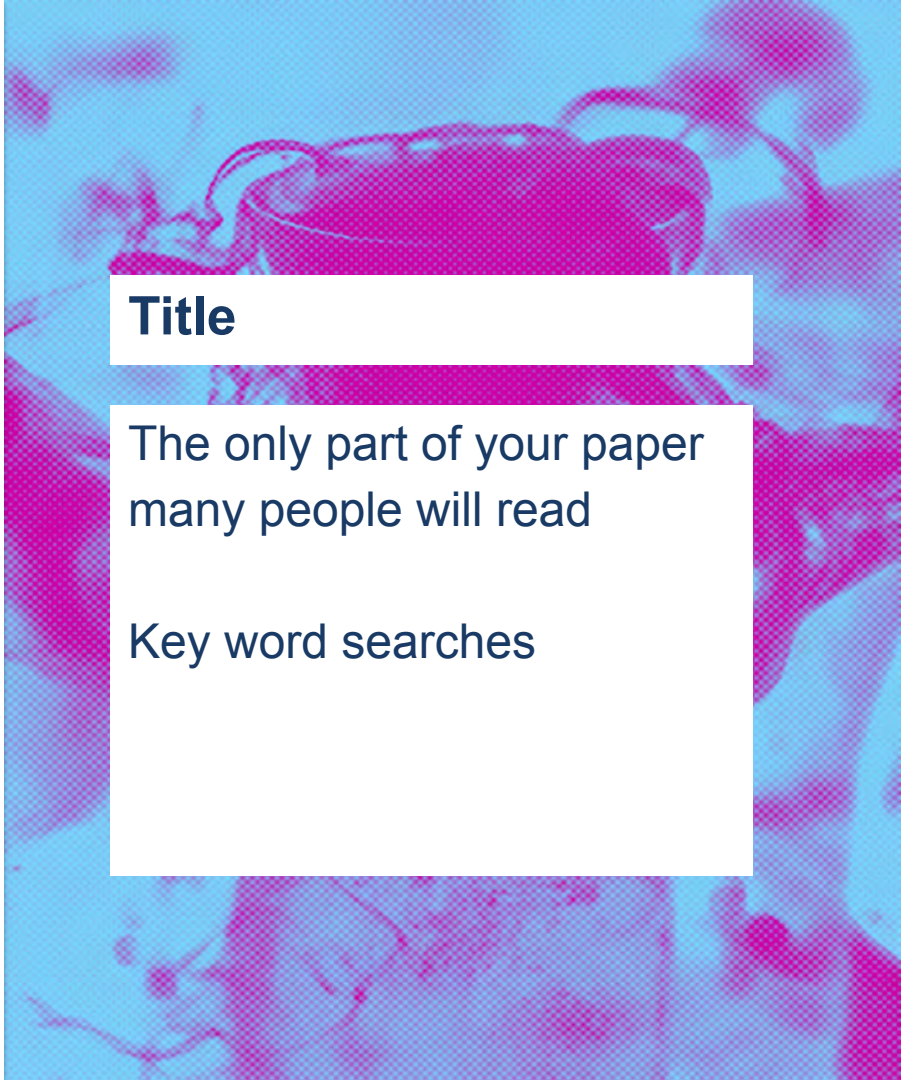
Remember: the cover letter may be the first (or only!) part of the submission an editor reads

- Keep it concise and informative
- Show why your work is interesting
- Skip the dull or derivative
- Don’t over-sensationalize your research
- Entice the reader without giving away the punch-line
- Include key information about study design
- Include important keywords

Cover Letter: Top Tips

Remember to change the journal name if using the same cover letter!!!

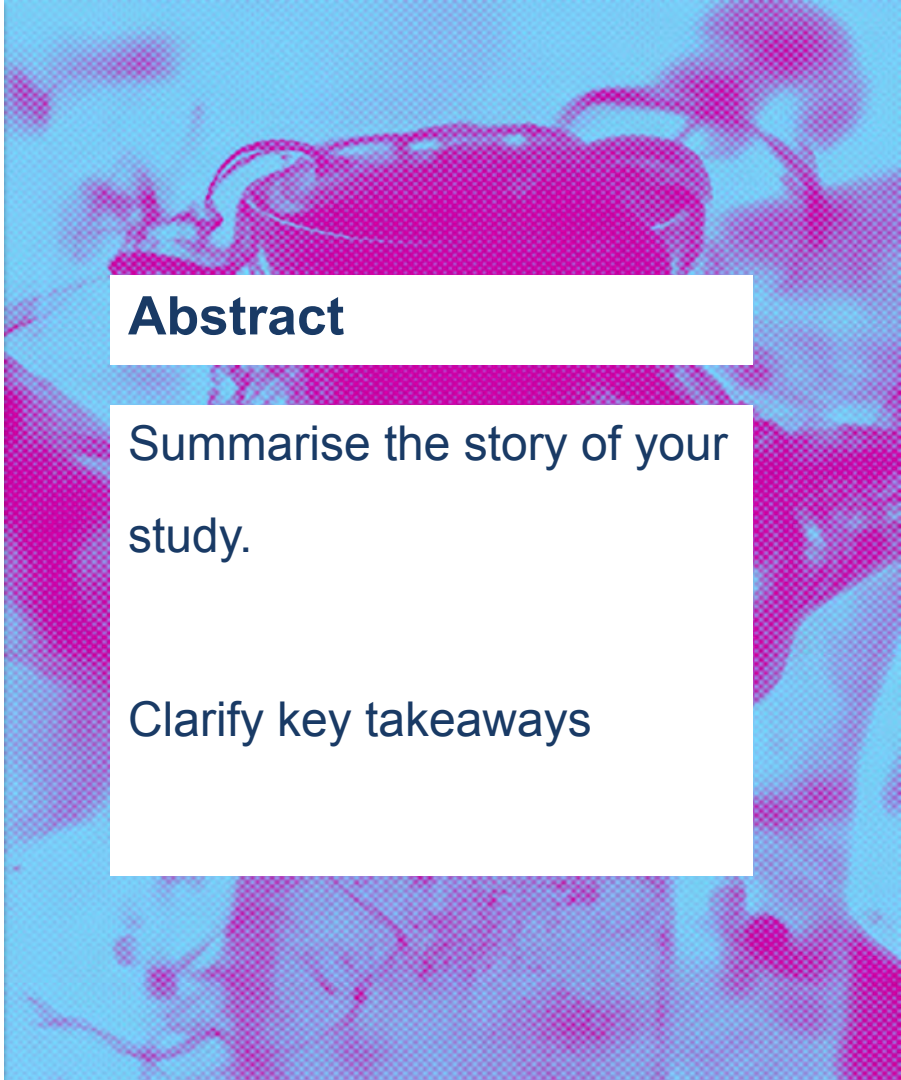
1. Keep it **concise** and informative
2. **Entice** the reader without giving away the punch-line
3. Include key information about the **study design**
4. **Don’t overly-sensationalize** your research
5. Include any important **key words**



Title: Examples

- *“A hierarchical framework for segmenting movement paths”*
- *“Rice Bean (Vigna umbellata) draft genome sequence: unravelling the late flowering and unpalatability related genomic resources for efficient domestication of this underutilized crop”*
- *“Decoys and dilution: the impact of incompetent hosts on prevalence of Chagas disease”*

1. The **first part of a manuscript read** by editors, reviewers and readers
2. The part of the manuscript captured and displayed in **PubMed**
3. It should be a concise **“standalone”** piece with a very clear message
4. It must **accurately reflect** the full text of the paper

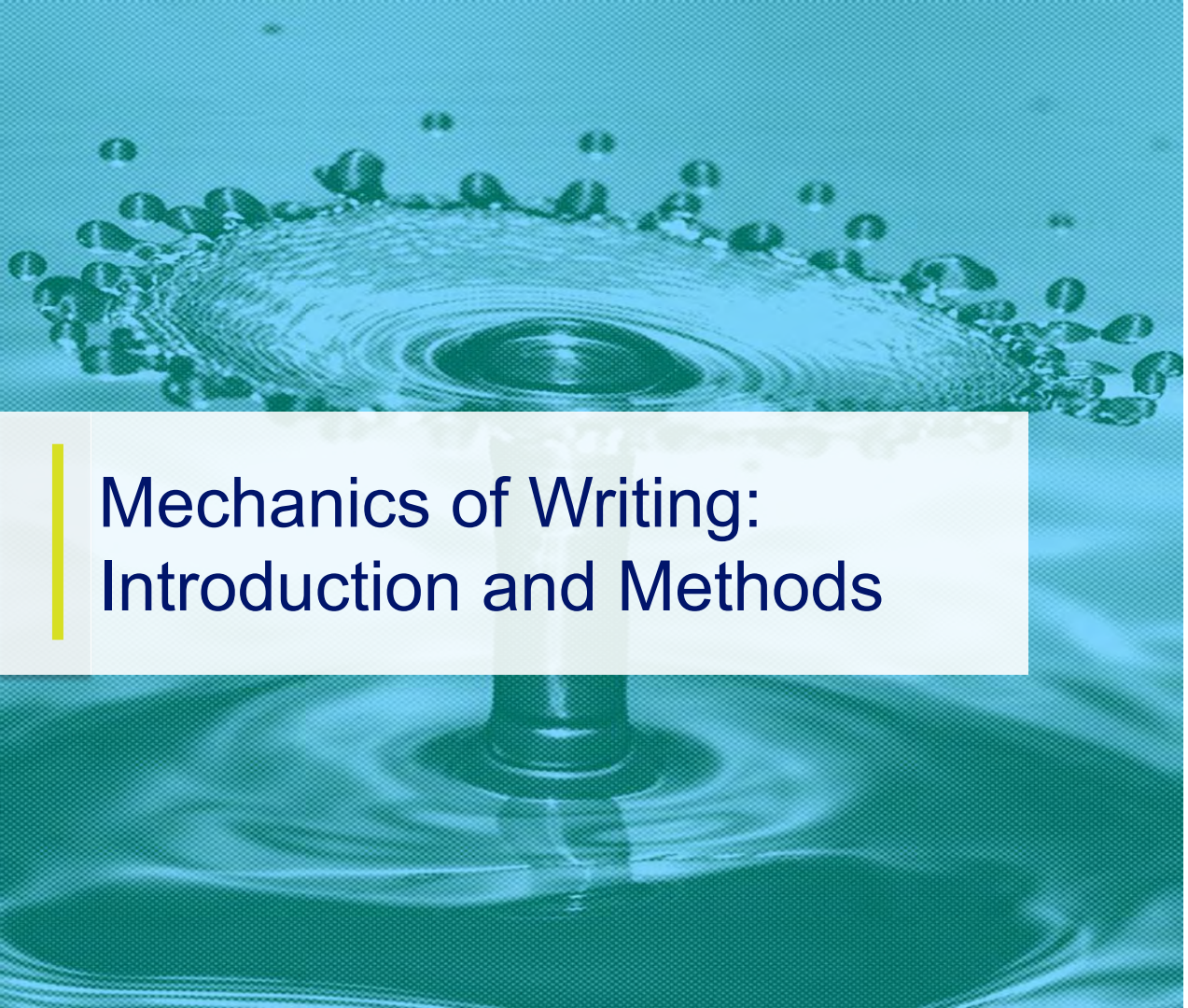


Abstract: What to Include

- *Why* did you do the study?
- *Why* is the study relevant?
- *What* did you do? *How* did you do it?
- *What* did you find?
- *What* did you conclude?

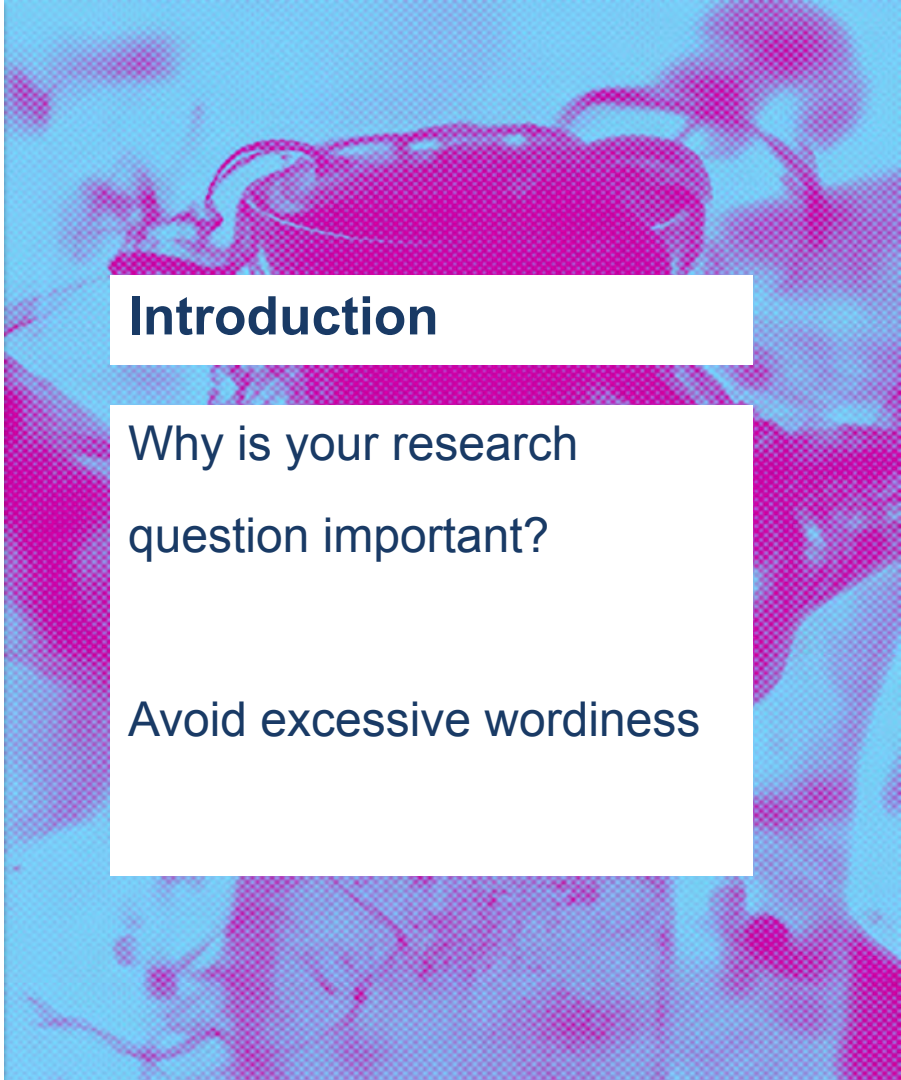
Abstract: Top Tips

- Keep it concise
- Focus on key results, conclusions, and take home messages: don't jam in too much detail
- Discuss the implications without overreaching your data
- Don't wildy speculate future implications
- Use a checklist, e.g. CONSORT, STROBE]
- Spell out your acronyms



Mechanics of Writing: Introduction and Methods

1. Grab the reader!
2. Should put the focus of the manuscript into a **broader context**
3. Draw your reader **immediately to the crucial issue** your work addresses



Introduction

Why is your research question important?

Avoid excessive wordiness

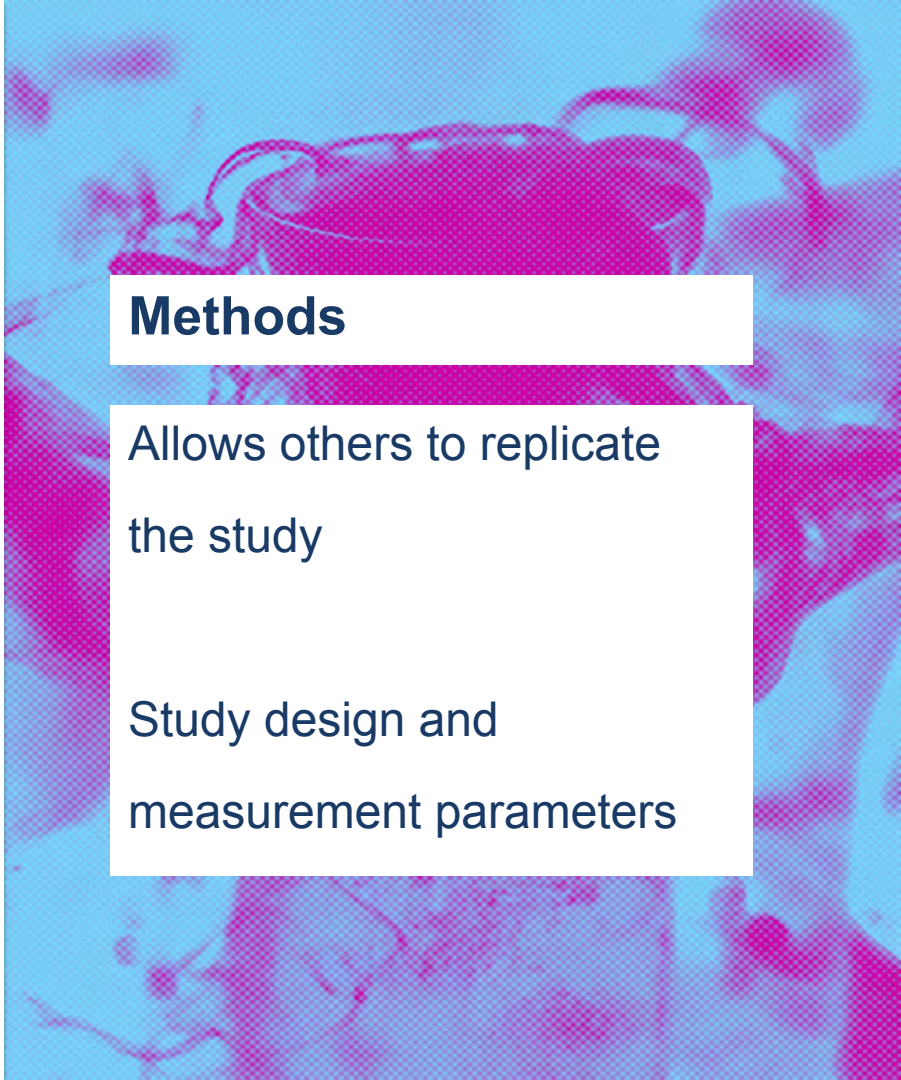
Introduction: What to Include

- Opening sentence takes you straight to the issue
- The most important details of the issue
- Brief summary of the controversies and the best evidence
- Ends in a crisp and clear research question and how you set out to answer it
- Keeps with the rules of good writing, using active rather than past tense

Introduction: Top Tips

- Keep it short: 2-3 paragraphs
- Set the scene, but avoid a literature review
- Highlight what is new or innovative in your work
- Highlight why your research is needed
- Make clear why it matters to doctors, patients, policy makers, or researchers

1. Make sure you use the **appropriate method** to answer your question, editors will check!
2. Give enough detail that a **qualified reader could repeat the study**
3. If your methods section is “thin on details” editors or reviewers may worry you are hiding a larger problem



Methods

Allows others to replicate the study

Study design and measurement parameters

Methods: What to Include - Structure

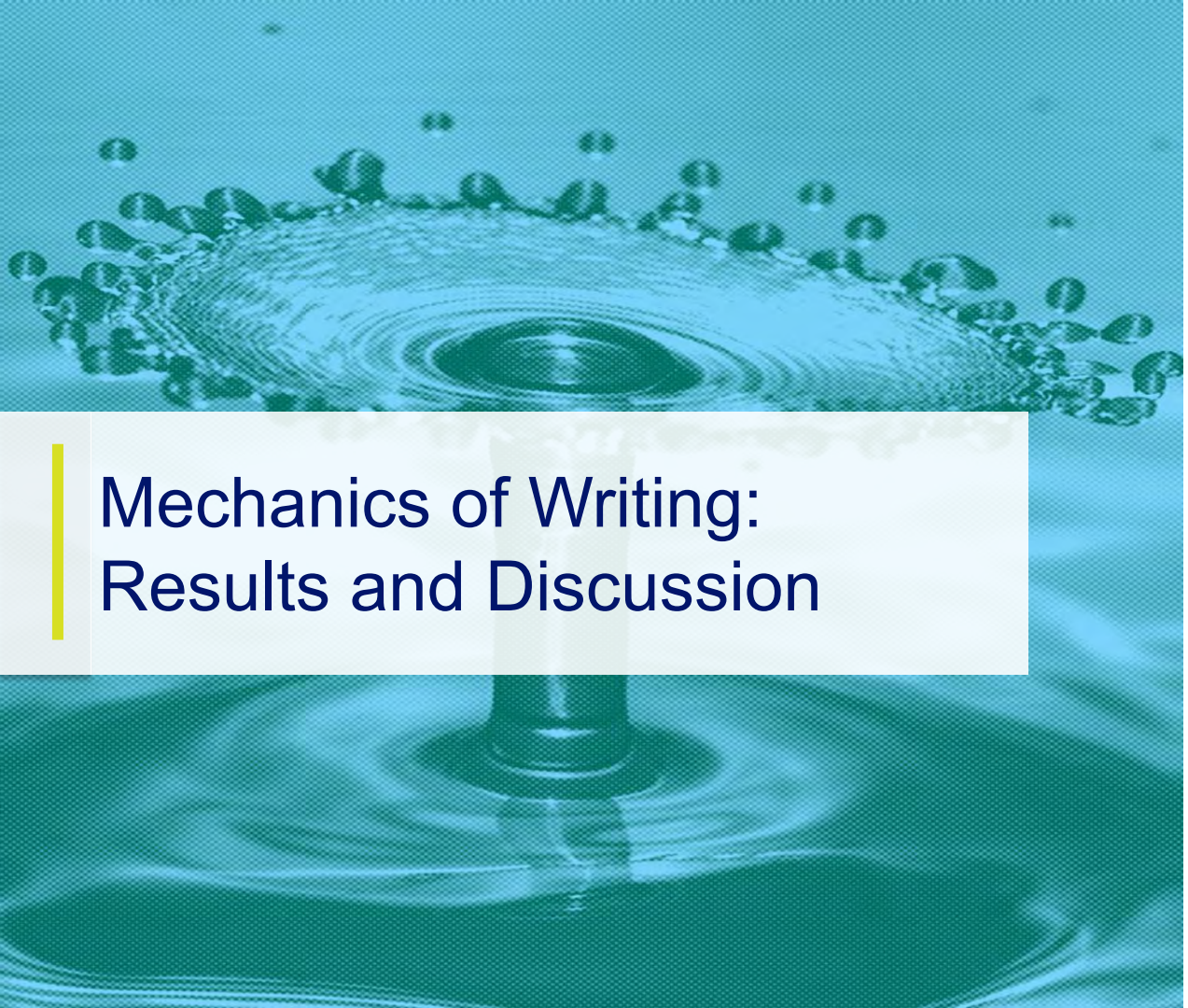
- For quantitative studies, split the methods into 6 subsections:
  - Design
  - Sample (source of the data)
  - Intervention
  - Outcome measures
  - Data analysis
  - Ethics (informed consent, IRB and IACUC approval)

Methods: What to include

- How sample size was determined
- How participants were recruited
- How you ensured your sample was representative of the population you wanted to study
- Measures used to reduce bias in the way you chose the sample
- Inclusion and exclusion criteria

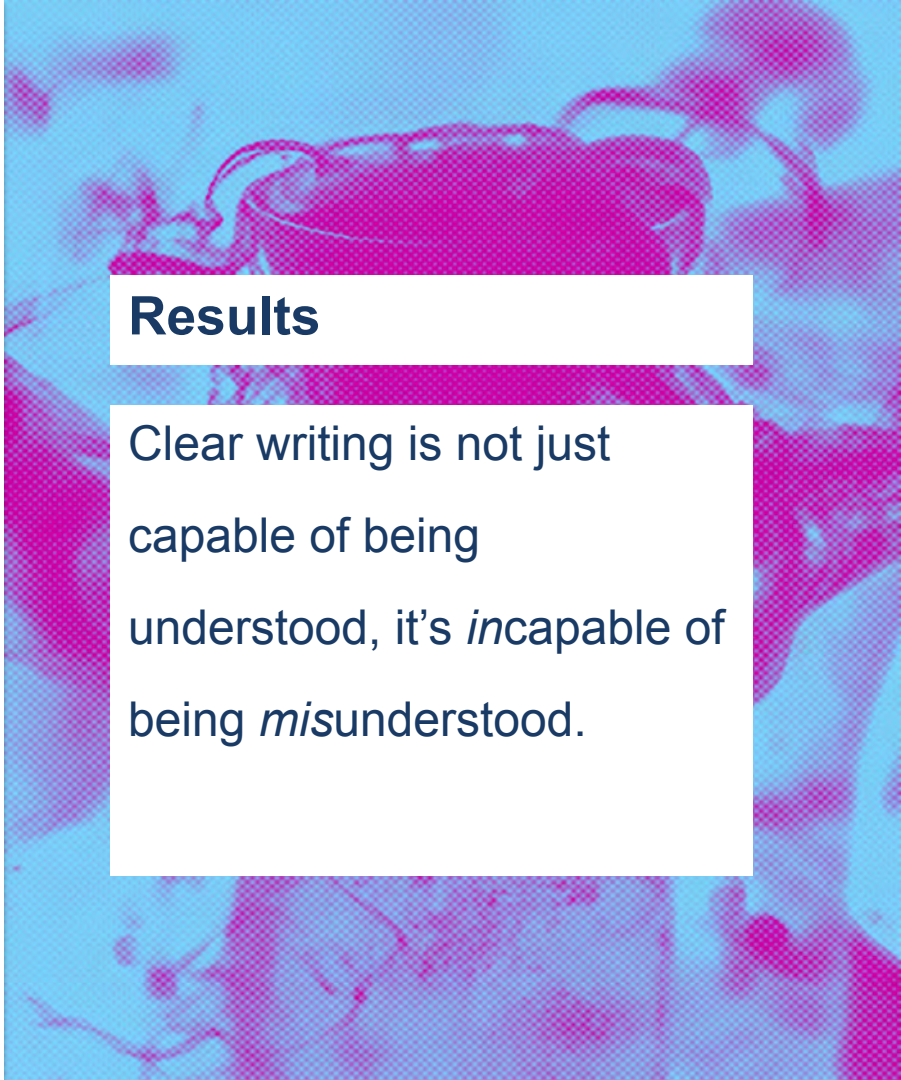
Data Analysis: What to include

- Describe the statistical methods and software you used to analyze your data
  - Ask yourself: can someone reproduce my work from the information provided in my paper?
- Tell readers how/where your data are available for reviewers, editors, and future readers



Mechanics of Writing: Results and Discussion

1. Just the **facts**, please!
2. State clearly **what you found** using words and numbers
3. Main findings in **figures and tables**



Results

Clear writing is not just capable of being understood, it's *in*capable of being *mis*understood.

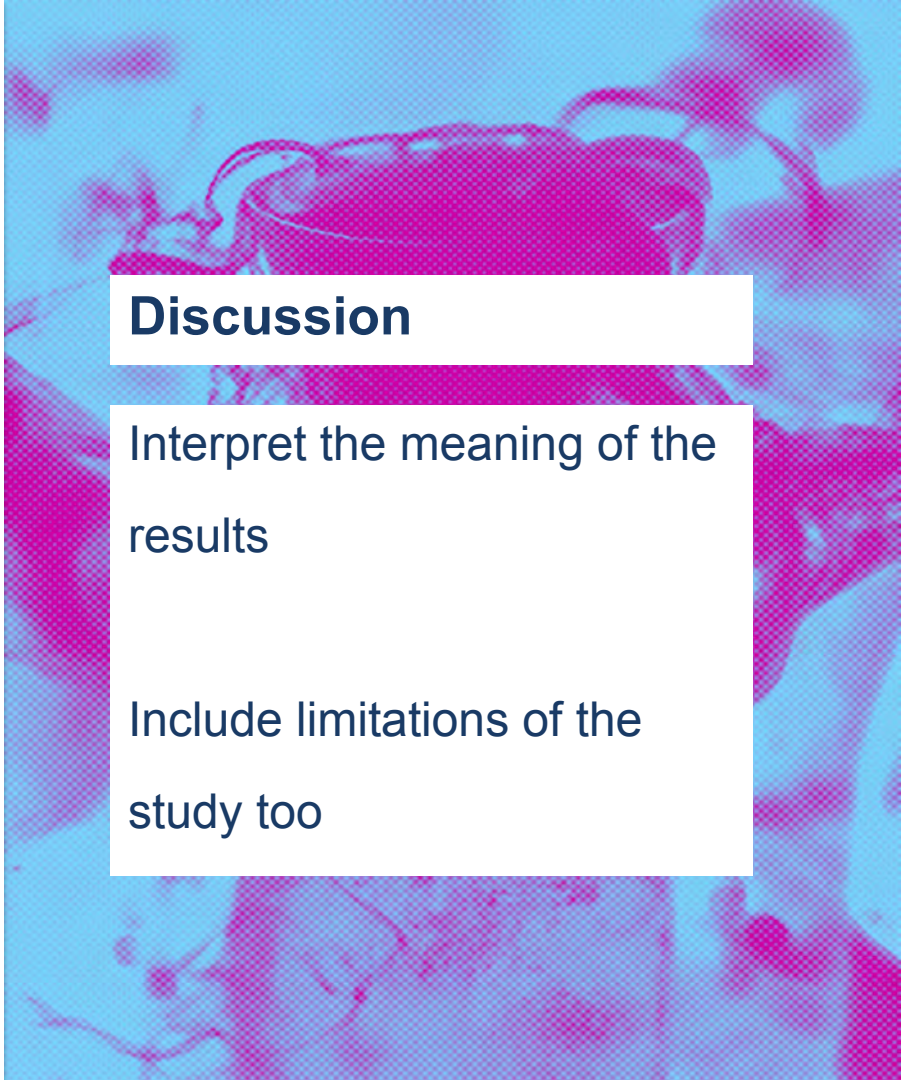
Results: Figures and Tables

- Each figure should have ONE stand-alone message
- Figures should be entirely understandable on their own, without reference to the whole paper or need to read Methods or Results
- Don’t clutter figures or tables with excessive numbers or text
- Don’t discuss what your findings mean in the figure legends

Results: Top Tips

- Don’t duplicate information in text and tables
- Order results around primary and secondary outcomes, *in the same order as listed in your Methods*
- Try to maintain a consistent order in figures, tables and text when describing variables or experimental conditions.

1. Start the discussion with a **single sentence** that states your main findings
2. **Don’t write an extensive essay** that extrapolates widely from what you found
3. Discuss both **strengths and weaknesses**



Discussion

Interpret the meaning of the results

Include limitations of the study too

Discussion: How to Structure it

First Paragraph

- Interpretation/answer based on key findings
- Supporting evidence

Subsequent Paragraphs

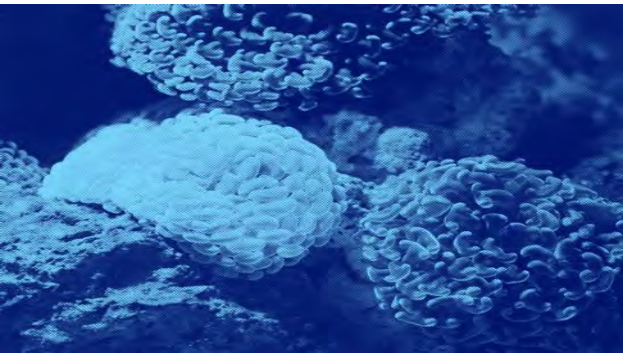
- Compare/contrast to previous studies
- Strengths/weaknesses (limitations) of the study
- Unexpected findings
- Hypothesis or models

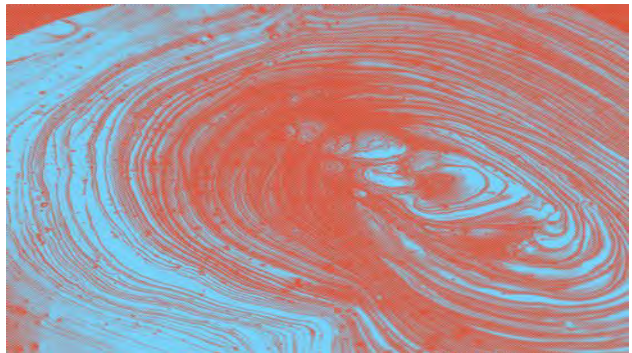
Last Paragraph

- Summary
- Significance/implication
- Unanswered questions and future research

PLOS

Open Q&A





THANK YOU!

Email me for:

- More questions
- More info on *PLOS Global Public Health* or PLOS

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