The template on the following pages may be helpful if…

…you need to write a clinical research article
…you dislike starting to write on a blank page
…you want to ensure essential elements make it into your manuscript
…you have only 5 minutes to think about your manuscript today

Whether you have 5 minutes or 5 hours, use this template to move your work ahead by capturing thoughts and information that will enable you to begin writing with something of value already on the page.

The prompts will not necessarily make it into your manuscript, but the information they help you capture will.

Enjoy, and please send me your feedback!

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INTRODUCTION

What is known about your topic? [background]
It is understood that________________________________________________________

What is unknown about your topic? [hook]
We do not understand________________________________________________________

What question did you ask (only the main one)? [study question]
Our primary question was____________________________________________________

What did you think the answer would be? [hypothesis]
We hypothesized that________________________________________________________

Why did you ask this question? [clinical relevance]
The answer is important because______________________________________________

Who cares about this question? [target audience]
The findings of this study are important to________________________________________

What secondary question(s) did you ask? [secondary questions]
Our secondary question(s) was/were...
1. ________________________________________________________________
2. ________________________________________________________________
3. ________________________________________________________________
METHODS

How did you go about asking your questions? [paragraph 1]
- Study design (eg, retrospective, cohort, review)
- Data source(s)
- Time period
- Location(s)

Who were your subjects and how many were there? [paragraph 1/2]
- Age?
- Race/ethnicity?
- Sex?
- Other relevant characteristics?
- Comparability of study groups?

How did you identify subjects/studies? [paragraph 2/3]
- Inclusion criteria?
- Exclusion criteria?

What were your outcomes of interest? [paragraph 2/3]
- Primary outcome
- Secondary outcomes
  1.
  2.
  3.
METHODS (continued)

How did you measure your outcomes of interest?  
[paragraph 3/4]

Who did the measuring? ________________________________________________________________
What were units of measurement? __________________________________________________________
At what time points did you measure? _____________________________________________________
How precise were your measurements? _____________________________________________________
How did you handle interobserver disagreement? _____________________________________________

What equipment did you use (including model, manufacturer)?  
[paragraph 4/5]

Medical devices ________________________________________________________________
Instrumentation ________________________________________________________________
Measurement tools _______________________________________________________________
Software ________________________________________________________________
Other _________________________________________________________________________________

How did you analyze your data?  
[paragraph 5/6]

Types of statistics presented _______________________________________________________________
Statistical tests used ________________________________________________________________
Statistical software (version, manufacturer) ______________________________________________
Alpha level? __________
Power analysis? ______________________________________________________________________

What kind of ethical approval did you receive?  
[first or last paragraph]

IRB approval (number) __________________________________________________________________
Patient/parent consent ________________________________________________________________
Exemption ________________________
RESULTS

What were the answers to your questions?

Primary question
_______________________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________________

Secondary questions
1. _____________________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________

2. _____________________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________

3. _____________________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________
DISCUSSION

Provide a brief summary of your study:
How did you address your main question? _________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
What new findings do you report? ___________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
Which other studies have investigated this topic?
Study 1 ______________________________________________________________________________________________
Study 2 ______________________________________________________________________________________________
Study 3 ______________________________________________________________________________________________
Study 4 ______________________________________________________________________________________________
Study 5 ______________________________________________________________________________________________
Study 6 ______________________________________________________________________________________________

How is your study stronger/different than others?
(Compare with studies listed above.) _________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

How do your results compare with other studies?
(Compare with studies listed above.) _________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
DISCUSSION (continued)

Were these the results you expected? If not, what possible mechanisms are at play?
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
What are the implications of your findings?

For patients________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

For clinicians________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

For other researchers ___________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

For society ______________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Other______________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

What were the strengths and limitations of your study?

Example

Limitation: Our sample size was small

Importance? We may have failed to detect significant differences

Justification? The sample size is reasonable given the rarity of the condition

Limitation 1: _________________________________________________________________________________________________

Possible effects? _____________________________________________________________________________________________

Justification? _______________________________________________________________________________________________
DISCUSSION (continued)

What were the strengths and limitations of your study? (continued)

Limitation 2: _________________________________________________________________________________________

   Possible effects? _____________________________________________________________________________________
   Justification? _________________________________________________________________________________________

Limitation 3: _________________________________________________________________________________________

   Possible effects? _____________________________________________________________________________________
   Justification? _________________________________________________________________________________________

Limitation 4: _________________________________________________________________________________________

   Possible effects? _____________________________________________________________________________________
   Justification? _________________________________________________________________________________________

What questions remain unanswered?

Future research should focus on: __________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________