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All the Sourcing Not Fit To Print^{*}

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A M E R I C A N C O L L E G E O F
 C H E S T
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All the Sourcing Not Fit To Print* Citing Electronic Material in Your Article

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Key words: citations; electronic publications; peer review

Abbreviations: DOI = digital object identifier; PAP = publish ahead of print; URL = uniform resource locator (Web address)

As the Internet, and the World Wide Web in particular, become an increasing part of medical literature, it is necessary for authors to learn how to correctly cite many types of material that only exist online. Even though the conventions for citing are in flux, some standards are being developed, and authors should become familiar with the types of online material typically used as sources in medical literature. This article will discuss how to cite material that is in electronic form.

NONPRINT MATERIAL ASSOCIATED WITH JOURNALS

The most familiar type of citation for authors is the standard journal article. Over the years, an article from a print journal has become the “war-horse” citation; the standard elements of author(s), title, journal name, year, volume, and page ranges have served to enable other researchers to quickly and reliably retrieve articles whether in print or online. In addition, because journals developed reputations for quality and expertise based on the peer review system, the imprimatur of an article published in a particular journal provides an approach for users searching the literature to evaluate it.

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As we move into a world where material is posted online and needs to be cited, those same elements are still needed: a reliable way to cite material, the knowledge that the material will be there for those who look for it, and the conviction that a trusted source has vouched for the accuracy of the data and the quality of the analysis. When authors prepare manuscripts, material should not be cited from online sources unless all of these criteria can be met.

By now, most medical journals have duplicated their content one way or another online. Many journals, such as *CHEST*, are presented on the HighWire Press platform. This division of Stanford University Libraries (Palo Alto, CA) has standardized the presentation of close to 2 million full-text articles. Users may read articles that appear in the print journal both as hyper-text markup language (with links to cited references and other sources) and portable document format files that duplicate the print version of the article. Other journals use platforms with many of the same features (eg, Science Direct from Elsevier Publishers). Organizations such as HighWire Press provide search engines for publishers and across the collection of journals they administer, work with indexing providers such as PubMed and the Institute of Information Web of Science to link full text to searches on those services, and provide links to references and other types of information from individual articles.

During the last decade, publishers and technology suppliers such as HighWire Press have been able to build on this infrastructure to develop alternative and supplemental versions of articles that have been requested of researchers. Here are some common types of electronic articles associated with journals.

PUBLISH AHEAD OF PRINT

Many publishers, including *CHEST*, now post accepted articles on their Web sites immediately or soon after publication so that research can be disseminated rapidly. These publish ahead of print (PAP) articles are not the final version. These articles

are typically incorporated into search engines such as PubMed and the HighWire Press search engine almost immediately.

The mechanism by which the different versions of articles are coordinated is the assignment of the digital object identifier (DOI), which you will now see on many articles (eg, 10.1378/chest.07-0617). For publishers, each DOI begins with "10.XXX", where 10 means it is a publication and XXX is the code for the journal; the code for *CHEST* is 1378. Each journal may create its own convention for assigning the rest of the DOI. This DOI stays with an article no matter how many versions are posted. If you provide the reader with a DOI of an article, (s)he can search for the most recent version of an article by DOI.

How should an author handle the citation of a PAP article? The short answer is to avoid it. Even though there have been rumblings in the scientific publishing world that DOI should replace the more prevalent year-volume-page range information, most readers, publishers, and search engines still prefer the latter in searching. The citation from the paginated article is a signal to readers that the final copyedited and proofed version is available. If you have referenced a PAP article, you should continue checking throughout the peer review and publication process to see if the final paginated data are available.

When you need to cite a PAP, the most recent *AMA Manual of Style*¹ recommends the following style (as an example):

8 Arzt, M, Wensel R, MTalvan S, et al. Effects of dynamic bilevel positive airway pressure support on central sleep apnea [published online ahead of print October 20, 2007]. *Chest*. doi:10.1378/chest.07-1620

If you are citing a PAP paper that does not have a DOI or whose DOI you do not know, follow this format as an example:

5 Schmodt S, Schuhegger R, Wendler T, et al. Molecular evidence of a nosocomial *Pneumocystis jirovecii* transmission among 16 patients after kidney transplantation. *J Clin Microbiol* 2008 January 23 [epub ahead of print]

The current *AMA Manual of Style*¹ provides more detail on other variations of PAP articles.

E-PAGES AND E-PUBLICATIONS FOR JOURNALS

A number of journals, such as *Pediatrics*, routinely publish articles only in electronic form. The reasons for electronic-only publishing vary, and readers should not assume that an article published by a reputable society or publisher that is not in print form is of lesser quality. The reasons can range from economic to a stated preference by readership for

more rapid availability to an option granted to the author. Third parties also routinely index these articles. Here is a sample of a recommended format¹ for citing an e-publication that has been paginated.

9 Zecca E, De Luca D, Baroni S, et al. Bile-induced lung injury in newborn infants: a BAL fluid study. *Pediatrics* 2008; 121:e146–e149 doi:10.1542/peds.2007-1220

Note that *CHEST* would consider the addition of a DOI optional in articles that have e-pages.

Some journals do not paginate e-publication type articles (for example, *Cochrane Database of Systemic Reviews*). The sample provided immediately above applies, except that one should add the article number in place of the e-page numbers (eg, Ram FS, Rodriguez-Roisin R, Granados-Navarrete A, et al. Antibiotics for exacerbations of COPD. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2006; CD004403).

OTHER TYPES OF ELECTRONIC ARTICLES

Some journals have developed hybrid types of electronic publishing; one example is "electronic long print short." In this format, the longer, more detailed article is published online and a shorter version is provided in the print issue of the journal. More details are available on how to cite these other versions of electronic articles.¹ One should cite the version of the actual material you reference; that is, if the information comes from the short, print version, cite that. If one looked at the longer, online version, cite this version.

E-LETTERS AND POSTPUBLICATION PEER REVIEW

Many journals allow readers to comment on articles directly online. This material may be termed *e-letters* or *postpublication peer review*. In contrast to PAP articles or e-publications, such material, although typically vetted before posting, is not peer reviewed in the traditional sense. Consequently, these letters and comments are not indexed and are not covered by search engines. Here is a sample of how to cite such material:

6 Resta O, Carratù P. Bi-level positive airway pressure ventilation in OHS [e-letter]. *Chest* 2007; 131:1678–1684. Available at: <http://www.chestjournal.org/cgi/eletters/131/6/1678>. Accessed January 15, 2008

In the above sample, the authors and title are of the e-letter, the print pagination refers to the original article, and the Internet address is a direct link to the commentary. As is customary in citing Web sites directly, the date of the last access should be provided.

DATA SUPPLEMENTS

To cite the material in a data supplement, first cite the article per the journal style, followed by the Web address uniform resource locator (URL) that directly links to the supplemental material, and finally the access date. Authors are advised to routinely monitor the information for authors provided by the journal to which they are submitting because guidance is continually under review.

ELECTRONIC MATERIAL FROM OTHER SOURCES

Web Sites

For background sources that change frequently, it is acceptable to provide the URL for a Web site, but this should be done in text, and not added to reference list. References should be limited to static material.

General News Sources

Scientific articles occasionally need to cite material from general news sources such as online newspapers. It is acceptable to cite the URL followed by the

date you last accessed the article (eg, Altman, LK. Progress slows in detection of new TB cases. *New York Times*, March 18, 2008. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/18/health/18tb.html?ref=health> Accessed March 23, 2008).

Take-Home Lessons

When referencing material from a journal that is not a traditional article, do the following: (1) be sure that you provide enough information to ensure that other readers can find the article; (2) use the same standards for online-only information that you use for print information; readers should be sure that the information is of the same quality of print sources; (3) if you cite a PAP article, try to update the citations to provide readers with the most current information; (4) do not provide a URL as the only citation information; try to provide at minimum either publication information or a DOI.

REFERENCE

- 1 JAMA and archives journals. *AMA manual of style: a guide for authors and editors*, 10th ed. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007; 63–67

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