

Poster Discussion Session Tips

Practical Requirements

The following information is provided to help presenters prepare for their poster discussion session.

Poster discussion sessions allow participants with similar interests to interact by using the poster as a discussion point.

These 1.5 hour interactive poster discussion sessions are led by a chair with expertise in the topic and/or research methodology. The chair will introduce and provide an overview of several posters organised around a theme and then invite each poster presenter to discuss the key points arising from their work, highlighting the areas in which they would particularly welcome discussion with the chair and audience. Each presenter will have no more than 5 minutes. There will then be an opportunity for delegates to view the posters and discuss them with the presenters. The chair will then reconvene the session inviting presenters to answer questions from the floor. This type of session is very valuable for drawing out the relationships between research endeavours, discussing interesting findings or methodological challenges and for establishing research networks.

Poster discussion presentations fall into the following categories which will be grouped together around related topics:

Research reports are presentations of original scientific data encompassing any established research approach, design or method.

Special interest reports include presentations of new or unique programmes or theories and descriptions of innovative ways in which established methods have been adapted to meet the needs of physical therapy practice, management, education or policy. They include professional resource materials, such as computer-based programs, training or audiovisual material.

Tips on **Preparing for the panel** and **Participating in the discussion** are below along with a **Final check** at the end.

Preparing for the panel

Poster discussions are a useful way to trigger an exchange of viewpoints among presenters. Because they involve on-the-spot interaction and may involve divergence of viewpoints and possibly competition for speaking time, they may be more difficult to prepare for than standard platform presentations.

As the poster discussion sessions involve both preparing a poster and an oral element the [poster presentation tips](#) and [platform presentation tips](#) may be of use to presenters. Below are some additional tips relevant to poster discussion sessions. They are presented for guidance only and the responsibility for the presentation rests with the presenter.

- You will have the opportunity to meet the other presenters in your session in the speaker ready room 30 minutes prior to your session time. Meeting them or making contact ahead of time can help you familiarise with who is who and build rapport. Even a brief chat just before the session will reduce your stage fright and help ensure a smoother discussion.
- Imagine the questions you are likely to receive and be ready to answer them. However, you will be grouped with other discussants who may answer the questions in different ways.

- Even if you cannot prepare an answer for every possible question, you can anticipate categories of questions and prepare, for each category, a few messages you would like to get across. As you select these messages, think of how you can convince your audience of them, using the posters as a point of reference.
- Because poster discussions are more like conversations, they lend themselves well to a slightly less formal tone than presentations. In particular, they are a good place for supporting messages with short but relevant stories (successes, failures, lessons learned and so on).
- When there are divergent viewpoints you should work constructively with the other poster presenters to deliver an interesting experience to the audience.

Participating in the discussion

- During the discussion itself, follow the chair's instructions. As a rule, speak only when invited to, but feel free to give signals to the chair when you would like to contribute to the discussion. Heed the chair's instruction/signals regarding keeping to time.
- When you are speaking, keep it short. A poster discussion is about exchanges. Make explicit links to what other poster presenters have said whenever you add to or disagree with their contributions.
- When you are not speaking listen attentively to what others are saying - make written or mental notes. As much as possible be a member of the team and aim to advance the discussion, not your own interests.
- If the chair allows, feel free to hand over to another poster presenter at the end of a contribution.
- If you do not know the answer to a question be prepared to say so rather than ramble or attempt to answer another question instead.
- Look at the audience and use eye contact when speaking. Look briefly at other poster presenters when referring to what they said or when handing over to them. When not speaking, look at whoever is speaking. In this way, if an audience member looks at you, they will follow your gaze to the speaker and that person will then benefit from their eye contact.

Final check

Here are some questions to help you check that you are prepared for a poster discussion session.

- Have you checked WPT2011's **poster tips** and **platform presentation tips** for relevant information?
- Practise presenting your points clearly and concisely, remember you only have five minutes.
- Think about likely questions and prepare answers.
- Practise discussing your topic both one-on-one and in small group discussion with colleagues and friends.
- Remember to view the other posters in your session, where time permits. You will not have time during the session as you will be busy speaking to delegates about your work.
- **Keep to time.**

Again, seeking advice from colleagues and asking them these questions will help you make any final adjustments before the presentation.