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What should a discussion include?

¿Qué debe llevar la discusión?

"Occasionally, I recognize what I call the squid technique:
the author is doubtful about his facts or his reasoning
and retreats behind a protective cloud of ink".
Doug Savile[1]

I have noticed that, in manuscripts sent to the journal, *Discussion* is the section that most effort costs to most authors. So much so, that some publishers even reject a paper for not having a good discussion section. In a scientific manuscript, a structure based on the IMRaD system must be followed: Introduction, Methodology, Results and Discussion.[2] The discussion section is as important as all others, and perhaps even more, since it is in this section where the author interprets and validates his results, beyond statistics.

According to Robert Day, English professor at the University of Delaware, expert in the use of English for scientists, and coauthor of How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper, some areas of the Discussion Section remind him of a diplomat, described by Allen Drury in his novel Advise and Consent (1959),[3] who gave "Answers that were winding endlessly through the interstices of English, until they finally vanished without leaving more than an absolute confusion and a polite smile."[1]

The Discussion Section is not meant to repeat what has already been presented in the results, it is the section that gives more freedom, but it is also the greatest challenge when writing. It is not done at will; it has a deliberate structure. It is important to start it with a brief summary of the findings, so that the reader knows and understands what the report is about. It should also, something frequently omitted, compare your own work with the results reported by others. What is wrong or shameful about it? Only the insecurity of who writes.

In this section it is important to discuss failures in the approach of the question, pondering whether or not it could be answered satisfactorily. Exposing the limitations of the study allows consideration of opportunities for future research or for clinical practice. It is necessary then to emphasize what was actually found, not what one had expected to find. Sometimes, useful recommendations may also be issued for those who would want to replicate an investigation. A study confirmed or discussed by others acquires greater relevance, one without replication has no echo, leaves no trace, nor is it useful.

It is not convenient to include cost data in a scientific discussion if the work does not deal precisely with that.[1] No data should be hidden, nor a personal interpretation should be given if it is not fully justified by the results obtained. Therefore, it is necessary to write explicit conclusions, so that the reader is left with a clear final message.

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It is also an act of intellectual honesty to anticipate criticisms and to stipulate possible objections and replies. This amounts to opening the controversy up, by inviting peers. In the long term this is not only rewarding, it increases intellectual and academic respect for the author. In scientific publications, as the saying goes, "producing rabbits from the sleeve" is out of line.

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