
Certified Professional Course in Writing Skills in Medical English

Writing Case Summaries

Writing Case Summaries:

Writing case summaries is an essential skill for healthcare professionals, especially in the field of medical English. A case summary is a concise and structured overview of a patient's medical history, diagnosis, treatment, and outcomes. It is typically written for communication between healthcare providers, medical records, research purposes, or educational presentations. Writing case summaries requires attention to detail, critical thinking, and the ability to communicate complex medical information clearly and effectively.

Key Components of a Case Summary:

- Patient Information: Include the patient's age, gender, medical history, presenting symptoms, and relevant demographic information.
- Chief Complaint: Describe the main reason the patient sought medical attention.
- History of Present Illness (HPI): Provide a detailed account of the patient's symptoms, their onset, duration, severity, and any factors that exacerbate or alleviate them.
- Past Medical History (PMH): Summarize the patient's previous medical conditions, surgeries, hospitalizations, and allergies.
- Medications: List the medications the patient is currently taking, including dosages and frequencies.
- Family History: Note any relevant family history of medical conditions that may impact the patient's health.
- Social History: Include information about the patient's lifestyle, habits, occupation, and social support system.
- Physical Examination: Summarize the findings from the physical examination, including vital signs, general appearance, and specific organ systems.
- Diagnostic Tests: List any laboratory tests, imaging studies, or other diagnostic procedures that were performed and their results.
- Diagnosis: Provide a clear and concise statement of the patient's primary and secondary diagnoses.
- Treatment Plan: Outline the treatment interventions prescribed for the patient, including medications, procedures, and follow-up care.
- Prognosis: Discuss the expected outcomes of the patient's condition and any potential complications or long-term effects.

Writing Style for Case Summaries:

When writing case summaries, it is important to use a clear and concise writing style that conveys the necessary information accurately. Avoid using jargon or technical terms that may be unfamiliar to the intended audience. Use plain language to describe complex medical concepts and avoid unnecessary details or tangents that do not contribute to the main points of the case. Organize the information in a logical and structured manner, using headings and bullet points to highlight key points and make the

summary easier to read and understand.

Example of a Case Summary:

Patient Information:

- 55-year-old male
- History of hypertension and diabetes
- Presenting with chest pain and shortness of breath

Chief Complaint:

- Patient complains of chest pain that started 2 hours ago

History of Present Illness (HPI):

- Chest pain described as pressure-like, radiating to the left arm
- Shortness of breath on exertion, no cough or fever
- No previous history of similar symptoms

Past Medical History (PMH):

- Hypertension diagnosed 5 years ago, controlled with medication
- Type 2 diabetes diagnosed 2 years ago, managed with diet and exercise

Medications:

- Lisinopril 10 mg daily
- Metformin 1000 mg twice daily

Family History:

- Father had a heart attack at age 60

Social History:

- Non-smoker, occasional alcohol use
- Sedentary lifestyle, works as an office manager

Physical Examination:

- Blood pressure 150/90 mmHg
- Heart rate 80 bpm
- Lung auscultation clear, no murmurs or rubs

Diagnostic Tests:

- ECG showing ST-segment elevation in leads V1-V4
- Troponin levels elevated at 0.5 ng/mL
- Chest X-ray normal

Diagnosis:

- ST-elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI)

Treatment Plan:

- Transfer to the cardiac catheterization lab for emergent intervention
- Aspirin, clopidogrel, heparin, and nitroglycerin administered

Prognosis:

- Guarded prognosis due to the severity of the STEMI
- Risk of complications such as arrhythmias, heart failure, or cardiogenic shock

Challenges in Writing Case Summaries:

One of the main challenges in writing case summaries is balancing the need for brevity and clarity with the requirement to include all relevant information. Healthcare professionals must be able to prioritize the most important details while still providing a comprehensive overview of the case. Another challenge is ensuring that the language used is appropriate for the intended audience, whether it be other healthcare providers, patients, or researchers. Additionally, maintaining patient confidentiality and adhering to ethical standards when sharing case information is crucial in writing case summaries.

Practical Applications of Case Summaries:

- Communication between healthcare providers for patient handoffs, consultations, or referrals
- Medical records documentation for legal and insurance purposes
- Research and case studies for academic and scientific publications
- Educational presentations for medical conferences, seminars, or training sessions

In conclusion, writing case summaries is an important skill for healthcare professionals in effectively communicating patient information in a clear and concise manner. By following a structured format and using a plain language writing style, healthcare providers can create informative and impactful case summaries that serve a variety of purposes in the medical field.