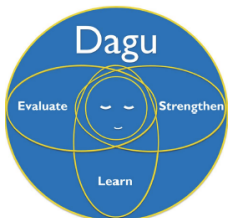


Writing the Discussion

Lars Åke Persson MD PhD
lars.persson@lshtm.ac.uk

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Discussion section of a manuscript: function



- To interpret findings in light of what was already known about the subject
- Explain our new understanding after your results
- Will connect to introduction, the literature cited, the objectives phrased: how did the results change the situation?

Discussion section of a manuscript: Organization

- **KEY RESULTS** Summarize key results with reference to study objectives
- **LIMITATIONS** Discuss limitations of the study, taking into account sources of potential bias or imprecision. Discuss both direction and magnitude of any potential bias
- **INTERPRETATION** Give a cautious overall interpretation of results considering objectives, limitations, multiplicity of analysis, results from similar studies, and other relevant evidence
- **GENERALISABILITY** (may be part of limitations paragraph) Discuss the generalisability, i.e. external validity, of the study results
- **CONCLUSION** Concluding the discussion, maybe policy implications, maybe need of further research

Discussion section of a manuscript: basic questions and principles (1)

- Do the results provide answers to your research questions/ address your objectives?
- Do the findings agree with what others have found, to theory (if appropriate)?
- If not: Alternative explanations? Weakness in your design, in others' studies?
- Given your conclusions, what is our new understanding of the subject area?
- If warranted, what is the next step in practice and in research?

Discussion section of a manuscript: basic questions and principles (2)

- Use the same key terms and the same verb tense (present tense) as in aims/objectives
- Discuss all key findings (also “no difference”, “not significant”, “not expected” etc.)
- Discuss and evaluate conflicting explanations of results (good papers do that)
- Please remember that statistical significance is not a measure of “effect”. Evaluate the public health importance of your findings
- Be brief and concise! Avoid general and vague words and phrases that may be misunderstood! Avoid empty words and phrases!
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/2/>