

Poster displays are an accepted way of presenting the results of research, audit and quality improvement projects. Here are some tips on how to plan, design and present conference posters effectively.

Why present a poster?

The poster is a visual presentation of written and graphic information. Because you can use both writing and figures or images, a large amount of information can be displayed. This is also a chance to be visually creative in exhibiting the results of your project.

Poster display sessions are popular at pharmacy meetings. They provide a vehicle for disseminating work and give the presenter an opportunity to informally discuss their project with conference delegates on a one-to-one basis. This is less intimidating than the prospect of a formal presentation in front of an audience, and yet it still provides experience in presenting and talking about your work.

A poster should not be regarded as a 'second-best' option. Successful poster presentations draw on a different range of skills from those used in formal oral presentations.

Planning your poster

Give yourself enough time to design your poster. Remember that you may need to get it approved by your supervisor and the named authors of the study. You will also need to allow time for the poster to be printed.

The conference organisers will tell you the size and format requirements of the poster. **The UKCPA requires a poster size of A0 or A1 portrait format.**

Designing your poster

Your poster should be visually attractive and eye catching. There are likely to be many posters in the same room so being creative with your design will draw the delegates to your stand. However, being creative should not be at the expense of including relevant information within the poster (see Box 1).

Box 1: How to make the most of your poster

- Make sure the content is accurate
- Avoid too much text
- Include photographs, figures and colour to make it visually attractive
- Space your text and figures to make it easy to read
- Use clear headings and conventional format (Aims, Methods, Results etc) to fit with the conference requirements
- Take advice from those who have presented posters previously, or look at examples of winning posters on the UKCPA website Resources Centre.

A poster cluttered with data is not attractive and will not hold an audience. There should be a clear but succinct introduction

and statement of aims to help the audience with some context for why the work is important and what it aimed to add to existing evidence. The rest of the information – Methods, Results/Evaluation, Discussion/Conclusion and References – should follow logically and clearly.

In preference to lots of written text, colourful charts, diagrams and images should be used to display data wherever possible. Relationships between variables and complex findings can be taken in at a glance when figures are appropriately displayed, and bold illustrations always attract the reader's eye.

The poster must be legible from a distance of about four feet to allow several people to read it at the same time.

The most common way of creating a poster is with PowerPoint. Hand-written material is not suitable. The UKCPA website has some examples of good posters which may give you inspiration, and you can download a template which you are free to use if you wish. Note that this is not a mandatory template for UKCPA conferences, only an example. Remember that your department may have its own template that you will be required to use.

Practicalities

If you need to transport the poster a long distance, you may want to consider carrying your poster in a poster tube. You can buy these at stationary shops or your department or colleagues may have one you can borrow.

Whilst some conference organisers will provide materials to mount the poster, it's a good idea to bring some drawing pins, sticky tape, Velcro, etc with you. On the day, remember it takes about 30 minutes to find your poster space and mount your poster (along with everyone else) so allow sufficient time.

Whilst posters are often displayed for the duration of the conference, there is usually a dedicated poster session. You need to be present for those times required by the conference. You should look professional and approachable. You should be able to give a succinct explanation of your work. You are sure to receive some interesting questions so don't forget to take along a notebook so you can note down these points along with the names and addresses of useful future contacts.

You may wish to prepare a brief hand-out for viewers to take away: it's often easiest to print off copies of PowerPoint posters on A4 sheets. Make sure your contact details are included.

Giving a poster presentation provides you with the opportunity to speak to many people and discover what is going on in your area of interest. It is a highly stimulating and motivating experience. Good luck and enjoy!

Resources available at:

<http://ukclinicalpharmacy.org/education/awards-programme/>