



## **Guidelines for Scientific Exhibits and Poster Displays:** **Application, Production and Presentation**

These guidelines are provided by the Healthcare Convention & Exhibitors Association (HCEA) as a service to its members, related associations, exhibit builders and designers, potential scientific exhibitors and other interested parties.

### **PREFACE AND DEFINITIONS**

These guidelines have been compiled to explain the nature of educational (scientific) exhibits and poster displays and the steps required in their creative development. Scientific exhibits and poster displays are included among the teaching methods used in continuing medical education (CME) at medical meetings and conventions. These constitute an accepted form of postgraduate medical education and can be eligible for CME credits, Category 2. The purpose of educational exhibits is to disseminate information about recent developments in healthcare. The public display of the presentation allows attendees to examine the information at their own pace. Authors are often required to staff their displays during specific times during the meeting in order to discuss their displays with interested attendees.

### **Definitions**

#### *What is a Poster Display?*

Effective posters communicate by the written word and visual illustrations. The format of a poster display provides a step-by-step explanation of procedures and the results of scientific research or multiple case studies.

Displays are usually one of three styles, as identified below.

- 1) Tabletop Poster: These displays typically consist of a series of cardboard or paper sheets that can be attached to an existing framework that rest on top of a table. The graphics consist of text, photographs and artwork printed or painted on the cards or papers attached to the framework with pushpins or thumbtacks.
- 2) Poster Display: A poster display is sometimes called a bulletin board display. The poster display area is usually a bulletin board or tack board that is four to eight feet wide and four feet high. Specific display areas may differ from these dimensions.
- 3) Electronic Poster: This display is an alternative to the traditional poster or tabletop display. Computers, supplied by the association, are sometimes provided at the organization's meeting, enabling attendees to view the presentation online. An electronic poster may be provided in PDF format on the healthcare association's website. The association's website and meeting publications will identify if electronic poster presentations are available.

*What is a Scientific Exhibit?*

- A scientific exhibit typically illustrates an extended study or a complex procedure with a minimum two-year follow up per patient for clinical studies.
- A scientific exhibit differentiates itself from other educational displays in the amount of material that is presented. The use of display cases, X-ray film view boxes, audiovisual presentations, interactive demonstrations or other types of media into a scientific display distinguish it from a poster presentation.
- The content of the exhibit should not be promotional. This limitation should be given special attention if the exhibit deals with a pharmaceutical product, medical device or any product that is sold on the open market.
- Demonstrations and comprehensive handout materials are encouraged and should reflect the exhibit content, as well as assist in understanding it.
- It is not necessary for a scientific exhibit subject to be new. However, it must make its point concisely, use clinical or research data to support its conclusions, and may show new or modified techniques as they relate to diagnosis, surgical complications or other phases of surgical problems. (\*See endnote)
- The display space provided for a scientific exhibit is usually greater than the space provided for a poster display.

**Submission of Application for a Poster Display or Scientific Exhibit**

Applications or abstracts must be submitted to the medical association to meet the convention timeline. A recommended timeline would be 12 months for the call for abstracts, and six to eight months for the exhibit application.

A complete submittal may include, but is not limited to, objectives, reference papers, photographs, handouts and number of cases/data studied. Although educational displays may be funded from sources other than the institution of the investigator, commercial sponsors should be identified on the submitted application, but should not be identified on the display. If any statements, procedures or dosages used digress from recognized standards, they must either indicate that they require Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval, or include a disclaimer about the receipt of or pending approval of the FDA.

**SCIENTIFIC EXHIBITS**

**Preparing a Scientific Exhibit**

Scientific exhibits are more interesting and informative if they include some of the following components:

- Creative, eye-catching and attractive artwork.
- Black and white or color photographs (use matte finish to avoid glare from overhead lights).
- Audio, video, multimedia or interactive computer programs to teach about procedures or instruments.
- Before and after X-ray films.
- Overlay graphics showing the stages and final results of a procedure.
- Models of extremities, joints, bones, implants, etc. to further develop the theme.
- Handout materials with an exhibit synopsis, references, correspondence address and other important information.

**Scientific Exhibit Booth Design and Layout**

*Space Planning:* Determine the design of the exhibit based upon the amount of exhibit space provided and available budget. Be aware of what items are provided and what items may involve additional expense. For example, does the association provide complimentary tables, chairs, A/V, utilities, etc?

*Exhibit Material:* The exhibit material (e.g., graphs, photographs, monitors) should not cover more than 70 percent of the total surface area. When possible, the side panels should be at an angle to the backwall (instead of perpendicular) so that viewers can read the sidewall information without having to stand directly in front of the panels. This allows more attendees to view the exhibit at the same time, and eliminates attendees from blocking other panels. If the sidewalls cannot be angled, it is even more crucial that good line of sight design techniques be used and text is minimized. Sign copy or graphics should not be placed lower than 3 feet from the floor. Keep in mind that portions of the exhibit placed too high on the panels will be visually inaccessible to some attendees.

*Trademarks:* Generic names of products must be used in text, and the trade name is restricted to a onetime appearance, usually at the bottom of the first background panel and in type size no larger than 1/2 inch high. Company logos may not be used in any part of the scientific exhibit.

*Mixed Media:* If incorporating view boxes, monitors and projection screens into a scientific exhibit, note that these items take up space and can block graphic panels. Transparency view boxes are the most effective way to display X-ray films or similar images. The displayed materials will be easier to view if the units are placed on tables.

#### *Methods for Reducing a Large Volume of Study Data*

- Prepare a rough outline of study highlights and points to be stressed.
- Revise the rough outline to a working outline to include only the essential elements of the study.
- Draw a schematic, showing which data will appear on each exhibit panel.
- Each panel should be well balanced and adjacent to related topics.
- Do not mix results and conclusions on the same panel or begin an item on one panel and complete it on another.
- Use a 14-point font or a larger font for text and avoid serif fonts—they are harder to read than non-serif fonts.

#### **Suggested Organization and Layout**

Often, scientific exhibits are organized around the essential components included in most medical manuscripts:

- Title, Authors
- Introduction
- Materials/Methods
- Data
- Results
- Discussion/Conclusions

#### *Title, Authors*

- Title should concisely state the conclusion of the study.
- Include full names of authors including affiliations.

#### *Introduction*

- Outline the reasons for doing the research project.
- Give a brief overview of the subject matter.
- Present as a series of short, concise statements, rather than in narrative form.
- May present new theories or approaches to treatment.
- Restricted use of quotes can be very effective.
- Graphics, illustrations or photographs may be incorporated in setting.
- State the theme of the exhibit.

### *Materials/Methods*

- Because available data usually exceed exhibit space, material should be reduced substantially without sacrificing or distorting study procedure.

### *Data*

- Data may be condensed by use of schematics, drawings and tables, and enhanced by short explanatory paragraphs. All references should be confined to the accompanying handout.
- In order to convey methodical information briefly and concisely, a narrative approach is discouraged.
- Electronic media, such as computers, videotapes and slides often help to condense this information into a usable form.
- If a product is the subject of the presentation, it should be referred to by its generic name in the body text. The product trade name can be referenced once, as a footnote, at the bottom of the exhibit in letters not to exceed 1/2 inch in height. Company logos may not be used in any part of the scientific exhibit.

### *Results*

- Generally, the results section will present study findings, side effects, laboratory changes and commentaries of a non-conclusive type.
- The scientific exhibit presentation is enhanced by the use of tables, graphs, photos and illustrations.
- Well-conceived and properly labeled graphics enhance the narrative discussion of study findings and disseminate much information quickly, with minimum space utilization. Use of eye-catching color combinations is suggested, but not so many that it makes it visually confusing.
- Audiovisual methods provide a firsthand experience of study findings, e.g., medical procedures, anatomical changes and pathological findings.

### *Discussion/Conclusions*

- Highlight the main points of the study.
- Re-emphasize important or unusual findings.
- Sequential, short, pointed bulleted statements are preferable.
- Graphics can be used.

### **Exhibit Design, Production, Components and Fees**

- The key to an effective scientific exhibit is preplanning and preparation well before the meeting.
- The layout should be quickly informative, clean and attractive.
- As a general rule, scientific exhibit booth spaces are ten feet wide. The depth will vary from four feet to ten feet.
- If a larger exhibit is provided, it is still recommended that the exhibit be designed and built in widths of ten feet.
- When the text is finalized, make arrangements for design and production.
- Actual design and production can take from eight to ten weeks.
- Before production begins, carefully review and proof the final layout. It should be acceptable, carefully proofed and signed off on by the investigator.
- Scientific exhibit booth space may be supplied with the following items on a complimentary basis:
  - \* An identification sign listing the exhibit title and booth number.
  - \* Carpeting.
  - \* A Velcro-compatible booth wall system.

Other items needed for scientific exhibit booth displays, such as the following, may need to be ordered at the presenter's expense:

- \* Audio visual equipment.
- \* Shipping display to and from the meeting.
- \* Utilities, such as electricity or Internet.

### **Scientific Exhibit Handout**

- The scientific exhibit handout is an integral part of any scientific exhibit, and great care should be given to its design and readability.
- As recommended with the exhibit design and construction, professional help may be needed to design and organize the handout.
- More of the original manuscript copy can be incorporated in the handout than appears on the exhibit.
- Many attendees will be interested in the display and will take the handout for further study at their leisure.
- Review the document carefully for typographic errors, style and organization. Once the handout is printed, changes become extremely expensive.
- Printing of the handout will often take three or more weeks; in a rush, printing can be done in less time, but be prepared to pay a premium.
- Anticipate needs carefully and order all handouts needed. A single printing will save money.
- Identify to whom and where the brochures are to be sent to minimize the potential for loss and reduce the cost of shipping and material handling.
- Samples, trade packages, products or company promotional literature should not be displayed at the exhibit.
- Scientific exhibit booklets and reprints should not include a product package insert, nor should they bear a company logo or address.

### **References**

- References are not generally used within the scientific exhibit copy.
- List references in the handout.

**Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Status:** If a device or drug requiring FDA approval is covered by the material in the display, the display must include the FDA clearance status of the device or pharmaceutical for the uses discussed or described. “Off-label” uses of a device or pharmaceutical may be described so long as the lack of FDA clearance for such uses is also disclosed.

**Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA):** Display must comply with HIPAA, which protects a patient’s rights and confidentiality.

### **Disclosing Conflicts**

In accordance with the ACCME rules on disclosing conflicts, exhibits should indicate conflicts for all authors. If using a computer in the exhibit, the first screen should indicate the disclosure statement.

### **Shipping**

- Select a freight carrier that guarantees delivery and provides shipment tracking.
- To avoid lost materials, follow the association’s explicit instructions for shipping to the advance warehouse or direct to the convention site.
- The scientific exhibitor’s name (which sometimes is the name of the author), the association’s name(s) and the scientific exhibit booth number should be on each package shipped to the convention. The scientific booth will be assigned a booth number from show management; it is imperative that this scientific exhibit booth number appears on all shipping labels.
- Consult the service manual for shipping options for outbound shipment at the conclusion of the exhibits. In some cases, the association may offer complimentary outbound shipping.

### **Installation and Dismantling**

The exhibitor's service manual provides the dates and time the exhibit can be installed, and when it can be dismantled following the convention. It will identify the official decorator and material handling company. Be sure to follow the instructions for scientific exhibits, not technical exhibits. If the service manual does not include the information for scientific exhibits, contact the association management office because often the procedures are different.

### **POSTER DISPLAYS**

#### **Preparing a Poster Display**

As with scientific exhibits, poster displays are usually organized around the essential components included in most medical manuscripts:

- Title, Authors
- Introduction
- Materials/Methods
- Data
- Results
- Discussion/Conclusions

See the section “**Suggested Organization and Layout**” starting on page 3 for more information.

### **ELECTRONIC POSTER PRESENTATIONS**

Electronic poster displays are an alternative to the traditional poster display, and are often used when exhibit space is not available to accommodate scientific displays. For example, an organization may provide all poster presentations in PDF format on its website, then offer computers at the organization's meeting for attendees to view the posters online. The association's exhibitor website and/or other meeting publications will inform you if electronic poster presentations are available.

*\*Portions of this document were derived from material provided by the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons.*

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