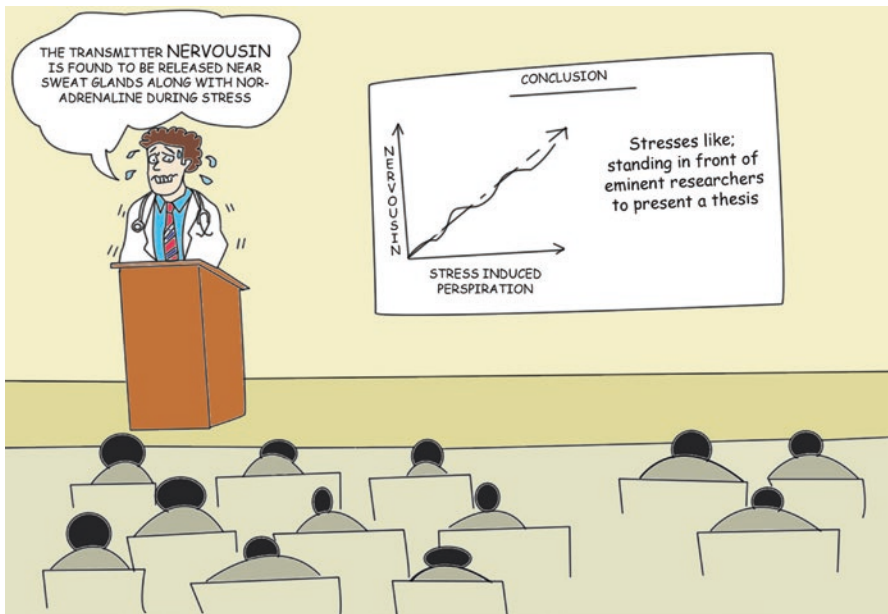


Presenting Thesis in Conferences: Oral and Poster Presentation

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*If you don't know what you want to achieve in your presentation,
your audience never will.—Harvey Diamond*



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Key Points

- The task to convert the voluminous thesis data, its analysis and the conclusions drawn over few years to a ten minute oral or a poster presentation is too demanding.
- The process starts with in depth discussion of the doctrine under proposal with colleagues and seniors, refining the proposal and submission for presentation in an appropriate conference.
- The initial presentation may better be a poster which gives the presenter ample informal time to defend his concept with the viewers in different ways thus improving the presentation skills, confidence levels and finally lead to a chance for making an oral presentation.
- The increasing visibility the candidate makes by continued presentation will make the profile of the presenter better.

Introduction

A thesis for a postgraduate degree or for Ph.D. specifically addresses an issue or few issues where differing theories are existent. By a detailed research the candidate plans to find a better solution to the issue or tries to bridge the differing doctrines. The proposal will be a new explanation or thought which can solve the issue under debate in a better way. Presentation of the work at various conferences can increase the visibility of both the work as well as the presenter [1]. The rewards and benefits of the conference presentations are innumerable.

Why Is It Important to Make Presentations in Conferences?

1. *Contribute to and learn about the most recent advances in the field*
You are able to present the data from your work at any point of time during the study thus allowing you to get feedback and improvise upon your study. In a conference, there is an opportunity to attend other talks and poster-sessions, which often represent the most cutting-edge research available, and can give valuable information ahead of the publication.
2. *Proponent of your field*
One of the most important gains of attending the conference is that you are able to act as an advocate of your science. Presentation can bring the doctrines and your thoughts into the notices of other researchers, policy makers and even public to improve your visibility.
3. *Learn how to talk about your data*
Your presentation skills will substantially improve with each presentation. More importantly when you are confronted with extempore questions, you get prepared to handle the question in a much more organized fashion. As each presentation gets over, your skills improve which will aid in the final defense of your research.

4. *Contribute to your own profile*

In a competitive job market, your presentation and publications will make a sizeable contribution. “Travel Bursary and Fellowships” help to improvise the resume in addition to providing the financial support. There is hardly anything to choose between oral or poster in terms of visibility and hence avail every opportunity to improve your curriculum vitae.

5. *Opportunity to meet your colleagues & seniors*

Conferences will provide ample opportunities to meet peers and leaders in the same field, to have discussions, to clear certain issues and to get some new inputs. Fostering the relationship will pave the way for future collaborations; joint works and even job opportunities.

How to Convert Thesis Work into a Presentation?

Conversion of a thesis where the issues under consideration are proved or disproved on the basis of a huge data into a 10-min oral presentation or to a poster of limited space is a demanding task [1, 2]. The following steps will enable an author to convert his thesis into presentation in conference.

1. The author should first understand the problem he is trying to analyse in depth—its relevance (clinical/theoretical), the different hypothesis and explanations with their merits and shortcomings, how the proposed solution or theory will help in solving some of the concerns. He should be well versed with the methodology used, interpretation of the data with significance, conclusions with rationale and enough references which can support the outcome. It is also important to make sure that others who are working in the same field are able to use his proposal partly or entirely to take up similar work to find solutions to related issues [3].
2. The author needs to discuss with his mentor/s and colleagues about the proposal to make a presentation of his work and take their opinion on the project to consolidate or refine or even change. Often the frank opinion of the colleagues will give a better insight and the entire plan may be changed [4].
3. Most of studies have primary and secondary aims at the proposal stage. But as the research proceeds it may also yield some valuable observations which may not be relevant to the thesis under consideration but certainly will be worth bringing out for the understanding of the people or may be of use to another study either already on or worth considering to begin. May be these corollary findings of the thesis will also find a suitable place in some conference and any discussion with the colleagues can be of great help.

The steps in converting a thesis into a presentation are shown in Fig. 1.

How to Choose the Conference for Making the Presentation?

The conferences available today are either general in nature or a specific theme-based one or many times disease and organ based. The level of these conferences

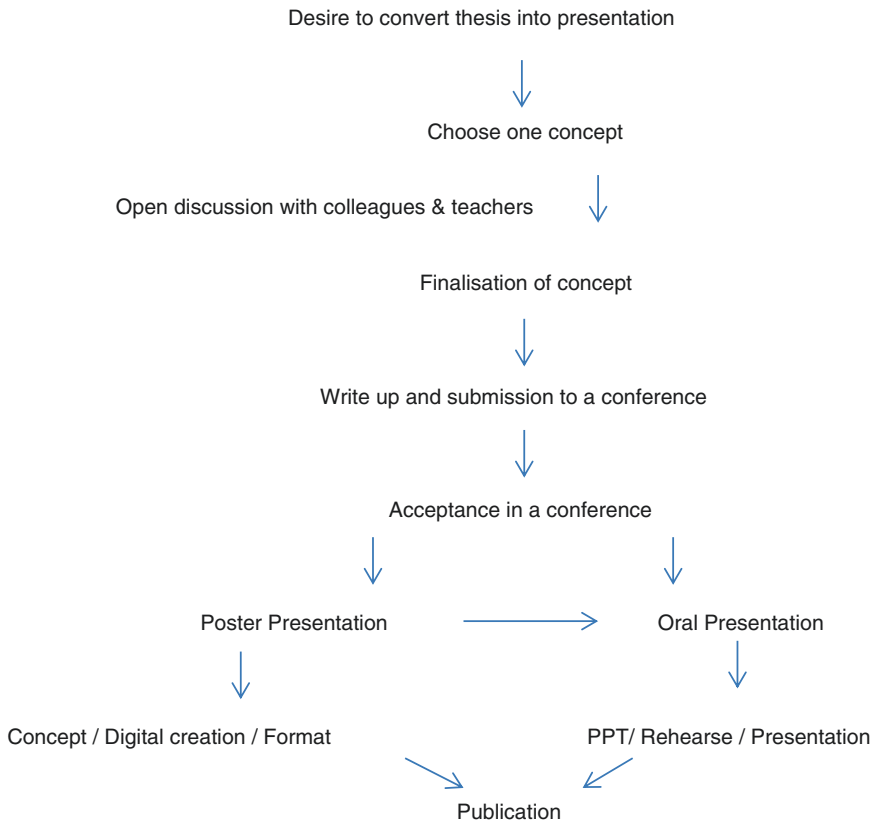


Fig. 1 Steps in converting thesis work into a conference presentation

varies from local to state to national and international levels. It is easier to choose the conference based on the topic of the study. For instance, “A thesis on Gastric Ulcer” can find acceptance in any general or gastrointestinal tract related conferences. The most difficult issue will be the level or nature of conference in which the candidate can send the presentation and can get an acceptance. A conference where fundamental research is the primary area of discussion, a clinical observational study may not find its place. But if the research findings are valid and highly relevant, be it clinical or theoretical, the presentation may be accepted. The presenter hence needs to choose the conference based on his own realistic assessment about the strength or credibility of his thesis. A look into the kind of papers in previous conferences may help the presenter to make a better assessment on the level of acceptance [2, 5]. It is also important to look at the theme of the conference as anything in the same lines might get accepted fast.

While the candidate is keen on a particular conference, it is important to realize that acceptance of the paper also becomes a challenge. An appealing title with a well-drafted abstract, which is submitted in time, will be contributory. The

credibility of the institution and the support group involved in the paper will be yet another deciding factor in many situations despite the strength of the paper itself.

What Is the Appropriate Format of Presentation and Preparation for Each?

The presentations in any conference can either be in the form of oral podium presentation or in the form of a poster, which from physical format is moving to its e-version. In some or even in most of the conferences among the e-versions of poster, the selected few or sometimes all are given a short time to explain or defend themselves to the assessors [5, 6]. Even if these are not for competition, the author is often given time for defending himself to the questions asked by the viewers. Posters have the space limitation while oral presentation has an added time limitation too. Both have different types of impacts- Oral presentation is limited to a specific audience in the specific time while posters do get prolonged time of exposure and a larger viewership. Both get augmented in terms of time and viewership, if there is an e-version on the proceedings where the papers and posters are included. Sometimes the choice has to be made on the basis of availability and on any statutory requirement. At times the policies in selection of papers by the organisers also will make an influence as to which category the paper gets accepted- oral vs. poster. Double-blind controlled studies, prospective studies and thesis with basic research are better conceived than clinical observational studies or studies like clinico-pathological co-relation where the professional expertise of a group of specialists comes into assessment. Papers where the demographic pattern is purely an institution based is less likely to be accepted against a population based data.

A poster presentation may be the best way to start a research being brought into notice. If you keep an open mind, inputs can be received and collated to give a direction to the work. It often gives you an opportunity for an informal talk with all levels of participants, more time to receive questions and answer them in a more relaxed way without much pressure of time. It also will help you to defend the thoughts in different ways and help you to choose the best way. As you proceed with the collection of data, analysis can be periodically done to make some preliminary observations. These can be presented better on oral presentation and get further inputs into the work. The final result can go to publication.

How to Make an Impact on Presenting the Thesis?

The impact a presentation can make in the conference depends on multitude of factors.

1. Choosing an appropriate title for the presentation is an important issue. The title needs to be framed in such a way that with a single glance, it will attract the reader, will give a rough idea on the topic and possibly will give a glimpse how

the conclusions can impact the future. Lot many of the participant delegates choose the lectures based on its title alone. It is recommended to frame the title after many times of writing or most practically even after writing the whole paper.

2. Making the presentation in any conference is an art. The “nervous” presenters need to be differentiated from “liars”. The anxiety of making a presentation can be overcome by the following points.
 - (a) Understanding the audience is an important factor—their level of knowledge on the subject, their possible interest in the topic and the possible influence of the conclusion in their thought process and in their daily clinical practice.
 - (b) Preparing the lecture with the available audiovisual aid in the conference. An alternate plan B also need to be kept as backup, in case there is a last minute change at the venue in terms of timing, format etc. One should also look at the guidelines already given by the organisers and complying with it will help the whole presentation. Technical challenges posed by the presenters such as making the presentation in incompatible software, often works against them in terms of valuable time allotted, loss of tempo of presentation and above all the interest of the audience [7]. It is advisable to check the compatibility of slides, videos etc. prior to the presentation to avoid interruptions in the presentation. It is important to make the presentation using the commonest method and technique in contemporary practice.
 - (c) Proven or specified formats are to be used. The contents in the slide need not contain the entire narration of presentation which in fact only drags the listener. It is better to have highlighted points by bullets and the narration can be better drawn out of that. Repeated spell checks need to be done before making the final presentation. A busy slide will be difficult to be read [6]. All animations and multiple colours are better avoided and are only modes to distract the concentration of the readers.
 - (d) Rehearsing the talk is to be done early so that the flow and delivery of lecture can be smooth and attractive. It is important to always adhere to the time allotted. It is usually seen that the last few slides are hurried through for want of time, which generally contains the most valuable points in the presentation. In such circumstances of pace at the end of the talk will turn out to be counterproductive.
 - (e) The presenter must conduct himself at the podium and must be presentable. Greeting the Chair, facing the audience with a smile and with an attempt to make an eye contact will help draw the audience to the presenter.
 - (f) The language, the diction and the tone of delivery of the talk matters a lot in keeping the audience with the presenter. Though scientific presentations are not tests on one’s linguistic skills, but still the language counts a lot in keeping the tempo and flow of presentation. Emphasis is to be done when it is needed. In an unexpected break in the flow during presentation, it is a wise pattern to narrate the matter in the slides verbatim rather than panicking on the stage so as to get the presentation back in track.

- (g) Answering questions after the lecture is an art, especially in an award paper session as it is expected that the presenter independently defends the study. Genuine questions raised need specific answers. It is important to identify experts on the topic, who raise questions, with whom you need to have discussion later on for redefining your thoughts and taking your thesis further. Inputs from them may also throw light on some hidden aspects of your research. Developing contacts with seniors and important people among the audience and maintaining the rapport in days to come is a skill as well a talent. This will pave for the entrance to other similar conferences and for many presentations. However, sometimes, comments are from those who want to make their presence noticed. Such comments should be answered tactfully without any direct offence against the person.
3. Providing relevant references from the literature related to the study is important. However, too many references may also be confusing and will just finish the valuable time you have been given for presentation.
 4. Some conferences will bring out a proceedings book with abstracts of the conference presentations. However, the authors have the liberty to publish the article independent of the conference supplement.
 5. The continued presence, repeated presentations and contributory discussions in the topic of your area of research will make you better known in the concerned area [8].

Conclusion

Although the task of converting a thesis work into a short presentation is demanding, it's equally rewarding. The conference presentation not only aid in improvising the study, but also sharpen one's presentation skills and confidence level as well as help in expanding the contact circle which may prove beneficial in future.

Case Scenarios

1. When one plans to convert his thesis to a presentation, the author needs to discuss the attempt with his colleagues to refine the presentation. True/False.
2. Graduation from poster presentation to oral presentation to publication is a natural process. True/False.

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