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Some tips about lecturing at international meetings

The following document was inspired by some of the current ACVS guidelines to help researchers, Residents, and Diplomates less familiar with didactic to prepare and present their material more effectively at professional meetings.

Preparation:

Ideally, start to think about your lecture months in advance and prepare lecture materials 6 - 8 weeks prior to the presentation date. Things to consider in lecture planning include the following:

1. Audience: Lectures should be presented at a Diplomate level. Greater attention shall be given to research and clinical cutting-edge practices. Resist the temptation to recycle lectures. Build new ones!
2. Be aware of the time limit assigned to your lecture. Aim to plan, prepare, and practice for 75% of the allotted time. For lectures longer than 15', plan to "wake up" your audience by change in pace, use of different media or insertion of clinical cases. If you have a very limited time allocated, concentrate on the most important points of your topic. Speaking more quickly or filling up power point slides with a lot of text is not the solution.
3. Lectures are traditionally organized into a clear introduction, body, and conclusion. Introduction and conclusion shall not exceed 30-40 % of the total speaking time.

Visual aids:

"PowerPoint" (Microsoft Corp, Redmond, WA) has become a ubiquitous part of academic lecturing. While it allows easy incorporation of images, videos, sounds, and other multimedia into a professional visual format, errors in presentation design can detract from the content of a lecture. PowerPoint can be a useful tool, but it is often used as "handrail to cling to" for people terrified of public speaking" (Stein, J AM Diet Assoc., 2006). Excessive use of distracting animation, poor color choices, and small font size are among the many sins that can be committed through PowerPoint. Please refer to professional support when preparing PowerPoint presentations.

Helpful links

There are plenty of useful links and tutorials on the web regarding the art of lecture preparation, slide designs and delivery. Even if you are a well-trained and very experienced speaker, do not hesitate to consult these as they are usually tailored to the needs of the most expecting audiences. Our public is changing...we shall change as well!