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Visualising complexity: embracing graphical abstracts in the BJD

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In the modern era of potential information overload, we are navigating a world of content that is constantly vying for our attention. A new generation of readers now expect a more dynamic, less static user experience. With this in mind, the BJD is committed to embracing new initiatives to increase interaction between authors and readers and make your research stand out. To remain competitive in this ever-expanding digital landscape, we are eager to grow the reach of the journal's outputs by publishing graphical abstracts. Therefore, the BJD now encourages authors to submit a graphical abstract with submissions of Original and Review Articles.

What is a graphical abstract?

A graphical abstract is a visual method to present your paper's key messages and findings, through the use of illustrations, photographs, figures, and icons. Graphical abstracts will be published alongside your article and may be used for dissemination on social media. Some examples of BJD graphical abstracts can be found in our Author Guidelines ([insert weblink](#)). Figure 1 shows the process of developing your own graphical abstract.

Why produce a Graphical Abstract?

A graphical abstract is a great way to increase engagement with your paper, as it helps the reader to digest and understand a lot of complex information in a simple visual format. Studies have shown that an article with a graphical abstract tends to get more social media engagement as compared to those

without any graphical abstract.¹ In addition, use of icons and figures breaks down language barriers and helps communicate to audiences whose first language may not be English, without the need for extensive translation of text.

Since moving to Oxford University Press in 2023, the new-look BJD website has improved functionality for a better user interaction and experience, showcasing our added value content more prominently. The graphical abstract will also be printed in the hard copy of the journal.

Structuring your Graphical Abstract

We have provided some useful guidance on how to structure and create a graphical abstract below. The papers by Spicer *et al*² and Ramos *et al*³ give you in-depth guidance.

- Your graphical abstract should visually represent the key messages of your research. It may be useful to look at posters that you have created already for conferences.
- We have decided not to ask for structured graphical abstracts that are created around set headings or provide a template, as we do not want to limit creativity. However, please ensure you include the main components of your paper by ensuring the abstract's key parts are represented (Background, Objectives, Methods, Results and Conclusions).
- Text should be kept to a minimum (emphasis on quality over quantity) – the abstract is the written summary of your work; the focus of the graphical abstract should be on imagery and clear results. The graphical abstract should enable the reader to understand your key findings in an instant.

Keep your target audience in mind

It is important that you consider who will be engaging with your graphical abstract. Use plain language where possible, and do not assume the reader has technical knowledge. Although the graphical abstract will be peer reviewed along with the rest of your manuscript, we recommend that you ask someone outside your research field to assess your graphical abstract and provide feedback before submission. Someone who was not involved in your research is best placed to check that the message is clear.

Technical requirements

Ensure that your graphical abstract adheres to the guidance found under 'Figures' here: <https://academic.oup.com/bjd/pages/general-instructions>. Use a font size larger than 11 to make the graphical abstract more legible.

You may use images from within your article, as long as you also incorporate other images alongside it. However, we prefer you to use new figures that are not included in your article, as this encourages you to produce something more bespoke and fit for purpose.

Peer review

The graphical abstract will be submitted and peer reviewed as part of the manuscript, so do keep an editable format as you may need to incorporate either the reviewers' changes or style changes required by the copy editors during production.

Graphical abstracts are the first step to achieving our aim of more lively and engaging content, which we hope will increase the usability, reach and impact of BJD's papers and prompt the reader to click through to the full manuscripts. We encourage authors to take time in producing a good graphical abstract as it will not only help with attracting a wide audience to your paper but will also be useful in social media dissemination. In future, the BJD also aims to produce video abstracts.

References

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2. Spicer JO, Coleman CG. Creating Effective Infographics and Visual Abstracts to Disseminate Research and Facilitate Medical Education on Social Media. *Clin Infect Dis* 2022; **74(Suppl 3)**:e14-e22
3. Ramos E, Concepcion BP. Visual Abstracts: Redesigning the Landscape of Research Dissemination. *Semin Nephrol* 2020; **40**:291-7

Figure legend

Figure 1 Illustration of the steps used to create an infographic or visual abstract. © Jennifer O Spicer, Caroline G Coleman 2022. Published by Oxford University Press for the Infectious Diseases Society of America. All rights reserved.