ZFA – Checklist for articles*

(Criteria may not apply to all text categories; see author guidelines at www.online-zfa.de/page/147)

General
The paper has not yet been published elsewhere or submitted for publication (cover letter). Font Arial, font size 12, line spacing at least 1 ½. Setting of line numbering (WORD). All abbreviations in the text are explained when first used. The length of a sentence never exceeds a maximum of 3 lines. Avoid unnecessary Anglicisms and foreign words. Max. manuscript length, incl. Fig./Tab. and bibliography (but without summary/abstract/keywords) – is 20,000 characters.

1. Cover sheet
Title in German and English, informative, concise, max. 100 characters. Abbreviations in the title are the exception. Contact data of the corresponding author is given (address, telephone, E-mail). The total number of characters (incl. blanks) is given.

2. Summary/Abstract (own page, max. 3500 characters)
The summary is structured (see author’s guidewww.online-zfa.de/page/147). A maximum of 5 keywords is given. The summary gives the content of the paper. The methodology section outlines the procedure and mentions the study type. In review papers, the search strategy is given under “Methodology”. English abstract corresponds to the German summary. English abstract was (ideally) checked by a native speaker.

3. Background
What is the issue, why is this study important? First sentence/paragraph makes clear what the paper is about. Current basic work on the topic is briefly mentioned and documented with quotations. It is made clear why this paper is important. The main question and any ancillary questions are described clearly. These questions are answered later in the discussion.

5. Methodology
How was the study conducted? The type of study is given clearly. The target population and the setting are described clearly. Recruitment is described clearly. The sampling strategy and access to the field are described for qualitative studies. In review papers, the search strategy is given under “Methodology”. Inclusion and exclusion criteria (recruitment) are described. The instruments for data collection and evaluation are described. A sentence/section on data protection is included (if applicable). A sentence/section on the decision of the ethics committee is included (if applicable). The statistical analysis is mentioned concisely and quoted if applicable.
6. Results

What was found?
The sociodemographics of the participants (physicians, patients, etc.) are described. Reference is made in the text to numbered tables and illustrations. Tables and illustrations should save text and are therefore only mentioned briefly in the text. A duplication of text and Tab./Fig. must be strictly avoided. The results are only described here and not discussed. Only those results are given which are also discussed later on. The percentages are rounded without decimal places. As a rule, literature is not quoted in the results section.

7. Discussion

What do the results mean?
The discussion is structured into:

1. Brief summary of (only) the most important results;
2. Comparison with other papers;
3. Significance/consequences for family practitioners;
4. Strengths and weaknesses of the paper
5. Conclusions (optional), with references to future research where appropriate

No discussion of results which do not appear in the results section. Conclusions relate (only) to own results.

8. Conflicts of interest

Conflicts of interest are fully named by each author in his own document.

9. References

As a rule, the maximum number of literature references is 20 (exception: systematic reviews)
Every literature reference is quoted according to ZFA specifications without exception. Quotations are numbered sequentially in Arabic numerals in the text [numbers in square brackets].
Every quotation from the literature in the manuscript is also listed in the bibliography.
Every literature reference in the bibliography is also quoted in the manuscript. Quotations from Internet pages are ended with "last accessed on..."

10. Illustrations and tables

Tables/illustrations should save text and are only mentioned briefly in the text. All tables and illustrations are numbered. All illustrations and tables have a legend. All abbreviations in tables and illustrations are explained in the legend. In the case of external illustrations, the source is referenced.

* modified according to JF Chenot (Greifswald)