

# Writing the Introduction Section

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Slides adapted from ITAPS, I TRY IT & TICR

# The Purpose of the introduction

- What the study is all about
- Put your study into context
- Why you did the study-relevance and importance
- State the primary research question



# The Purpose of the introduction

But it is also to

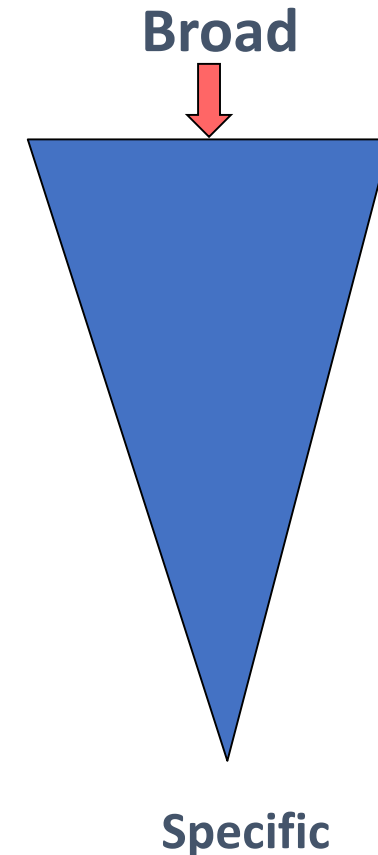
- Entice your readers to look further
  - If its a manuscript, you want your reviewer to be excited to continue reading
  - If its for an abstract you want your reviewer to accept it for the congress
- Tell the readers what to expect



## The Structure of the introduction

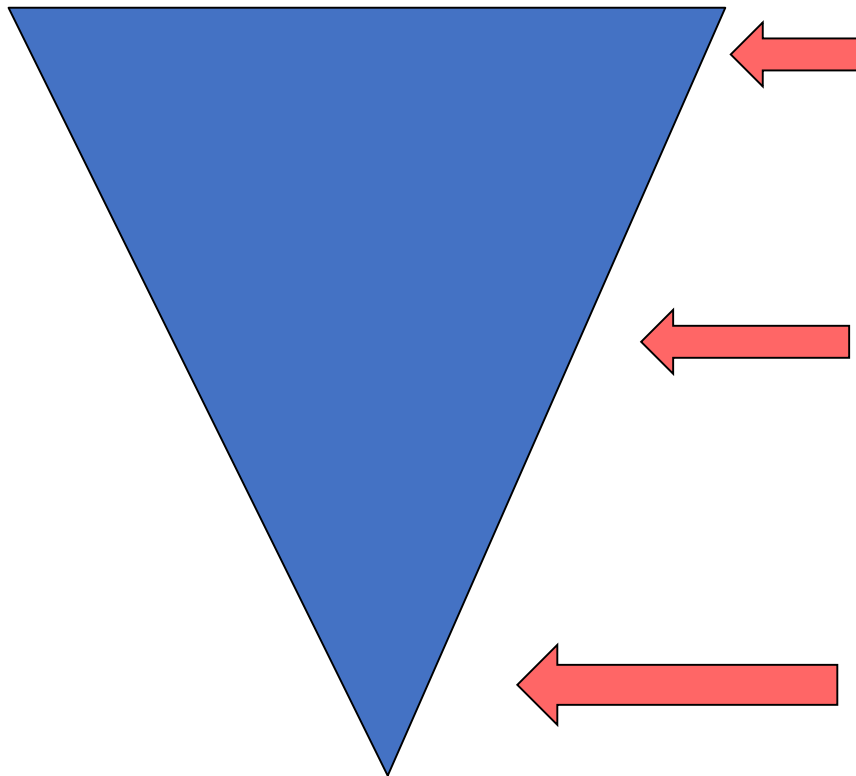
Think of Introduction as 4 sentences:

- The general situation
- The specific situation
- The gap in our knowledge of the specific situation
- What you did to fill the gap



# The Structure of the introduction

## Funnel Structure



## Broad to specific

- What is already known about the research question – context (and what is the RQ)
- What are the limitations to current knowledge – gap
- What do you hope to achieve through your study, and what approach are you taking (study design)

## Example of a four sentence introduction

1. **General:**

HAART reduces HIV morbidity and mortality

2. **Specific:**

A substantial proportion of HIV+ persons delay entry to care

3. **Gap:**

No one has examined entry into care in a setting where care is widely available

4. **How we fill gap:**

We used the HIV/AIDS case registry to estimate the time from diagnosis to entry into care

## General situation

- Discuss the background to your research question- indicate the magnitude of the problem or disease burden
- Start with few words about the overall topic, that best reflects key message of your study, e.g. Disease, a diagnostic test, a technique or therapy
- Stay focused to the topic, avoid too much detail
- Avoid information that is not relevant to the topic  
Stay reader- friendly, use terminology that is understood
- In an Abstract this is usually one sentence

## Get specific

- Summarise relevant literature to establish the context of your study
- No need to quote every article you read
- If no research in the area, explain why
- Discuss existing beliefs/current views and where they originated
- In an abstract this may be 2-3 sentences



## Mind the Gap

- After your literature review, identify the gaps that exist in the literature and explain why that knowledge is relevant
- Explain why the study is needed and is important.
- Do not criticize a study unless your work represents an improvement- use an objective tone
- In an abstract this is probably 1 sentence

## How did you fill the gap

- State your research question and explain briefly what you did to answer the question.
- Highlight the innovative features of your study, your design, sample, or measurement methods
- Reviewers are skeptical about studies that just re-report old data, so it is essential to highlight the new information
- In an abstract some of this may be under the heading of aims. 2-3 sentences

## Example

Background: Measuring incidence is important for maintaining the safety of the blood supply.

Blood collected from repeat donors over time is used to estimate the incidence of viral infections. These repeat-donor based incidence estimates have been extrapolated to estimate incidence in first-time donors by blood services that use nucleic acid testing (NAT) to screen donors by multiplying repeat donor incidence by the first-time/repeat-donor NAT yield (RNA+, Ab- donations) ratio . NAT yield rates and detection periods can also be used to directly estimate incidence in first-time and repeat donors.

However, NAT yield cases are often too few for meaningful analysis; moreover, many poorer blood services collect the majority of blood from first-time donors and cannot afford NAT.

The South African National Blood Service (SANBS) detects a large number of NAT yields annually. In addition, all HIV seropositive first-time donors identified over a five-year period were tested on the Limiting Antigen (LAg) avidity assay to determine recency of infection.

Aims: To estimate incidence in first-time donors using the LAg assay and compare these incidence rates with established models, as well as with the incidence in the general population.

## Example

**BACKGROUND:** South Africa has a high burden of HIV and HBV and to a lesser extent HTLV. Transmitting HIV, HBV or HTLV to patients who already have viral infections can worsen their prognosis. Blood transfusion is a competent mode of transmission for these viruses as it delivers a large viral dose.

The prevalence of HIV, HBV and HTLV among recipients of blood serviced by the South African National Blood Service (SANBS) is not known. Not all Viruses, such as HTLV, are screened for at SANBS and therefore could be transfusion transmitted.

Background prevalence of HIV, HBV and HTLV in the general population and specifically among blood recipients can be used to inform testing strategies

**AIM:** The aim of the study was to determine the prevalence of HIV, HBV and HTLV I/II among blood transfusion recipients receiving blood products from SANBS.

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# Questions

