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The Five “I”s of a Good Discussion

By Douglas J. Casa, PhD, ATC, CSCS

Good research includes good discussion. This key element of a study requires substance, clarity and perspective. For tips on communicating effectively when discussing a research study, learn the five “I”s set forth here by the 2001 New Investigator Award winner.

Research involves establishing and following accepted methods to examine an issue and arrive at a conclusion. However, the project is far from finished at that point. Discussing the results is a key element of research. The following suggestions are to help research participants learn how to more effectively discuss their studies.

The Five “I”s of a Good Discussion

#1: Integrate

Integrate your findings into the current literature. Distinguish how your findings add to the cohesive web being formed within a particular line of research.

It is important to note that the discussion is not meant to serve as a complete literature review unto itself. The discussion should only use the research that has laid the foundation or closely paralleled the current study.

Save the thorough analysis of a specific topic for review articles, not the discussion section of your manuscript.

#2: Interpret

Interpret the meaning of your results. Explain potential physiologic, biomechanical, and psychological mechanisms for the results. Support considerations with reputable research.

In a well-controlled study, results do not occur randomly; they occur for a reason. The discussion should encapsulate the possible causes.

#3: Implications

Discuss the implications of your findings for changing or strengthening policies, procedures, methodology, etc. Your results may in some way influence the way in which health care professionals do their jobs. The implication statements bridge the research results with the reality of the everyday job.

#4: Identify

Identify the limitations of the current study, so the reader can apply the results to the specific context in which the data collection occurred. The reader should be reminded that the results, for example, may only be true for high school athletes, or for the settings used in this study, etc.

Your results are not the end-all but simply an additional block on the base of knowledge being formed within a particular area.

#5: Ideas

Suggest logical ideas for continued research that would build upon the current findings. The researcher will intimately come to realize, through the limitations and study-specific confines, that important future studies could be done to address other similar issues. Share this information freely to encourage the growth of knowledge in our profession.