

Patient privacy and publication

Patient privacy needs to be respected in publications and so identifiers should be removed from both the text of a paper and any associated images. Information should be relevant and maintain anonymity. Images should be cropped as tightly as possible, to eliminate unwanted detail or identifiers which could breach patient privacy or otherwise cause distress.

Identifiers to be excluded from publications

- Names
- Initials
- Dates of birth and death
- Dates of treatment
- Personal identifying numbers (for example, social security numbers and medical record numbers)
- Location of treatment, such as the name of a hospital
- Anything unique about individuals that could lead to identification, which might include occupation or tattoos

While it should not be possible to identify an individual from the information in the submission, complete anonymity cannot always be guaranteed and therefore informed consent for publication should be obtained for all case reports.

Patients can be identified from tattoos, jewelry and clothing if these are included in images.

Details that can be included in publications

- Age
- Symptom duration
- Personal medical history
- Family medical history
- Medications
- Occupation (if relevant, and unless uniquely able to identify the person)

Further information

Cornock, M. Case reports and ethics: focus on consent, privacy and authorship *Case Reports in Women's Health*, 32 (2021), e00358, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.crwh.2021.e00358>

Elsevier <https://www.elsevier.com/about/policies-and-standards/patient-consent>

Riley, D. S., et al. CARE guidelines for case reports: explanation and elaboration document *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, 89 (2017), 218–235, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclinepi.2017.04.026>