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Case studies and case series in dance medicine and science: what, how, when, and why?

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As we seek to gain understanding about the intricacies of the field of Dance Medicine & Science (DM&S), we consider how our research questions may be best answered by thoughtful selection of a research method. Depending on the specific research question, one or more study designs may be appropriate. Often, our observations yield important information from which others would benefit. A case report can be a window into a clinical conundrum, identify novel treatment or rehabilitation approaches to physical or psychological trauma, raise pertinent clinical and research questions, and be a wellspring for future research endeavors.

The purpose of this presentation is to demonstrate the utility of case reports and case series within the DM&S field. Reporting detailed information on individuals and their presenting problems and treatment can advance the multi-disciplinary DM&S field and its growing body of literature. A case report offers unique information about an individual patient or client, the presenting problem, and may help practitioners identify a novel treatment approach or a clinical outcome not previously reported in the literature. Case reports and case series provide thorough descriptions of issues that may not be appropriate or suited to other research methods. The case series consists of a collection of reports of individual patients, which can be useful to identify a pattern not previously defined. In this presentation we will define case reports and case series, suggest how DM&S practitioners may identify appropriate DM&S issues to report in the literature, illustrate key components of case reports through DM&S examples, and outline how to write a case report or case series for publication or presentation. After attending this forum, we expect that attendees will be able to: (1) describe the value of the case approach to research, (2) recognize how DM&S might benefit from the case approach to research, and (3) use the case study and series method for enhancing DM&S research and practice.