Grant Writing Tips

By: Dr. Jon McGavock

The Children's Hospital Research Institute of Manitoba

Dr. Jon McGavock

Jon is a scientist at CHRIM. He has held CIHR funding since 2008 including several salary awards and team grants. More importantly, for every grant awarded, Jon has failed at least 10 times. Those failed grants were more valuable than the successful ones.

Grant writing: "Turn your coal into a diamond"

Below is a summary of expert tips on grant writing that Jon shared in our February CHRIM/CCHCSP mentorship session. Read on/keep a copy handy to make the most out of your grant writing time!

1 Have a great idea
   a. Develop or use **new technology.**
   b. Get reviewers excited by **challenging dogma.**
   c. Convince reviewers that your research is **filling a huge gap.**
   d. **Do it better;** for example, use better methods than those who tried before.
   e. **Patient led-priorities** can unearth new questions and unmet needs.

2 Make your case
   a. **Create a compelling argument:** don't write a thesis, tell a story. to make your case. Why is it important? Why is it novel?
   b. **Anchor the reader** in the first paragraph, and the first sentence of every paragraph after.
   c. **Use an active voice, write with certainty**
   d. **Highlight your work.** You are an expert in this area and you should be doing this work. Let the reviewers know.

3 Forging the argument
   a. **Strong pilot data** shows the validity of your hypothesis.
   b. **Know the jury;** who will be reading your grant? Is this the right audience (panel)? What have they funded?
   c. **Vet your case** through pre-reviews, rather than crossing your fingers and hoping reviewers will 'get' your grant.
   d. **Kill red herrings.** Don't give reviewers a hole or distractor to focus on.

Learn more about the CHRIM Mentorship Program:
For more information, contact Chelsea Bowkett: CBowkett@chrim.ca

Grant Writing Tips

By: Dr. Jon McGavock

4 **Add panache**

    a. **Clean and logical.** Follow the outline of the grant call. Make sure your question, hypothesis, design, and PICO (if applicable) are clearly stated.

    b. **Use graphics and reference your data**...a (professional looking) picture says 1000 words.

    c. **Justify everything** with references/explanations.

    d. **Align with review criteria.** It's available, use it to make the reviewer's job easier.

Extra tips:

Developing a great idea:

- Start early
- Talk to people about your idea; refine how you think and talk about it
- Pressure test your idea; refine the idea with people outside of your area of expertise
- Claim it; get your idea out there with a review or perspective

Making a good case for your proposed studies:

- Gather and use templates (successful grants) from mentors
- Make an outline of your arguments using clear concise headings
- Conclude each paragraph with a clear and confident sentence
- Know your audience: Use the information that is available about the grant panel and the review criteria

Sign up for opportunities like observer programs to see how reviews work IRL

Don't give up! Be like the honey badger

Helpful links:

Examples of active/passive voice:

- University of Toronto
- International Science Editing
- UCR Graduate Writing Center

Early career reviewer in training/observer programs:

- Fall 2020 Observer program
- Spring 2021 Reviewer in Training program

Writers that may inspire you:

Siddhartha Mukherjee
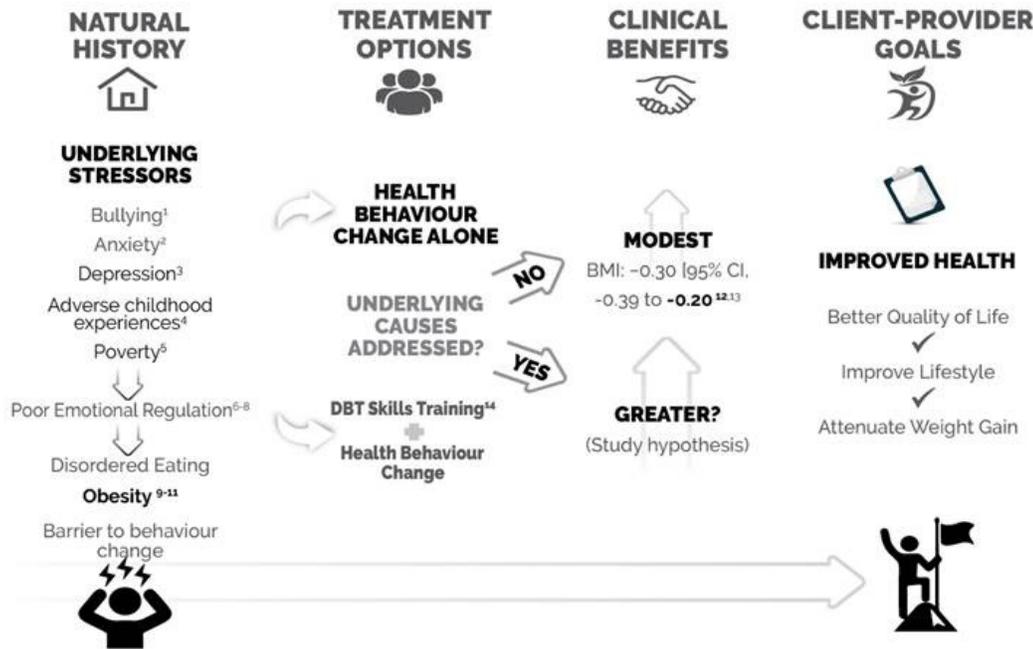
- The Gene: An Intimate History
- All work - The New Yorker
- Why does the pandemic seem to be hitting some countries harder than others?
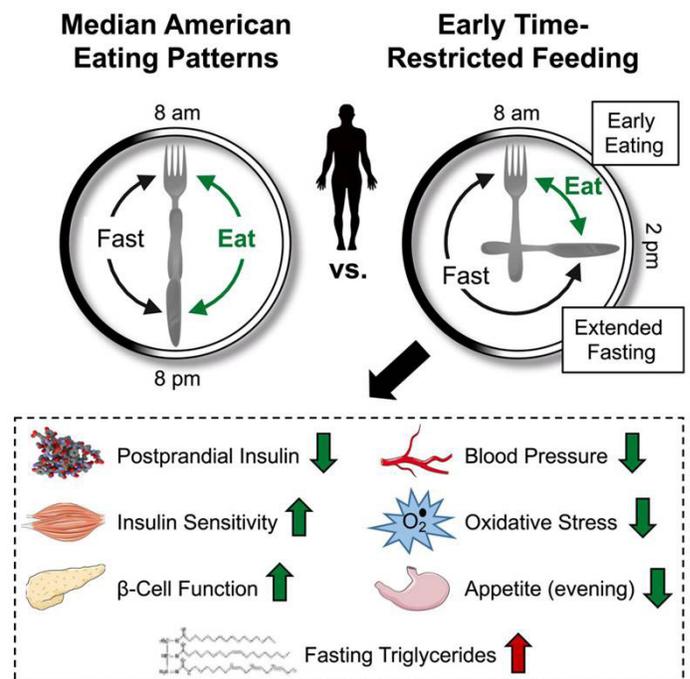
Grant Writing Tips

By: Dr. Jon McGavock

Examples of theoretical frameworks:

Optional read

Cell Metabolism (2018) Jun 5;27(6):1212-1221.e3 (PMID: 29754952)