Appendix: Text-tables

Text-tables – effective tools for presentation of small data sets

Arranging statistical information in a classic table and referring to it elsewhere means that readers do not access the information as immediately as they would when reading about it within the sentence. They have to find the table in the document (which may be on another page), losing some time. This slightly decreases the strength of the information. Quicker access to the information can be achieved within a sentence, but this is not an effective structure if more than 2 numbers are to be compared. In such situations, a “text-table” appears to be ideal for communicating information to the reader quickly and comprehensibly (Tufte 2001). The text-table is a simple table with no graphic elements, such as grid lines, rules, shading, or boxes. The text-table is embedded within a sentence, so no reference to it is needed. Keeping the power of tabular arrangements, text-tables immediately convey the message. Look at the following examples.

Original sentence:
Iron concentration means (±standard deviation) were as follows: 11.2±0.3 mg/dm$^3$ in sample A, 12.3±0.2 mg/dm$^3$ in sample B, and 11.4±0.9 mg/dm$^3$ in sample C.

Modified:
Iron concentration means (±standard deviation, in mg/dm$^3$) were as follows:
- sample B  12.3±0.2
- sample C  11.4±0.9
- sample A  11.2±0.3

Original sentence (do Carmo et al. 2011):
"Prior to rotavirus vaccine introduction, there was a trend of declining diarrhea-related mortality among children younger than 1 y (relative reduction [RR] = 0.87/y; 95% CI 0.83–0.94; p < 0.001), 1 to < 2 y of age (RR = 0.96/y; 95% CI 0.91–1.02; p = 0.23) and 2 to 4 y of age (RR = 0.93/y; 95% CI 0.87–1.00; p = 0.06)."

Modified:
Prior to rotavirus vaccine introduction, there was a trend of declining diarrhea-related mortality among children in all age groups (RR stands for relative reduction per year):
- < 1 y    RR = 0.87 (95% CI 0.83–0.94; p < 0.001)
- 1 to < 2 y RR = 0.96 (95% CI 0.91–1.02; p = 0.23)
- 2 to 4 y  RR = 0.93 (95% CI 0.87–1.00; p = 0.06)

Some rules for arranging text-tables
1. The larger a text-table is, the less power it has.
2. The sentence that precedes the text-table acts as a heading that introduces the information the text-table represents, and usually ends with a colon. Text-tables should have neither headings nor footnotes.
3. Indentation of text-tables should fit the document’s layout.
4. Occasional changes in font (such as italics, bold, a different typeface) may be used, but with caution. They can, however, put some emphasis on the tabular part.
5. Do not use too many text-tables in one document or on one page.
6. In addition to the above rules, apply rules for formatting regular tables. For example, numbers should be given in 2-3 effective digits; ordering rows by size and their correct alignment will facilitate reading and comparison of values; space between columns should be neither too wide nor too narrow.

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