

How to ace a podium presentation: top tips

Does the thought of giving a presentation turn your legs to jelly? Would you love to share your work with your peers but can't pluck up the courage? Then this article is for you. To help quell your nerves and improve your skills next time you step up to the podium we have invited two award-winning trainee urologists to give you their top tips.



Alexander Light,
NIHR Doctoral Fellow, Imperial Prostate,
Imperial College London; St4 Urology
Registrar, North West London, UK.

Podium presentations are hard, and the environment is often intimidating – some topics will remain polarising for the rest of time! These five tips might be helpful for making sure you thrive in these situations:

- 1. Keep it simple.** You could have done a truly impressive and highly complex piece of research, but if you cannot summarise it within a few sentences, you will instantly lose your audience. The key is to provide just enough detail to outline what you have done but without going off tangent, particularly with complex methodology. Unlike a paper, where you can dedicate as much time as you like to outlining complex methodology, in a short presentation you have to keep it very simple.
- 2. Speak slowly.** If you speak too quickly you will lose the audience, especially if you do need to explain anything complex. Furthermore, if you are presenting at an international meeting like the EAU, you should be conscious that the international audience may have different levels of English proficiency and / or may not speak English as quickly as we would in the UK. Speaking at a measured pace becomes paramount.
- 3. Provide clear take home messages.** You did this work . . . so what? Why is this important for the audience? Do not just summarise the findings from the data, try and translate that into actionable points that can be taken into clinical practice. However, make sure you avoid hyperbole. Making sweeping statements with your final words that are not substantiated by your data will inevitably lead to a fiery question session!
- 4. Perfect your 'photo' slide.** The best presentations have a key slide at the end the audience tend to photo, reuse, and share. This usually includes a neat summary figure and one or two key messages.
- 5. Anticipate the common questions.** When undertaking the research, you will inevitably have identified some unsolvable issues that limit your work. Make note of those and understand their significance. Many audience questions tend to centre around identifying holes in your work – discovering what those holes are for the first time whilst on stage will put you in a difficult position.



Aswathy Pavithran,
Core Surgical Trainee, Royal Derby Hospital, UK.

As a urology core trainee, I've experienced both the highs and lows of podium presentations – some nerve-wracking, others rewarding. I know firsthand how daunting it can feel, especially early in your career. Here are some tips that have helped me, shaped by my own experiences and feedback:

- 1. Preparation.** Follow the conference guidelines and use their slide template – it makes your presentation look polished. Use bullet points, images, or graphs instead of paragraphs of text. Practise your talk several times, focusing on timing and delivery. Visualising your audience and rehearsing in front of peers builds confidence and sharpens your content.
- 2. Delivery.** Knowing your content thoroughly is crucial for a seamless delivery. Begin with a rehearsed introduction to ease your nerves and establish a good flow. Speak clearly, maintain a steady pace, and use voice modulation to keep your audience engaged. Make eye contact to connect with your listeners, and avoid reading directly from your slides, as it can come across as unprepared. Simplifying complex concepts will also help maintain your audience's interest and understanding throughout.
- 3. Tailor your content.** Know your audience. For a urology conference, skip basic definitions and focus on the clinical relevance of your work. A sharp, relevant introduction will hook your audience.
- 4. Handling questions.** The Q&A session can feel like the toughest part, but it's a chance to shine. Listen carefully, answer clearly, and admit if you don't know something. Ask mentors to challenge you with tough questions during preparation.
- 5. On the day.** I've learned the hard way how important it is to familiarise yourself with the setup. Once, I had my notes on PowerPoint and was unable to use them as I had to use a microphone and pointer instead and had to recall everything from memory – it was a scramble! Arriving early to familiarise yourself with the setup can save unnecessary stress and let you focus on delivery.

Grab every opportunity to deliver podium presentations as it is your chance to showcase your work, continue building your presentation skills and leave a lasting impression.



SECTION EDITOR

Kelly Ong,
ST3 in North Central & East London.
kelly.ong@nhs.net