RTC Seminar Instructions for Presenters

Thank you for volunteering to present at the upcoming RTC trainee seminar!

The objective of the RTC seminars is to provide a forum for trainees to present their work to their peers and the wider research community. We hope that the seminars will help generate a stimulating environment by creating intellectual buzz and promoting collaborations. Consider this event as an opportunity, rather than extra stress, and use your presentation to get your data and thoughts organized, obtain useful input and practice discussing your study. Please note, that until further notice, the presentations will be held via zoom.

Benefits of presenting at an RTC seminar:
- Practice your presentation and communication skills, get prepared for conferences or committee meetings, get experience in answering questions;
- Generate presentation-quality figures which will help you to assess progress, critically evaluate the quality and completeness of your data, notice gaps in the research, and give you a head start on writing publications/thesis;
- Find common topics with the audience and initiate collaborations;
- Generate and foster new ideas;
- Get feedback via an anonymous form that attendees fill out.

Before your presentation:
A couple of weeks before your presentation you will be asked to send your title and a brief blurb (just a few sentences) describing your topic and methodology to the RTC coordinator (**Sophie Koch**, rtc@smh.ca). Please give us a very brief blurb about your study, so we can highlight the key techniques and approaches you are using. We will use this description to promote the upcoming seminar in our Newsletter and on social media.

Learning objectives - optimize your message and educate your audience:
Please keep in mind that as you are presenting, you are also teaching your audience. Seminars allow attendees to learn about various topics, get new ideas, see how other projects evolve, and find out about approaches and ways to troubleshoot. Methods and approaches can also connect seemingly unrelated topics and may help you to connect with other researchers. Regular participation at the seminars can help trainees familiarize themselves with a diverse array of methods, which is useful for reading research papers and finding new approaches for their own projects.

Please prepare your presentation with these important learning objectives in mind. When explaining your topic, please remember how it feels to be an audience member. Provide all information you would need at a listener to follow the presentation.

Tips for preparing your presentation:

Unpublished data can be sensitive. Therefore, always discuss with your supervisor what data to present. As ongoing work is discussed at the seminars, recording the talks or taking pictures of the slides is forbidden unless you obtain permission from the presenter and the supervisor.

Time limit:
Each RTC seminar session will have two presentations, each 20-25 min long, with 5-10 min for questions (30 min/presenter total). The discussion will be stopped after 30 min. If you go over time with your presentation, discussion time will be shorter. It is not recommended to have more than 20 slides for this presentation.

Presenting to a non-expert audience:
Please make your presentations accessible for people with all kind of research backgrounds and all levels of experience. DO NOT use your unchanged committee meeting presentation, which was prepared for experts as much of the audience will not be able to follow it.

Introduction: Provide background information to explain your topic. Describe what is already known and state what the key knowledge gaps are. Briefly summarize previous work by you/your group that lead to your project. Explain significance of the question. Clearly describe the *rationale* for the study.

Research question(s) and goals: Research question(s) or hypothesis should be clearly stated (it is recommended to use a separate slide for this). Define *overall objectives and specific aims.*

Methods: Please clearly explain the methods and approaches you used. A separate methods section for this talk is not necessary; however, please make sure to summarize the essence of the method before explaining the specific data.

Results and conclusions: Do not rush through the details. Clearly presented data with sufficient details are essential for the audience to assess whether the conclusions are valid.

Developing methods, troubleshooting: Remember, setting up, adapting and validating new methods are essential aspects of any research project. So is troubleshooting. These are time consuming and important steps that are often undervalued. It is common for trainees to feel that during these essential stages they "have no data". This is not true! Troubleshooting and method validation provide vital controls and support credibility of the data. Therefore, these should be discussed, especially if you need feedback and advice.

Interpretation, summary, conclusions, perspective: Your final conclusion slides should not only summarize findings, but also put them into perspective and highlight some open questions. The discussion may initiate new ideas, and prompt feedback on potential gaps, questions, directions. Unlike for a committee meeting, listing future plans is not essential, although it can be useful for your discussion (also see below). You can involve the audience in brainstorming and use their collective expertise to get ideas about your project.

…"But I do not have enough data!"
Trainees discuss ongoing work, at different stages of completion. Although most presenters have already been working on their projects for some time, projects often run into difficulties and many presenters struggle with the dreaded "I don't have enough data" feeling. However, this is not likely to be true: you probably have lots of data, although these may not yet be complete or fully conclusive. If discussing these, be open about their incompleteness. *A research project is a journey, and how you reach a conclusion is as important as the conclusion itself*. Therefore, if your study is not completed yet, you should discuss your project plans, explain the basis for the questions, highlight the approaches you are using and their validation and talk about initial findings. Draw conclusions where possible and explain what is needed to make the study conclusive (e.g., more repetitions). Remember, troubleshooting and methods validation are essential parts of your work.

Contact Sophie at rtc@smh.ca if you have any questions!