

EDITORIAL

How effective are research titles in promoting the visibility and citation impact of healthcare innovations?

Sumarno Adi Subrata 

Author information

Department of Nursing, Universitas Muhammadiyah Magelang, Indonesia

 adisubrata@ummgl.ac.id

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Abstract

Research titles are often the first point of contact between a scientific contribution and its potential readers. In healthcare innovation, a well title can play an important role in determining whether a study attracts interest, reaches its intended audience, and becomes part of subsequent scholarly discussions. Yet, the importance of titles is sometimes underestimated with authors devoting attention to study design, data analysis, and manuscript preparation. This editorial examines the role of research titles in shaping the discoverability, visibility, and potential citation impact of healthcare innovation studies. A clear and informative title helps readers recognise a study's relevance, enables search engines and bibliographic databases to retrieve it more effectively, and communicates its central contribution without requiring readers to examine the full text. Titles that identify the innovation, target population, clinical context, or principal research focus may therefore offer practical advantages over those that rely on vague expressions, excessive technical terminology, or unnecessarily elaborate wording. However, visibility should not be confused with scientific influence. Although an engaging title may encourage readers to explore a publication, citation patterns also depend on methodological rigour, originality, clinical relevance, accessibility, journal readership, and the wider development of the field. Titles must consequently balance discoverability with accuracy, avoiding exaggerated claims or promotional language that overstates the significance of the findings. From an editorial perspective, title quality deserves greater consideration during manuscript preparation and peer review, particularly for research intended to inform clinical practice, healthcare policy, or future innovation. Editors and authors share a responsibility to ensure that titles are concise, precise, informative, and faithful to the evidence presented. At last, a research title cannot guarantee recognition or citations, but it can help ensure that healthcare innovations are more readily found, correctly understood, and meaningfully considered by the scientific community.

Keywords: Citation impact, healthcare innovation, research titles, research visibility, scientific publishing

A research title is more than a label attached to a scientific manuscript (Bowman & Kinnan, 2018). It is the first opportunity for researchers to communicate the purpose, relevance, and potential contribution to the scientific community (Walsh, 2014). Before readers examine an abstract, evaluate a methodology, or consider the implications of a study, they usually encounter its title. This initial encounter can influence whether they decide to explore the publication further, particularly in an academic environment characterised by an increasing volume of scientific literature (Tullu, 2019). For healthcare innovations, the importance of this first impression deserves particular attention because innovations often emerge at the intersection of clinical practice, technological development, healthcare management, patient experience, and scientific investigation. A study may present a promising solution to a clinical problem, introduce a new approach to patient care, or demonstrate an improvement in healthcare delivery, yet its contribution may receive limited attention if the title does not communicate its relevance clearly. The contemporary research environment presents a substantial challenge for authors seeking to ensure that the findings reach the appropriate audience. Scientific databases, institutional repositories, academic search engines, and digital publishing platforms provide access to an enormous range of publications (Kohn, 2025). This accessibility has created opportunities for knowledge exchange, but it has also increased competition for readers' attention. Researchers frequently identify relevant publications by scanning titles in search results, examining reference lists, or reviewing the contents of scientific journals. Under these circumstances, a title that clearly identifies the research topic and its significance may help readers distinguish a relevant publication from alternatives (Grant, 2013).

However, a title that is vague, unnecessarily complicated, or poorly aligned with the study's central contribution may make an otherwise publication more difficult to recognise (Pottier et al., 2024).

This issue of preparing the title is particularly relevant to healthcare innovation as the value of research frequently depends on its capacity to present research quality. Innovations in nursing, clinical treatment, diagnostic procedures, rehabilitation, digital health, patient safety, and healthcare organisation require attention from diverse audiences, including clinicians, researchers, educators, policymakers, and healthcare administrators (Hu et al., 2025). Each group approaches scientific literature with different questions and professional priorities. A well-constructed title can help these audiences recognise the potential relevance of a study without requiring them to interpret an ambiguous description. In this sense, the title functions as an important communication link between the production of scientific knowledge and its subsequent use (Chandra & Chandra, 2025). Nevertheless, the relationship between research titles and citation impact requires careful consideration. A publication does not become scientifically influential simply because its title is attractive or contains frequently searched terms. Citations reflect multiple processes, including the originality of the research question, methodological quality, relevance to current scientific debates, accessibility of the publication, and the extent to which other researchers can build upon its findings (August et al., 2026). The argument of this editorial is therefore that research titles should be understood as an important component of scholarly communication rather than an independent determinant of research success. Their effectiveness lies in helping relevant readers discover, recognise, and understand a scientific contribution.

The research title as the first point of scientific communication

Scientific communication begins before a reader reaches the body of a manuscript. A title establishes the initial framework through which a study is interpreted and provides a preliminary indication of its subject, scope, and intended contribution (Soni, 2023). Although this function may appear straightforward, writing an effective research title requires judgement and critical thinking. Authors must communicate sufficient information to distinguish their work from related publications without overwhelming readers with unnecessary detail. They must also balance technical precision with accessibility, particularly when their research addresses problems that cross disciplinary boundaries (Matsubara, 2024). In healthcare innovation, this balance can be especially challenging because new interventions and technologies are often described using specialised terminology. A study examining a novel wound assessment application, an artificial intelligence system for identifying diabetic foot complications, or a family-centred intervention for chronic disease management may involve technical concepts that are unfamiliar to some potential readers. A title dominated by complex terminology may communicate precision to a narrow group of specialists while making the study less accessible to clinicians or researchers working in related fields. At the same time, replacing established scientific terms with vague expressions may reduce the title's informational value.

An effective title should therefore identify the essential subject of the investigation using terminology that is both scientifically appropriate and understandable to its intended audience (Tantry & Garg, 2025). The objective is not to make every title appealing to every reader, but to warrant that readers can recognise the publication's relevance. For example, a title describing an artificial intelligence-based approach to diabetic foot ulcer assessment communicates a more identifiable clinical problem than a title referring to technological transformation in healthcare. The former provides a clearer starting point for readers interested in diabetic foot care, clinical decision support, digital health, and wound management. The distinction between an informative title and an attractive title is also fundamental. Attractive wording may encourage curiosity, but curiosity alone does not establish scientific relevance. Titles that use dramatic expressions or broad claims can create expectations that the study is unable to fulfil. An innovation described as revolutionary, transformative, or practice-changing should provide evidence proportionate to such claims. Otherwise, the title risks creating a discrepancy between the promise of the publication and the findings reported in the manuscript. For editors, this distinction has practical implications. A title should not be evaluated solely according to whether it sounds interesting or memorable. Its scientific accuracy, specificity, clarity, and consistency with the research design are equally important. The strongest title is one that attracts appropriate attention because it communicates a meaningful contribution, not because it exaggerates the importance of the findings (Bahadoran et al., 2019).

Discoverability in an increasingly digital research environment

The discoverability of scientific publications has become an essential consideration in contemporary academic publishing (Minteer, 2022). Researchers rarely identify all relevant studies by reading entire journals from beginning to end. Instead, they commonly use bibliographic databases, academic search engines, electronic journal platforms, and reference management systems to identify publications relevant to a particular question. These systems allow researchers to search

by keywords, phrases, authors, publication titles, and other bibliographic information. Consequently, the language used in a research title can contribute to how readily a publication is recognised during the literature discovery process. The relationship between titles and discoverability should not, however, be reduced to the inclusion of as many keywords as possible. Search systems use different indexing and ranking mechanisms, and the title is only one component of the information available for retrieving a publication. Abstracts, author-selected keywords, subject classifications, references, metadata, and the broader relevance of the publication may also influence whether a study appears in a particular search (Demner-Fushman et al., 2005). A title that contains numerous keywords but lacks a coherent meaning is unlikely to provide the best foundation for scholarly communication. Authors should instead identify the principal concepts that define their research and incorporate the most appropriate terms. In a study of a digital intervention for preventing pressure injuries among hospitalised patients, for example, the central concepts may include the intervention, the clinical outcome, and the patient population. The title need not include every methodological detail or related concept. Its purpose is to establish the study's identity clearly enough for readers and search systems to recognise its relevance.

Terminological consistency is equally important (Golgolnia et al., 2024). Healthcare research frequently uses alternative expressions for similar concepts, although the preferred terminology may differ across specialties, countries, and professional communities. Authors should consider established clinical terminology and the language commonly used by their intended readership. When an innovation introduces a new term, it may be necessary to combine that term with a familiar clinical concept so that readers can understand its relevance. This approach can be particularly useful for emerging technologies that have not yet developed a consistent vocabulary across the scientific literature. The international character of healthcare research introduces another consideration. A publication may be highly relevant to a particular national healthcare system although also offering implications for researchers in other countries (Muula, 2007). Titles that depend on unexplained local abbreviations, institution-specific terminology, or unfamiliar expressions may restrict recognition among international readers. Providing sufficient context without making the title excessively long can improve its interpretability across different settings. Discoverability is not synonymous with search engine optimisation in its narrow commercial sense. Scientific publications should not be treated as products whose visibility must be maximised at any cost. Their discoverability should serve the responsible dissemination of knowledge. The appropriate objective is to make relevant research easier to identify while preserving the accuracy and integrity of its scientific message.

From visibility to reader engagement

Discoverability creates an opportunity for a publication to be considered, but it does not guarantee that readers will examine the full text. Once a study appears in a search result, readers must decide whether its apparent relevance justifies further attention. The title can support this decision by communicating the clinical problem, the innovation being investigated, or the knowledge gap the research addresses (Zareivenovel et al., 2024). This function is particularly important for healthcare professionals, who frequently work under substantial time constraints. Clinicians, nurses, and healthcare managers may need to locate evidence that can inform a specific decision without having sufficient time to examine every potentially relevant publication (Sevy Majers & Warshawsky, 2020). A title that identifies the population, intervention, clinical setting, or outcome may help them determine whether the study warrants further examination. The same principle applies to researchers conducting systematic reviews, who must identify potentially eligible studies efficiently before assessing their full reports.

A title should offer enough information to support an initial judgement of relevance without attempting to summarise the entire study. Overly broad titles can make it difficult to determine whether a publication addresses the reader's question. Narrow titles may obscure implications in the immediate setting. The appropriate degree of specificity depends on the research question, the design, and the intended audience. Consider a hypothetical study evaluating a nurse-led digital intervention to support medication adherence among adults with diabetes. A general title referring to digital innovation in chronic disease management may attract attention from a broad audience, but it provides little information about the intervention or the outcome. A more specific title identifying the nurse-led intervention, the target population, and medication adherence would allow readers to make a more informed initial assessment. Such specificity does not guarantee greater readership, but it provides a clearer basis for identifying the study's relevance. The title may also shape readers' expectations about the nature of the evidence (Wager et al., 2016; Letchford et al., 2015). However, including the design in every title is not necessarily required. The decision should depend on whether this information improves clarity and interpretation. Reader engagement depends on the relationship between the title and the content that follows. A clear title may encourage a reader to open the abstract, but the abstract must then provide a consistent account of the research question, methods, results, and conclusions. If the title promises a major clinical benefit that the findings

do not demonstrate, the resulting discrepancy may undermine trust. Effective titles contribute to engagement when they establish accurate expectations and generate attention through clear language.

Understanding the relationship between titles and citation impact

Citation impact is frequently used as an indicator of scholarly attention, although its interpretation requires considerable caution (Aroeira & Castanho, 2020). A citation occurs when a subsequent publication refers to an earlier study, usually because that study provides relevant evidence, a theoretical foundation, a methodological approach, or a point of comparison. Citations can reflect recognition of a valuable contribution, but they do not necessarily indicate agreement, methodological excellence, or direct clinical influence (Bornmann & Marx, 2013). Some studies are cited because their findings are controversial, limited, or inconsistent with subsequent evidence. Within this understanding, a research title may contribute to citation opportunities by helping researchers identify relevant publications. If a title communicates the research topic clearly, other investigators may be more likely to recognise its relevance when conducting literature searches or preparing manuscripts. The resulting relationship is indirect. A title can facilitate the initial discovery of a study, but the study's scientific contribution must provide a reason for subsequent researchers to cite it.

The distinction between facilitating citations and generating citations is important for authors and editors (Ngatuva et al., 2021). A title cannot compensate for an unclear research question, inappropriate methods, unreliable measurements, insufficient analysis, or conclusions that exceed the available evidence. A study may receive limited attention if it addresses a specialised question or is published in a context with relatively few active researchers. Citation patterns are shaped by the interaction of multiple scientific, social, and publishing-related factors (Ray et al., 2024). The characteristics of the research field also matter. Studies addressing investigated conditions, developing technologies, or major public health priorities may have access to larger potential readerships than studies addressing rare conditions or highly specialised clinical questions. Review articles may attract citations because they synthesise evidence across numerous studies (Amobonye et al., 2024), whereas primary research articles may be cited more selectively. These differences complicate attempts to attribute citation outcomes to titles alone. Publication age introduces an additional consideration. A recently published article has had less time to accumulate citations than a study published several years earlier. Citation practices also vary across disciplines, journal types, and research methods. Comparisons based solely on raw citation counts may therefore produce misleading conclusions about the relative effectiveness of different titles.

For these reasons, claims that a particular title structure necessarily increases citations should be supported by appropriate empirical evidence. Observations that highly cited articles often have certain title characteristics do not establish that those characteristics caused the citation advantage. Highly influential studies may receive citations because of their originality, importance, or timing, while their titles simply reflect the conventions of the field. Authors can improve clarity, precision, and relevance through careful title construction, even though they cannot control how frequently their publications will ultimately be cited.

The distinctive challenges of titles for healthcare innovations

Healthcare innovation encompasses a wide range of activities, from developing new diagnostic tools and digital platforms to introducing changes in nursing practice, rehabilitation, patient education, and healthcare organisation (Thacharodi et al., 2024). Unlike research that primarily advances theoretical understanding, innovation research often seeks to demonstrate how a new approach might address an existing problem (Brewster et al., 2021). A title must identify the innovation without making the work inaccessible to readers who do not share the authors' technical background. In studies involving artificial intelligence, for example, the specific computational method may be important to informatics researchers. Although, clinicians may be more interested in the condition being assessed, the clinical task being supported, and the intended application. An effective title should reflect the central purpose of the study rather than prioritising the technology over the healthcare problem it is intended to address.

This principle is particularly relevant to nursing research. Innovations in nursing are sometimes presented primarily in terms of technological novelty, with insufficient attention to patient experience, clinical judgement, professional responsibilities, or the organisation of care. Yet the value of a nursing innovation cannot be established solely by demonstrating that a new tool or procedure exists. Its significance may depend on whether it supports safer care, improves communication, strengthens patient participation, reduces avoidable workload, or addresses an unmet clinical need. A title describing an artificial intelligence system for wound assessment, for example, should distinguish between developing the system, testing its diagnostic performance, evaluating its usability, and examining its effect on clinical outcomes. These are different research objectives and represent different levels of evidence. Describing a preliminary development study as evidence that an innovation improves patient outcomes would misrepresent the contribution of the

research. By contrast, a title that accurately identifies the innovation and the aspect being evaluated helps readers understand what has been established and what remains uncertain.

The same principle applies to studies of complementary therapies, mobile health applications, remote monitoring, and new models of family-centred care. An innovation may demonstrate feasibility or acceptability without establishing effectiveness. It may improve a surrogate outcome without demonstrating a reduction in complications, hospital admissions, or mortality. The title should preserve these distinctions because they influence how clinicians, researchers, and decision-makers interpret the evidence. Healthcare innovation titles should also avoid implying that technological novelty is inherently beneficial. New interventions require evaluation in relation to clinical need, safety, equity, cost, implementation feasibility, and patient preferences. A title that identifies the intended application without assuming a successful outcome provides a more credible foundation for subsequent scientific discussion. In this way, effective title construction contributes not only to visibility but also to the responsible interpretation of innovation research. A useful title generally identifies the principal subject and, where necessary, clarifies the population, setting, intervention, or outcome. The relative importance of these elements depends on the study. A clinical trial may benefit from identifying the intervention and target population, whereas a qualitative study may need to communicate the phenomenon of interest and the participants' experiences. A methodological paper may require greater emphasis on the technique being developed or evaluated.

Authors should also consider whether abbreviations improve or hinder understanding. Familiar abbreviations may be appropriate in specialised fields, but uncommon abbreviations can create unnecessary barriers for readers outside a narrow professional community. Similarly, technical expressions should be retained when they are necessary for scientific precision, but unnecessary jargon should be removed when a more direct expression conveys the same meaning. The use of questions in titles requires similar judgement. Question-based titles can be effective when they communicate a clearly defined scientific problem. However, a question should not be used merely to create suspense. In empirical research, the title should identify the subject sufficiently clearly for readers to understand what was investigated. For editorials, perspectives, and conceptual discussions, a question may provide an appropriate framework for critical reflection, provided that the article develops a substantive argument rather than simply repeating the question. Punctuation and title structure also deserve attention, although they should not be treated as independent indicators of quality. A colon can separate a general theme from a more specific description, while a single descriptive phrase may be sufficient for a straightforward study. Neither structure is universally superior. The most appropriate choice is the one that communicates the research clearly while conforming to the journal's requirements.

The role of journal editors in improving title quality

Journal editors in an important position between the production of research and its dissemination to the scientific community (Vaishya et al., 2025). The responsibilities include evaluating the relevance, originality, methodological quality, and reporting standards of submitted manuscripts (Caellegh, 1993). Title assessment should form part of this broader editorial process rather than being treated as a cosmetic exercise performed after the scientific review has been completed. At the initial screening stage, editors can assess whether the title communicates the manuscript's principal subject and aligns with the journal's scope. A manuscript submitted to a nursing journal, for example, may investigate an advanced diagnostic technology but provide limited information about its relevance to nursing practice. If the study genuinely contributes to nursing knowledge, the title may need to communicate that connection more clearly. If the research does not address the journal's disciplinary focus, changing the title alone will not resolve the underlying problem of scope.

During peer review, editors can encourage reviewers to assess whether the title accurately represents the research question, study design, population, and principal findings. This does not mean that every title must follow a uniform structure. Rather, reviewers should identify ambiguities, unsupported claims, or omissions that materially affect interpretation. Their recommendations should be based on scientific communication rather than personal preferences about wording. Editorial guidance can also help authors understand the difference between improving discoverability and attempting to manipulate citation outcomes. Journals may encourage the use of clear terminology, appropriate keywords, and accurate descriptions of the research contribution. However, they should avoid promising that particular words or structures will increase citations unless such claims are supported by relevant evidence. The title may also require reconsideration when a manuscript undergoes major revision. Changes to the research question, interpretation, or presentation of results can alter the central contribution of a paper. Editors should ensure that the final title reflects the accepted manuscript rather than retaining wording developed before the study's findings were fully interpreted. For Editors-in-Chief, title quality represents an opportunity to strengthen the journal's overall communication standards. A

journal's scientific reputation depends primarily on the quality and integrity of the work it publishes, but the clarity of its titles also affects how effectively that work can be identified and understood. Although the importance of title quality can be argued conceptually, the question of how effective titles is in promoting visibility and citation impact requires empirical investigation. It is suggested that a clear title may improve recognition of a publication's relevance, but the extent to which this translates into additional readership or citations remains an empirical question.

Conclusion

Research titles occupy a small space in a manuscript, but they perform an important function in the communication of knowledge. They introduce the research question, establish initial expectations, and help readers determine whether a publication merits further attention. In healthcare innovation, a clear and informative title can support the recognition and dissemination of findings. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of a title should not be judged solely by its attractiveness or its association with citation counts. Discoverability, reader engagement, and citation impact represent related but distinct outcomes, each influenced by factors extending beyond the title itself. A good title may create an opportunity for a study to be found and considered, but the scientific quality, originality, relevance, and usefulness of the research ultimately determine its contribution to the literature. For authors, this means approaching title writing as a substantive component of manuscript preparation rather than a final administrative task. For editors and reviewers, it means evaluating titles according to their clarity, accuracy, relevance, and consistency with the evidence. For the research community, it means recognising that visibility is important when it supports the responsible exchange and application of knowledge, not when it becomes an end in itself. Until stronger evidence establishes the extent of these relationships, claims about the citation advantages of particular title structures should remain measured and evidence-based. The central editorial principle is straightforward: a research title cannot guarantee that a healthcare innovation will be recognised or cited, but it can help promote that the innovation is presented, discovered by the appropriate audience, and evaluated on the merits of its scientific contribution.

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AI statements

The author did not use artificial intelligence (AI) to formulate the ideas presented in this article. The manuscript reflects the author's own intellectual contributions and critical thinking that supported by relevant literature.

Availability of data and materials

All data and information presented in this article are derived from the references cited in the reference list. In addition, some statements reflect the author's own critical thinking and analysis, informed by personal experience in developing titles for scholarly publications.

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There is no conflict interest to declare.

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This editorial present suggestions and recommendations for healthcare innovation researchers on how to develop effective titles for their scholarly publications.

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Editor's perspective

Innovation points

- A clear, informative, and well-structured title can improve the discoverability of healthcare innovation studies in academic databases and search engines.
- Titles that communicate the central innovation, target population, or clinical relevance may attract a wider readership and create opportunities for citation.
- Authors, reviewers, and journal editors should ensure that titles are concise, accurate, searchable, and engaging without exaggerating the novelty or significance of the research.

Potential areas of interest

- How much does a research title influence the discoverability and visibility of healthcare innovation studies in academic databases and search engines?
- Do titles that emphasize innovation, clinical relevance, or practical implications receive more citations than conventional, descriptive research titles?
- What role should journal editors and peer reviewers play in improving research titles to enhance scholarly visibility while maintaining scientific accuracy and integrity?

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