

## CHAPTER 16

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### *THE DISCUSSION/COMMENT*

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#### **Purpose of the Discussion**

Authors should begin writing the Discussion immediately after they are comfortable that they have generated a draft of the Results section that approximates what will be presented in the final manuscript. Earlier, we indicated that the Materials and Methods section should be written after the Results section, but this does not necessarily suggest that it needs to be written *immediately* after the Results section. Writing the Materials and Methods section is usually a rather straightforward (but nevertheless important) task that does not require a great deal of intellectual creativity. In contrast, for the Discussion, it is critical to sustain the intellectual momentum generated while producing the Results section since the Discussion is where the importance of the results is emphasized. The fundamental goals of the Discussion are:

To provide readers with the *answer* to the question that has been clearly defined in the Introduction, to briefly review the findings presented in the current study that were used to generate this answer, and to convince readers that generating this answer was important.

#### **Writing the Discussion**

##### **Importance of the Opening Sentence**

In order to accomplish these goals efficiently, the very first sentence of the Discussion should be used to communicate the most important finding of the current study. This should, in principle, be the answer to the question communicated in the Introduction. In Chapter 10, we strongly suggested that the very first step in the preparation of any manuscript, should be to write a single sentence describing the “take-home” lesson of the manuscript, specifically:

“The single essential piece of new knowledge that I want all readers of the manuscript to come away with is that.....”

The first sentence of the discussion should closely approximate this sentence. The introductory wording of the sentence should change, as indicated below, but the remainder of the sentence should be roughly the same, specifically,

“The most important conclusions from the current study are that.....”

Consider a manuscript with the following question/problem statement in the Introduction: “It has been well documented that there is a significant positive association between total body mass and bone min-