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Abstracts must be structured and use the following headings: **Study objective; Design; Setting; Patients (or Participants); Main results; Conclusions.** It is very important that the abstract is properly prepared in accordance with the guidelines for structured abstracts published in *Annals of Internal Medicine* 1987; 106: 596–604. In particular, **Design** must include as many of the following terms as apply: randomised; non-randomised; double blind; placebo controlled; crossover; before-after trial; inception cohort; cohort; case-control; survey; case series; cost-effectiveness analysis; cost-benefit analysis; retrospective; prospective. **Patients (Participants)** must include numbers studied, the proportion of participants who completed the study, and the numbers of eligible subjects approached who refused to participate. Characteristics of matched groups should be specified.

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2 Armitage P, Berry G. Statistical methods in medical research. Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1987: 194.

3 Wisniewski HM, Sturman JA. Neurotoxicity of aluminum. In: Gitelmad HJ, ed. Aluminum and health. A critical review. New York: Marcel Decker, 1989: 125–6.

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