Writing for Publication—What you need to know to get article published.

Usha Chauhan NP
McMaster Medical Centre
CSGNA October 4th 2104

Objectives

• Outline necessary steps required for publishing an article
• Review useful tips on writing for publication
• Discuss reasons why the manuscript is rejected
• Provide an overview of writing an abstract and prepare a poster

How many of you have published?

What did publish?
Why publish?

- To share knowledge and expertise
- To disseminate research
- Report an interesting case
- To express an opinion, share ideas, generate discussion
- To expand our knowledge
- Provide evidence on which practice can be based
- Assert “ownership” of a topic
- Contribute to dialogue
- Advance one’s discipline
- Gain intellectual stimulation
- Enhance one’s personal reputation, self satisfaction
- For promotion or job expectations
- To express views on professional issues

Keen, A. Nurse Education Today (2007) 27, 382–388

“Sharing what you know is an act of generosity and sharing what you do will renew your passion for nursing”

Heinrich, K.T. American Nurse Today 2009 Volume 4, Number 8

Why nurses do not publish?

Nurses in clinical practice:
1. Fail to recognize the value of written communication as a way of sharing valuable knowledge expertise with others.
2. View writing for publication as difficult and daunting task, reserved only for those in academia
3. Deter the novice writer
4. Busy nurses may have little time to devote to writing for publication.
5. Favour oral communication over the written word
6. Lack of confidence

What are some types of publication?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of publication</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book reviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>Letters</td>
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<td>Opinion pieces</td>
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<td>Editorials</td>
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<td>Reflections</td>
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<td>Case study</td>
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<td>Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literature reviews</td>
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<td>Systematic reviews</td>
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<td>Discussion papers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abstracts for conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>Posters for conference</td>
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John W. Albarran, J.W. & Scholes, J. British Association of Critical Care Nurses, Nursing in Critical Care 2005 • Vol 10 No 2

Hierarchy of evidence

### Hierarchy of Evidence for Intervention Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of evidence</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Systematic review or metaanalysis</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>A synthesis of evidence from all relevant randomized, controlled trials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randomized, controlled trial</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>An experiment in which subjects are randomized to a treatment group or control group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlled trial without randomization</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>An experiment in which subjects are nonrandomly assigned to a treatment group or control group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case control or cohort study</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Case-control study: a comparison of subjects with a condition (cases) with those who don’t have the condition (controls) to determine characteristics that might predict the condition. Cohort study: an observation of a group(s) (cohort[s]) to determine the development of an outcome(s) such as a disease.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systematic review of qualitative or descriptive studies</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>Qualitative study: gathers data on human behavior to understand why and how decisions are made. Descriptive study: provides background information on the what, where, and when of a topic of interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion or non-consensus</td>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Authoritative opinion of expert committee.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Hierarchy of evidence: ranking of research evidence evaluating health care interventions

![Hierarchy Diagram](image)

Evans, D 2003, Journal of Clinical Nursing 12: 77-84

### Before you start: Ask?

- What am I writing about?
- Who am I writing for?
- Why am I telling them?
- Where will I publish the article?

Albarran JW & Scholes, J. British Association of Critical Care Nurses, Nursing in Critical Care 2005 • Vol 10 No 2
What am I writing about?

• Write about something you know.
• Sometimes taking an active role:
  – Reporting the results of an audit you instigated
  – Implementation of practice guidelines
  – Case study
  – Unusual clinical condition
  – Nursing care delivered.

Who am I writing for?

• Who will be interested in your article?

Why am I telling them this?

Conducting a literature review on the topic:

• Is your idea unique?
• Previous publications on the topic?
Where do you want your article published?

- Target journal
  - Broad-Based Peer-Reviewed Journal
  - Specialty Oriented Peer-Reviewed Journals
  - Controlled-Circulation Journals
  - Online Journals
- Type of article
- Impact factor

Developing and framing the publication

Stage 1
Why did we start?

Stage 2
What did we do?
- Design questionnaire
- Organize a literature review
- Implement and review guidelines
- Undertook sampling and data collection

Stage 3
What we found?

Stage 4
What does this mean?
- What is the implication to practice
- Issue for policy change
- Opportunities for future research


Cronin, P et al, British Journal of Nursing, 2008, Vol 17, No 1
Getting started to write

Stages of writing

- There are three stages to the writing process:
  - Preparation
  - Writing
  - Rewriting and submitting
Preparation

• Identify the author or authors
  – Agree division of work
  – Agree who is to be the first author
• Considering the target audience
• Select an appropriate journal
• Read the journals philosophy statement
• Consider the style used for articles published in the journal
• Read the editors “Guidelines for authors”

Keen, K. Nurse Education Today (2007) 27, 382–388

Writing

• Plan, structure and outline based on author’s guidelines
• Select appropriate content
• Write a draft including (or starting with) the abstract
  – Avoid academic jargon
  – Be clear – avoid overcomplicating the issues
• Seek “trusted” opinions
• Revise the draft
• Repeat previous steps as necessary (Remember it does not need to be right first draft)

Keen, K. Nurse Education Today (2007) 27, 382–388

Free writing

• Let your thoughts flow, putting pen to paper and writing:
  – Write down whatever comes into your mind.
  – Don’t judge the quality of what you write
  – don’t worry about style, spelling, grammar or punctuation.
  – Can’t think of what to say, you write that down.
• Set limited time e.g. 15mins

http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/brainstorming/
Steps to Effective Writing

1. Control sentence length and style.
2. Trim all unnecessary words.
3. Include only one idea in each sentence.
4. Keep your words simple.
5. Put yourself in the reader’s shoes.
6. Use transitional words.
7. Use specific not abstract words.
8. Use positive, strong, colorful, definitive language.
9. Organize ideas and sentences.
10. Review, cut, review, cut.

Basics of scientific writing

• Careful word choices
  – Clarity
  – Simplicity
  – Accuracy
• Sentences that are direct and brief using active voice

Fahy, K. Women and Birth (2008) 21, 86—91
Simplicity and clarity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor word choice</th>
<th>Better word choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acquire</td>
<td>Get</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilize</td>
<td>Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted</td>
<td>Tried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascertain</td>
<td>Make sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsequent</td>
<td>Next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluminous Big</td>
<td>Large, Full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase</td>
<td>Buy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remainder</td>
<td>Rest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use active voice not passive

- **What is wrong with this sentence?**
  - Participants under aged 16, who did not get parental consent, were not recruited.

- **Improved**
  - I decided not to recruit participants under the age of 16 unless they also got parental consent.

- **How Improved?**
  - The message of the sentence concerns a judgment about who to recruit and why.
  - Using active voice makes the actor and the reason more clear. In active voice, version the 'I' is now the subject (not the participants).
  - The verb 'decided' is active and places the action on the verb that is most appropriate; 'decided' rather than 'recruited' as in the passive first sentence.

Use active voice not passive cont.

- **What is wrong with this sentence?**
  - When tobacco smoke is inhaled it takes 10-20 seconds for nicotine to be delivered to the central nervous system via arterial circulation.

- **Improved**
  - Nicotine takes 10—20 seconds to reach the brain after inhalation.

- **How Improved?**
  - The subject (nicotine) is first in sentence and is the actor.
  - In the first sentence ‘tobacco smoke’ was the subject whereas the actor was ‘nicotine’.
  - The verb reach is active in the second sentence whereas be delivered is passive.
Brevity

- We tend to write as we speak longwinded and convoluted
  - Become very dull and difficult to read
- Fewest words possible
- Too many words only confuse the reader
- Achieving brevity is the result of disciplined and consistent self-editing
- After 1st draft -- simplify what is written
- Re-write many of your original sentences and paragraphs to achieve clarity and brevity
- Assume several drafts before your paper is ready

Fahy, K. Women and Birth (2008) 21, 86—91

Structure of the publication

- Introduction - why did you ever start on this study?
- Methods – what did you actually do?
- Ethics – were your actions morally acceptable?
- Results – what did you discover?
- Discussion – so was it worthwhile?
- Clinical message – so what? Accompanying statements
- References – where can the reader find other parts of the greater story?
- Illustrations – making it more interesting

Nursing Times: Author Guidelines
www.elsevier.com/authors

Length of articles

- Based on the journals:
- Approximately 12 pages in length.
- The main text (not including abstract, Methods, References and figure legends) 5,000 words.
- The maximum title length is 15 words.
- The abstract — no more than 150-350 words long
  - No references
  - Serves both as a general introduction to the topic, brief, non-technical summary of the main results and their implications.

Nursing Times: Author Guidelines
www.elsevier.com/authors
Process for Submitting

- Proof read
- Re-read editors’ Guidelines for authors
- Format headings and figures
- Check referencing for consistency, correctness and style
- Gain copyright permissions where required
- Prepare title page
- List key words for the manuscript
- Submit according to instructions to one journal only
- Be patient and expect revision or rejection
- Make any changes as advised
- Re-submit amended manuscript

Keen, K. Nurse Education Today (2007) 27, 382–388

How does the review process work?

- Editors read manuscript for relevance, new knowledge, general quality, adherence to journal guidelines and readability.
- 2 or more reviewers are selected
  – attempts are made to match reviewers with subject matter and methodology as far as possible.
- Reviewers are given 2 weeks to respond and critique a manuscript.
- Approximately 4–6 weeks to provide thorough evaluation.
- From reviewers’ comments, the editor will accept, suggests amendments or reject the manuscript.
- Authors are given a period of time to submit a revision
- The Editor in Chief has the final say in acceptance for publication in the journal.

Editorial Nursing and Health Sciences 2013. 15, 263–264
Authorship

Authorship based on substantial contributions to:

a) Conception, design, analysis and interpretation of data
b) Drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content
c) Final approval of the version to be published

Conditions (a), (b) and (c) must all be met.

- Participation solely in the acquisition of funding or the collection of data does not justify authorship
- General supervision of the research group is also not sufficient for authorship
- Gift authorship: providing funding or overall supervision

- ‘Ghost authorship’: Professional medical writers sometimes called ‘ghost authors’
  - invited to draft reports
  - selected investigators review and revise and then append their name as authors.


Impact Factor (IF)

- IF is an imperfect evaluation of the standing of a journal amongst journals of a similar discipline
- Journal IF only considers the citation an article receives in the first two years after it is published.
- IF is important, as they are the standard currently accepted as a relative measure of a journal’s worth.
- IF is a function of the number of articles published in a journal as a measure of the number of citations for articles in that journal.

Nursing and Health Sciences 2013, 15, 263–264

Reasons why the publication is rejected
Reasons why the publication is rejected

**General errors**

- The article is not a good fit for the journal.
- Does not address an important issue.
- There is no new information presented.
- The same or a similar paper has already been published.
- The literature review is insufficient or lacking key articles.
- There is poor use of the English language.
- Contains many mistakes—typos, punctuation, inconsistencies.
- Did not follow the journal’s formatting guidelines.
- References are missing or outdated.
- The topic is too narrow.

*Hasse, J.M. 2013 Nutrition in Clinical Practice 28(2)*

Reasons why the publication is rejected cont.

**Errors specific to research papers**

- The problem statement is not clearly defined.
- The study used poor experimental design.
- Methods are insufficiently reported.
- Study is inadequately controlled.
- Sample size is too small.
- Results are over-interpreted.
- The wrong statistics were used to analyze the data.

*Hasse, J.M. 2013 Nutrition in Clinical Practice 28(2)*

Finally accepted!
Writing an abstract and preparing a poster

Abstract
- Title makes simplest statement about the content of your article
- The first impression
- 200-300 words, one printed page
- Abstract allows to elaborate
- Structure with headings often required
- Structured - purpose, methods, results conclusion two or three sentences.
Creating a scientific poster

• Communicates your research at a conference
• Is a visual presentation of information.
  – It should not simply reproduce your written paper at poster size.
• Should be understandable to the viewer without verbal explanation.

Know your audience

• In 3 seconds, a viewer decides whether to approach your poster or leave.
• Subject must be clearly understandable from at least 10 feet away.
• Use a statement, photograph, or diagram as a focal point to attract attention.
• In the next 30 seconds, the viewer decides if your content is worthy of further exploration.
  – Provide a clear flow of information from introduction to conclusion.
  – Focus on major findings—do not try to include everything you know.
  – Text should be concise enough to be read in under 10 minutes.

Organize Your Information

• Divide your information into main sections:
  Title—concise name of poster, contributors, organization
  Introduction—statement giving quick overview of poster
  Problem—statement of the problem
  Method—brief description of the processes and procedures
  Results—outcomes, findings, data
  Conclusion—summary, discussion of significance of results, a few easily remembered key conclusions
Take above sections and summarize its contents into 3 categories:
  Heading—title the audience will see first
  Statement—one sentence relating to the heading, the audience will read this definition and should have and understanding of this particular section
  Support Material—if the definition has sparked their interest, they will move on to this section which should include documentation and illustrations

http://www.soe.uoguelph.ca/webfiles/agalvez/poster/#3
Resources

- http://nursingeditors.com/
- http://www.nurseauthoreditor.com/
- https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/922/01/
- https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/567/01/
- Refworks

Summary

- Provided detailed outline and necessary steps required for publishing an article
- Reviewed useful tips on writing for publication
- Discussed reasons why the manuscript is rejected
- Provided an overview of writing an abstract and preparing a poster

Thank you for your attention!

Questions?