Writing for Publication: An Editor’s View

Our Objectives

• Articulate personal responsibility for leadership of the practice of nursing through publication.
• Explain the 5 Ps of effective writing and the concept of storytelling in the development of a manuscript for publication consideration.
• Analyze the characteristics of a publishable manuscript from a DNP project for a peer-reviewed journal using the RIGOR framework.
• Apply common principles of journal publishing to DNP project dissemination through publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

Personal Responsibility

The profession, publishing, and you

• Publishing is a responsibility of the profession of nursing
• Publishing is essential to the ongoing development of the discipline of nursing
• Publishing is external validation of the quality of your work
• Publishing makes you better at whatever it is you do
• Peer-reviewed publications are one of the ultimate indicators of your scholarly productivity

How do you fit it?

Scholarship of the DNP

Knowing and understanding what is known
And
Applying what is known to improve patient outcomes by improving nursing and health care through verifiable methods

Purposes of the DNP Academic Product

• Conduct clinical capstone project
• Demonstrate facility with practice improvement/evaluation
• Document the process in writing
• Satisfy program faculty
• Graduate!
What the academic product is not?

- It is not ready for publication consideration!
- Why not?
  - Audience
  - Academic prose
  - Academic requirements
  - Redundancies
  - Manuscript road map
  - Author guidelines
  - So what?
  - Etc.

Five Ps of Effective Writing

Effective Writing is Practical

- It says something useful
- It says it in an understandable way
- Choose nouns over adjectives, verbs over adverb, plain words over fancy ones, specific words over general ones
- Choose short sentences over long sentences, personal over the impersonal
- Use punctuation appropriately; use your spell check
- Read the APA Manual!

Effective Writing is Parsimonious

- Use as few words, sentences, and paragraphs as possible to make your point and tell the story
- Every word should have a purpose and “tell” (Strunk & White, 1959)
- Every word counts; figuratively and sometimes practically
- Parsimonious writing does not waste the reader’s time, but it does artfully lead the reader through the story

Effective Writing is Precise

- Ideas logically expressed
- Primary sources are used
- Terms are precisely and consistently used
- Overall the manuscript is internally consistent

Effective writing is . . .

- Practical
- Parsimonious
- Precise
- Persuasive
- Passionate
Effective Writing is **Persuasive**

- The critical first paragraph – what is the problem, why is it important, and who does it affect?
- Background section shows the gap in knowledge, information, or practice that the project was designed to fill.
- Persuasive writing leads the reader from section to section logically
- The reader is convinced!

Effective Writing is **Passionate**

- You believe in the work
- You believe in the importance of the topic
- You believe in the contribution of the work to the literature, practice, public health, etc.
- Use declarative sentences. Use first person. Avoid passive voice.
- Your message is direct and uncluttered

**Rigor: Readable**

- Problem is clear
- Purpose is clear
- A funneling approach to the content
- No logical gaps/leaps
- Writing is tight
- No officialese, prolixity, windfoggery, jargon
- Respects the reader

**Rigor: Important**

- Contemporary
- Problem is important to nursing/health care
- Synthesis evident
- Worth the reader’s time
- Clear take home message

**Rigor: Grammatically correct**

- Accurate mechanics including punctuation
- Noun/verb agreement
- Precise relations between pronouns/antecedents
- Parallel sentence structure
- Verb tense
- Active voice
- Non-personification of objects
- Correct word order
The Habit of Truth

The foundation of scholarship as a collective human enterprise is neither intellect nor technical skill. It is simply honesty. If scholars did not have what Jacob Bronowski (1965) called “the habit of truth,” there could be no accumulation of reliable knowledge, and thus no science. The rules for this habit of conscience are absolute: no compromises, no evasions, no shortcuts, no excuses, and no saving face. Planning, conducting, and reporting research (or clinical projects) make sense only as long as the social contract among scholars is honored—everyone tells the truth as well as he or she can know it.”

Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2014, Chapter 2, page 25

General Manuscript Structure

- **Beginning**: the introduction
- **Middle**: structure depends on the type of story you are telling
- **End**: the discussion

OCAR: Story Structure


OCAR: Opening, ...

- Who is the story about?
- Who are the characters?
- What do you need to understand about the situation to follow the story?
- What is the larger problem you are addressing?
OCAR: Opening, Challenge, . . .
- What do your characters need to accomplish?
- What specific question(s) do you propose to answer?

OCAR: Opening, Challenge, Action, . . .
- What happens to address the challenge?
- Answer the question(s) you posed.

OCAR: Opening, Challenge, Action, & Resolution
- How have the characters and their world changed as a result of the action?
- What did you learn from your work?
- What can your readers take away from what you learned?
- This is the discussion and conclusion

DNP Project to Manuscripts
- Type of project
  - Quality improvement
  - Program evaluation
  - Other
- Type of academic document varies
- Does the project have import/implications beyond the study site?
- SQUIRE Guidelines

Anatomy of a QI Manuscript
- SQUIRE: Standards for Quality Improvement Reporting Excellence
- Introduction
  - Problem description
  - Available knowledge
  - Rationale
  - Specific Aims
- Methods
  - Context
  - Intervention(s)
  - Study of the intervention(s)
  - Measures
  - Analysis
  - Ethical considerations
- Results
  - What did you find? 6 elements
- Discussion
  - What does it mean? Summary

Anatomy of a Program Evaluation Manuscript
- Purposes
  - Determine the effectiveness of an intervention
  - Assess and improve the quality of an intervention
- Types
  - RCT: efficacy
  - Dissemination & implementation
  - Formative, Process, or Summative evaluation
- Introduction
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion
For All Manuscripts

- The work reported must have been done consistent with contemporary standards of clinical inquiry
- The content must represent a deep understanding of the problem at hand
- The writing must meet scholarly standards for publication

Principles of Journal Publishing

- The journal's mission
- The journal's staff
- Why peer review?
- Steps in manuscript development
- The “so what?” principle
- The road a manuscript follows
- Ethical issues
- Potential pitfalls

Purposes of Peer Reviewed Journals

- To publish good work that informs the discipline and the reader
- To advance knowledge/science, research, practice, policy
- To ultimately improve the health and well-being of the public

The journal’s mission

- Find a journal’s mission statement or description to determine if your manuscript is a good fit.
- The quality of any scholarly periodical or journal is totally dependent on the manuscripts that are submitted for publication consideration.
- Journals do not exist to publish your work... they exist to publish good work that informs their readers in a significant way.

A Journal’s Staff

- Authors
- Reviewers
- Editorial Board Members
- Editorial Assistants
- Managing Editor(s)
- Assistant/Associate Editor(s)
- Editor-in-Chief, the Editor

Why Peer Review?

- Evaluation – goal is to select the highest quality manuscripts for publication
- Integrity – Because reviewers are independent they help ensure the integrity of the publishing process and the research or other scholarly activities reported in manuscripts
- Quality – gives authors access to experts in the field who can provide support and insight for improving the quality of the manuscript
The “So What?” principle

Journal editors want to publish work that helps to inform, advance, or challenge the current status of their discipline or journal’s focus.

The Road a Manuscript Travels

• Submission
• Format review
• Peer review
• Editorial decision: accept, accept with revision, request for revision, rejection
• Revision(s)
• Peer review

Manuscript Revisions

• Expect and plan for revisions
• Clear directions from reviewers (Don’t expect reviewers to agree!)
• Read reviews
• Schedule time to revise
• Organize major and minor points
• Respond to each point

The Road a Manuscript Travels

• Editorial decision to accept the manuscript
• Manuscript is edited
• Manuscript sent to publisher, copyedited, and typeset
• Manuscript is prepared for publication
• Page proofs to author

The Four Rs of Revising

• Reading - what did you write?
• Reflecting - how do the reviewers’ comments help you gain perspective on your manuscript?
• Rewriting - this is the essence of good writing
• Responding - precisely and thoughtfully

Pierson, 2008

Ethical Issues

• Human subjects
• Authorship
• Copyright
• Failure to cite
• Plagiarism
• Duplicate publication and self-plagiarism
• Simultaneous submission
• Slice & dice publishing = LPU
• Conflicts of interest
• Acknowledgements
What not to do in your quest to become a published author.

Common Writing Pitfalls!

1. Submitting the right manuscript to the wrong journal or the wrong manuscript to the right journal
2. Not having a clear focus and topical outline for the manuscript
3. Poorly developed basic writing skills including the critique and synthesis of existing literature

Common Pitfall #4

4. Falling into the four failures trap! Failure to:
   – Get private peer review before submitting the manuscript
   – Seek editorial review and assistance before submitting the manuscript
   – Access statistical consultation before submitting the manuscript
   – Adhere to the requirements of the author guidelines or style guide of the specific journal

Common Pitfalls #5 & 6

5. Taking the reviewer’s/editors comments and directions for revision as personal – allowing your personal reaction to block your ability to revise and resubmit.
6. Having faulty beliefs or assumptions about publishing.

You as an Author

• A manuscript is a piece of you
• Writing takes time and practice
• Take your subject seriously
• Take yourself with a grain of salt!

Final thoughts...

• Editors want your manuscripts
• Submission of a manuscript is a bit like going naked in public
• Publishing is a team effort: author, reviewers, editors, publisher
QUESTIONS?

A Few Helpful Resources

• Elsevier Publishing Campus: https://www.publishingcampus.elsevier.com/
• Nurse Author & Editor: http://naepub.com/
• “40 Things Editors Won’t Tell You (But You Need to Know)”: http://naepub.com/publishing/2016-26-1-6/
• International Academy of Nursing Editors: http://nursingeditors.com/

Manuscript Guidelines for Different Types of Research & Reviews

• CONSORT: CONsolidated Standards Of Reporting Trials
• STROBE: Strengthening The Reporting of OBservational studies in Epidemiology
• SRQR: Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research
• PRISMA: Preferred Reporting Items Systematic Reviews & Meta-Analysis
• MOOSE: reporting standards for Meta-analysis Of Observational Studies in Epidemiology
• EQUATOR-Network.org (Enhancing the Quality and Transparency of Health Research)

Resources


Relevant Editorials

Lowe, N. K. (2016). Validity of measurement in nursing, or any other, science. JOGNN, 45, 141-142.
Records, K. (2014). Differentiating the generation of knowledge from the application of knowledge. JOGNN, 43, 399-400.