Health News: Pearls for Publishing with Multiple Authors

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MY NAME IS JANICE PUTNAM, a past chair of the Missouri Nurse's Editorial Board and author for almost 25 years. How I became an author is a fun story. When I moved to Missouri, we bought a farm and I naturally connected farm work with nursing care and prevention. I learned that there were a lot of agricultural health issues on farms and that there are knowledge deficits that nurses can address. I wrote on the night shift as a private duty nurse. I was thrilled when it was published. This was a defining moment for me as a nurse because I was writing about nursing to other nurses. I was empowered with good information and helpful insights. I shifted from writing solo to writing with other authors. I will now share several management tips and lessons learned about publishing with multiple authors.

Let's start by talking about health content experts. Publishers need health content and look to health content experts for this. Who are health content experts? Yes, nurses. But it's not any nurse. Health content experts are nurses with extensive clinical experience and specialized knowledge in a specific area. The evidence-based pyramid shows that editorials and expert opinions support the entire structure (What is evidence-based practice in nursing?, 2023).

To become health content experts, nurses can use a career trajectory (Oriol et, 2015). It is a tool to plan/focus your nursing specialization. The career trajectory is an upward arching path, like an arrow flying through the air. Over time, a trajectory includes several deep dives. These dives expand a nurse's knowledge and experience making the nurse valuable as a health content expert. Where do you anticipate that your arrow is going to land?

Before accepting an opportunity to take on a new project, I ask two questions that help me determine whether it is right for me.
- Can knowledge gained through this project advance my nursing trajectory?
- Can I share what I learned with other nurses and healthcare providers?

I may decline a project if the answer to either of those questions is not positive.

Another tool for authors, ResearchGate, tracks how often an article has been read or cited. After inputting my published articles into ResearchGate, I was notified of the statistics of people reading my work. This is motivating feedback for an author. As one becomes more experienced, the number of citations also becomes a motivating statistic because it represents nurses reading and building upon the article in practice.

Writing with multiple authors is beneficial (Gill & Gosine-Boodoo, 2021; Moxley, 2023). There's an efficiency when authors are problem-solving and brainstorming. It's a great chance to network with others.

It helps to use your good people skills in a group writing environment (Moxley, 2023). As a leader, invest in cultivating diversity, equity, and inclusivity. Be creative and positive. Members will feel vested and valued. Practice being flexible and transparent when items are changed. Let everyone contribute, know what happened, and document. Tracking progress can motivate and maximize this when you're moving well.
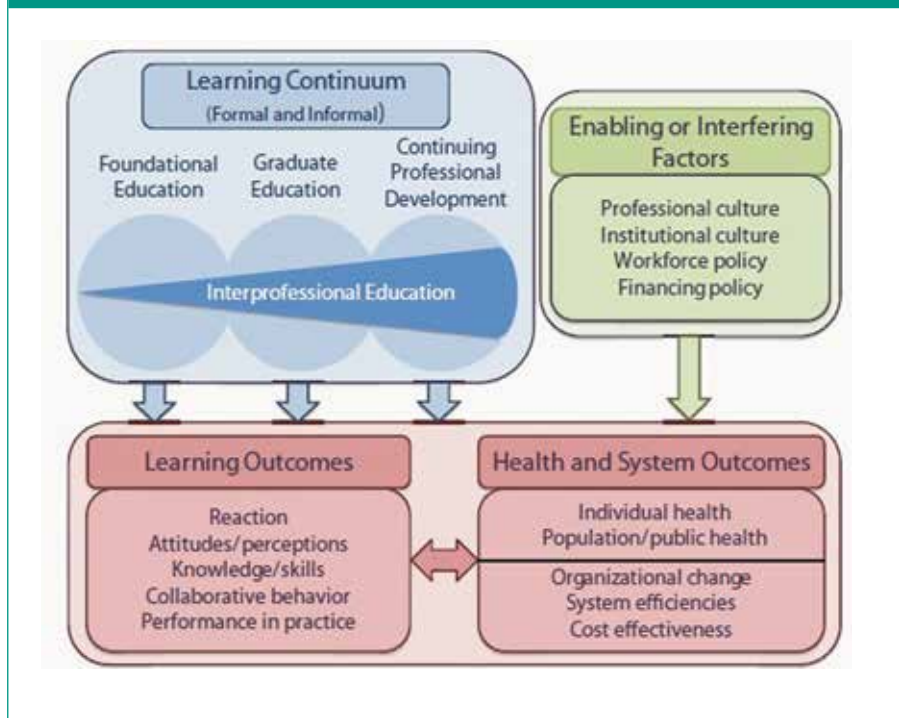
When choosing coauthors for your team, consider special skills or specific time allocation needed. It is helpful to share your strengths. Try some self-reflection regarding what you bring to the table (Moxley, 2023). What kind of skills do you have? What working style do you have? What are the communication preferences? Past experiences with collaborations? Writing with other authors demonstrates an ability to work with other team members. (This is a high-level skill - highlight this on your resume!)

Authorship order is an important decision (Moxley, 2023). The order can be set according to the amount of contribution that each author has provided. It's important, though, to have this discussion in the beginning. Set up expectations. You can be flexible later on if the situation changes. A team charter contract may commit these considerations for the people working on a manuscript.

It is helpful to have an external expert review your outline or manuscript. This can be a supervisor, a colleague, or an industry expert. Ask how your project aligns with organizational goals, industry standards, and current research trends. Have them note any inconsistencies, ambiguities, or constructive criticism.

Tracking progress is an opportunity to find out if there's an issue. I like to track manuscript progress at the

FIGURE 1. The interprofessional learning continuum (IPLC) model. (Reprinted with permission from the CCC Marketplace)

Interprofessional authorship (IPA) has many of the same benefits as single-discipline coauthorship promoting innovation, delegation, and cost.

The Interprofessional Learning Continuum (IOM, 2015) helps me understand interprofessional authorship (See Figure 1. The interprofessional learning continuum (IPLC) model). When it comes to interprofessional publishing, foundational knowledge is required to participate. For example, a freshman nursing student does not have the clinical expertise to contribute meaningfully to a manuscript. As nursing students advance their education, they can contribute and write about this with others. *(see Figure 1)*

On the other hand, interprofessional education authorship is ideal for continuing professional development because of the experience and expertise shared. As we have discussed, co-authors have different nursing skills and knowledge levels. When you start interprofessional publications, be aware these differences can exist in other disciplines.

The Interprofessional Learning Continuum (IOM, 2015) model also emphasizes three outcomes. There are learning outcomes which include attitudes, knowledge, and skills. There are health outcomes at the individual or population level. Lastly, system outcomes include organizational system efficiencies and cost-effectiveness. These outcome options are helpful as projects grow and become more sophisticated.

Enabling or interfering factors in the Interprofessional Learning Continuum (IOM, 2015) can serve as guiding points for writing the lessons learned segment of a project. For example, what was learned about the professional culture in which this project took place? What about institutional culture? Is there a workforce or financing policy that either helps support or was a barrier to doing

beginning of every meeting. Each member can speak about their progress and anything supporting or blocking progress. This progress review is a good system for promoting author responsibility. In a bad-case scenario, someone on the team may have to step up to complete the brunt of the work. When this happens to you, make it a point to evaluate what happened and how to prevent it from happening again.

Barriers to writing with other nurses can include various writing levels, different attitudes about the subject, or different levels of commitment to the project (Moxley, 2023). There can also be personality conflicts. In other cases, there may be ethical conflicts. These barriers can be challenging but are growth opportunities for nurses.

Mentorship involves a senior person helping train someone at a junior level. In Brenner's Novice to Expert Theory (1982), experienced nurses guide novice and experienced beginner nurses, sharing their expertise and helping them to develop.

Mentorship models include a mentor and a mentee (protege). The mentoring may be formal or informal and designed as self-managed, in a group, or with a professional association such as the Missouri Nurses Association (Freedman, 2009).

There are best practices for mentorship. Lumpkin (2016) advises the mentor and mentee to define the purpose, goals, and strategies. A meeting to document the purpose, goals, and strategy assures a match between mentor and mentee and an agreed-upon plan. After the first meeting, plan regular meetings and evaluate the effectiveness of this mentorship.

Fountain and Newcomer (2016) state that in higher education, best practices for mentorship identify the need for support from the faculty, administration, and mentorship-supporting resources. Mentorship should be seen as a value and institutional responsibility. The mentorship plan benefits from being aligned with organizational goals.

Interprofessional co-authorship is a specialized type of writing.
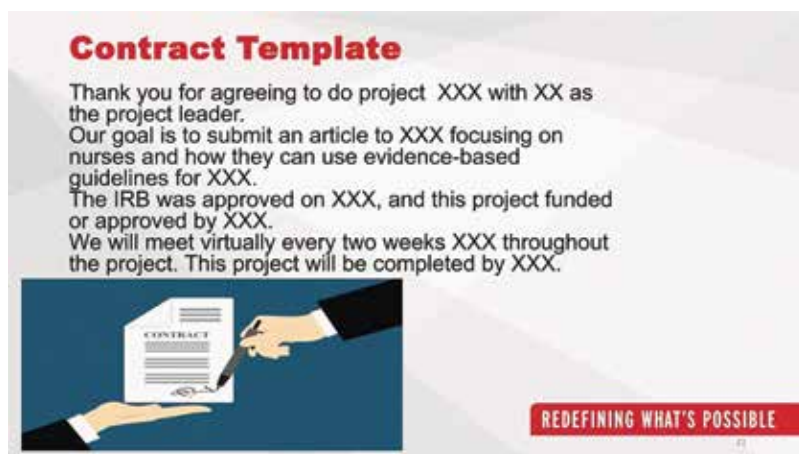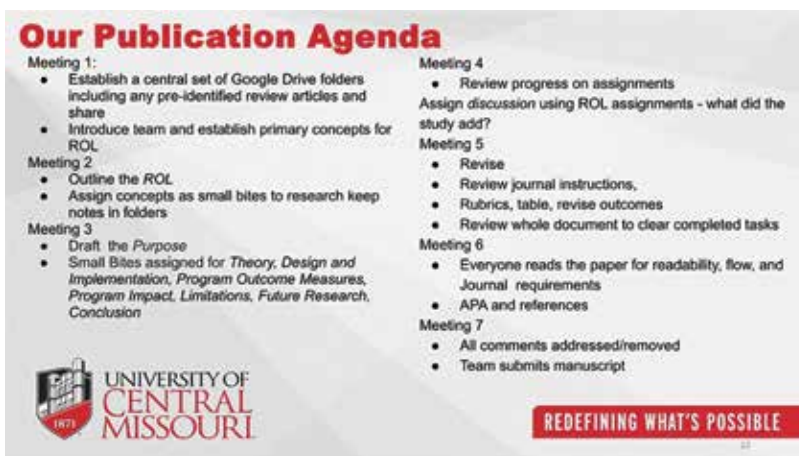
FIGURE 2. Contract Template

FIGURE 3. Our Publication Agenda

this kind of project? This is the kind of information that supports other practicing professionals and their future projects!!

When writing together as a group, we aim to complete preliminary work, posters, presentations, and publishing in that order. Each of these activities provides important feedback that molds the final article. Networking occurs around posters and presentations and editors may approach YOU! This is a great opportunity.

A team charter is a contract (See Figure 2. Contract Template). It gives you the who what, when where how, and why of this project that you're doing. When I start

a project, I draft something like this and email it to them for future reference. Team members have a chance to review the summary and ask further questions. *(see Figure 2)*

At this point, we confirmed the willing members. We identified each person's strengths for the different assignments, and then looked for availability, usually 30 minutes to an hour weekly. We made everyone an editor in Google Drive to write and edit. We routinely rotate assignments so the team can see other people's writing.

To guide our meetings, we used a publication agenda. A publication agenda

is a great tool for organization and motivation (See Figure 3. Our Publication Agenda). The agenda has sections representing the article sections. We assigned small chunks of writing following the agenda. Each time we met, I put the responsible person's name on the agenda for follow-up. This reminds me to ask for an update at the beginning of each meeting. The publication agenda is a great tool for promoting responsibility and keeping us on a timeline. *(see Figure 3)*

Small writing bites are another helpful technique for writing with others. Giving people small assignments to complete in a week or two keeps the team moving forward. Taking steps forward any time you write is empowering. Typically, each author writes 2 or 3 paragraphs with reference links. We ask all writers to use hyperlinks to their sources. They may want to do some references already, but it's not necessarily early on.

Examples of a small writing bite may include several paragraphs on a new practice guideline or a major background concept. A small writing bite might summarize a prevention or teaching toolkit. Practice guidelines and teaching toolkits are great for creating images of resources or resource tables. Near the end of the article, we identified the discussion headings by revisiting the literature review and writing on nursing gaps and possibilities for the future.

In conclusion, I encourage you to be a health content expert by writing about nursing for other nurses and health professionals. Think about your trajectory and select your teammates carefully. You can look for mentorship opportunities in existing relationships and common interests. Lastly, consider interprofessional publishing to save money, energy, and personnel, and promote innovation.