

Embark on the Publishing Journey and Sail to Success!

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Are you considering writing for publication but don't quite know where to start or whether you have the expertise to write an article? If so, you're not alone. The idea of publishing an article in a scholarly journal can be daunting for nurses new to professional writing. That said, the best way to learn is to jump right in with both feet and do it...but perhaps with a bit of sage advice to consider for the best chance of success.

The first step in writing an article is topic selection. Topics can run the gamut from clinical subjects to innovations, impactful stories, process change or improvement efforts, research, advocacy and ethical challenges. The sky is really the limit here. An important caveat is that if you intend to write about an interesting patient case, you will need both patient and employer permission to obtain patient care information and publish a factual case report. A good alternative approach is to write a review article on the disease or disorder with a fictitious, but representative, case example that

illustrates key points without risking a HIPAA violation. Any use or submission of data from your workplace requires administrative approval; research must also have IRB approval noted in the manuscript before a publisher will consider the submission.

Papers written for school can sometimes become journal articles, but there's more work to be done. If you intend to submit an academic assignment for publication, the format must be changed from a school paper to a manuscript that adheres to all of the journal's author guidelines, otherwise the editor-in-chief (EIC) will likely desk-reject the submission. The bottom line is that if the paper is really good, get the most mileage out of it that you can. The advantage of starting with a school paper is that you've probably completed a good portion of the literature search and have a solid framework for the article.

Another decision point revolves around whether you intend to include any co-authors. If so, assure that the

co-author agrees to the established timeline and guidelines for submission. The order of names on the manuscript should also be determined up front to avoid any misunderstandings or conflict later. The author order may not be as important for three or less co-authors, but it can become an issue when publishing with a larger group. Some authors will become encompassed in the "et al" within in-text citations. Finally, paper should read as if it was written by a single author no matter how many co-authors are included.

Once you have a topic and possible co-authors, the most efficient next step is to determine where you would like to submit the paper. It's best to figure this out before you write the paper since journals have different author guidelines. Writing the paper and then trying to decide where to submit it may require a partial re-write to comply with that journal's specific author guidelines. Select a journal that's best aligned with the topic and your target audience. Consider whether it is a topic that would apply to a general nursing audience, or a particular specialty group. Read articles from the journal you select as your potential publishing venue and note the "editorial voice" for how content is presented in the article. Is it less formal or very academic? Assure your writing will align with the journal's style. Consider the DNA Reporter as a great vehicle to share your ideas and gain experience with the publishing process. When you write for the DNA Reporter, you will have the support of colleagues to guide you along the way!

When writing the manuscript according to the journal's author guidelines, use references that are no more than 5 years old unless there are few published articles about the subject, or the older

articles are considered classic or “benchmark” for the topic. Also assure that the writing represents all of the authors’ personal best efforts with strict attention to grammar, punctuation, and spelling. If artificial intelligence (AI) is used, it must be disclosed. Authors are accountable for any errors that result from use of AI programs, which can introduce inaccurate information known as hallucinations, including citation of references that don’t exist. Submit the manuscript to *only one journal at a time*—sending the same manuscript to more than one journal is a violation of publication ethics.

The editor-in-chief (EIC) of the journal will receive and review the manuscript. If the EIC determines that the paper has potential for publication, the EIC will select peer reviewers from the journal’s peer review panel based on their expertise with the topic and invite them to review the manuscript. If the EIC does not wish to consider the paper any further, the EIC may desk-reject it at that point. The EIC could also request revisions, even before peer review. After all of the reviews are complete, the manuscript will be sent back to the authors for revision. It is important to respond to reviewer feedback constructively; their feedback is intended to strengthen the paper. The authors can decide on whether they will make the recommended revisions, but should include well supported rationale if they choose not to make particular revisions.

The EIC will review the revised manuscript and may send it out for another round of peer review to assure that the reviewer’s recommendations are satisfactorily addressed. Some manuscripts go through multiple rounds of peer review. Once

all of the final reviews come in, the EIC will make a decision. If the paper is formally rejected, it then can be submitted to another journal. However, if it is accepted, it’s time to celebrate your success and then prepare to work with the journal editors as they prepare the manuscript for publication. Review the article proofs carefully for any errors in copyediting and notify the journal within the required timeline.

I’m sure that the steps I overviewed sound like a lot of work, but the process is worthwhile and comes with many benefits, including a tangible way of showing professional initiative, expertise and demonstrating a commitment to excellence. Remember to cite your publication in your resume or CV. Publication confers immortality in a sense because the published work will live on as it will be indexed in various professional databases such as PubMed and even referenced by other authors. It is a gift that you can give to yourself and to all who benefit from reading it. Don’t forget that the DNA Reporter is a great place to get the word out and make your voice heard—best of luck! ■

For more information on how to publish in scholarly nursing journals, check out the following selected resources:

Laskowski-Jones, L. (2021, February 9). *Getting published in nursing journals previously recorded on: Wolters Kluwer*. <https://info.lww.com/Nursing2021Webinars.html>

Saver C. (2021). *Anatomy of writing for publication (4th ed.)*. Sigma Theta Tau International.

Think. Check. Submit, 2024: <https://thinkchecksubmit.org>



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