Successful Writing for Publication

V. Susan Carroll, MS, RN-BC, SCRN
Editor-in-Chief, *Journal of Neuroscience Nursing*
Writing for Publication ...

- Objectives
  - After attending this session, you will be able to:
    - List the steps in developing a publishable article
    - Describe the components of a typical manuscript
    - Identify steps in the publishing process
    - Avoid ethical dilemmas
“Writers are not just people who sit down and write. They hazard themselves. Every time you compose ... your composition of yourself is at stake.” (E.L. Doctorow)

“The act of putting pen to paper encourages pause for thought, this in turn makes us think more deeply about life, which helps us regain our equilibrium.” (Norbert Platt)
Writing for Publication...

- Blocks to writing -
  - Nothing to write about, no ideas - “Every writer I know has trouble writing.” (Joseph Heller)
  - Insufficient time
  - Lack of mentorship or support
  - Lack of self-confidence
  - Too much material
  - FEAR!!
Why publish?
- Increases your personal knowledge base
- Establishes or increases your status as an expert
- Offers professional visibility
- Offers personal satisfaction
- Provides support for promotion or tenure
- Expands the body of professional nursing literature and helps advance the profession
Writing for Publication ...

- Where can I find ideas?
  - Look at your own clinical practice
  - Check the indices for various journals
  - Watch for “Calls for Manuscripts”
  - Query journal editors
  - Expand on a previously published article
  - “Fill out” or expand on a poster presentation
  - Develop an oral presentation into a narrative manuscript
Writing for Publication ...

• How will I find time to write?
  – Set manageable goals
  – Organize your work
  – Complete a “chunk” at a time
  – Negotiate time at work
  – Deadlines - some authors do, some don’t
Writing for Publication ...

• How can I develop the self-confidence to write?
  – Volunteer as a manuscript reviewer
  – Start with short articles
  – Review material already written
  – Seek feedback - from colleagues who have published, from a journal editor
  – Seek out a mentor
How can I obtain support?

- Conduct a web-based literature search
- Visit a local library
- Again, seek a mentor or co-author
- Enter a writing contest
• Do I have too much material for a single manuscript?
  – Establish a focus or a specific, more narrow angle
  – Write a preliminary query letter
  – Write a purpose and scope statement
  – Break the whole into smaller parts
Steps in the writing process:
- Plan the project
- Develop and refine an outline
- Write, write, write
- Review, review and submit
- Publish
Writing for Publication ...

• Planning the writing project:
  – Identify your topic and then ask these questions –
    • What is the purpose and scope of the work?
    • Who is the primary or target audience?
    • Which journal best fits this project?
    • What work is already out there?
    • If a query was sent, what was the response?
Writing for Publication ...

- Develop and refine your outline
  - Search and review the literature
  - Take notes
  - Sort material
  - Rethink the outline and sequencing of major ideas
  - Resort material ...

Now, you are ready to write!
Writing for Publication ...
Writing for Publication ...

• General tips for writing:
  – First, write a purpose and scope statement, then an outline
  – Write from the outline, focusing on one section at a time
  – Write the easiest portion first, then the most difficult
  – Write the introduction and summary after the body of the manuscript is complete
  – Write the abstract last
Writing for Publication ...

- Components of most manuscripts:
  - Abstract
  - Title
  - Introduction
  - Body
  - Summary
  - References
  - Supplemental materials - for example, figures, tables, charts
Writing for Publication …

• General tips for writing (cont’d):
  – Check paragraphs order, length and transitions
  – Avoid:
    • Slang, clichés, jargon, regional colloquialisms - “The best style is the style you don’t notice.”
    • Verbosity - “As to the adjective, when in doubt, strike it out.” (Mark Twain)
    • Redundancy
    • Personal pronouns
    • Trade and brand names for drugs and products
Writing for Publication ...

- **Abstract:**
  - Concise summary of the manuscript
  - Understandable, must stand on its own
  - 100-400 words in a single paragraph (length depends on individual journal requirements)
  - Should *not* contain:
    - Information not included in the paper itself
    - Tables, graphs, figures or charts or references to them
    - References to literature
Writing for Publication ...

- Title:
  - May be the most important part of the manuscript
  - Only part you know will be read
  - May be used by secondary services (indexes)
  - Should be as informative as possible
  - Avoid “cute” or grandiose titles
  - Must catch the reader’s attention
Writing for Publication ...

• Introduction:
  – Presents the purpose and scope of the manuscript
  – Uses the present tense
  – Entices the reader to continue ... “It was a dark and stormy night...”
  – If writing a research-focused manuscript, includes the rationale for the study and states the research question(s)/purpose(s)
Writing for Publication ...

• Body of the manuscript:
  – This is the “meat” of the work, the primary focus - you should devote the majority of effort and space to this section
  – Developed directly from the outline
  – Meet achieve the stated purpose of the work and remain within the scope
Writing for Publication ...

- **Summary:**
  - This = the conclusion
  - Should be a paragraph or two
  - Relates back to purpose and scope
  - Summarizes the content, may stand alone
Writing for Publication ...

• References:
  – Can be current (typically within 5 years) or “classic,” sentinel
  – Use the format specified by the journal you have chosen—for example, APA, MLA, AMA, Chicago style
  – Number of references is negotiable; however, if you mention a source **anywhere** in the manuscript, it must be included in the reference list when using APA format. All web-based-references must still be available at the time of copy editing.
Writing for Publication ...

• Tables, figures and formatting:
  – A table is data or information arranged in orderly columns and rows
  – A figure is a drawing, diagram, photo or tool
  – Both are used to supplement or sometimes shorten the text; they cluster related data together
  – Achieve clarity through simplicity -“Less is more”
  – Must add value to the manuscript
Tables, figures and formatting (cont’d):
- Provide a title for each table, a caption for each figure
- Must submitted in a suitable electronic format; for JNN, photos must be digital, B/W
- Seek permission to publish as needed before submitting your manuscript
- Indicate the name of the software program (Excel, Word - include version, Photoshop) used in their creation
- For JNN, format per EM specifications
Writing for Publication ...

- Article formats/styles:
  - Research report
  - Evidence-based practice
  - Case study
  - Disease/treatment based
  - Focused article or column
  - Opinion, reflection or personal perspective
  - “How to”
  - Literature review
  - Concept analysis, theory building
Writing for Publication...

- The research manuscript:
  - Abstract - include purpose, objectives, hypotheses, methodology, results, implications, limitations
  - Title - may be longer than those in non-research manuscripts
  - Methods - describes research design and methods, includes enough detail to allow the reader to assess validity, replicate the work, cites previously published or established methods
Writing for Publication ...

• The research manuscript (cont’d):
  – Results - report only results directly derived from the data, address both significant and non-significant results, use appropriate statistical analyses, summarize with tables/figures, do not without findings contrary to original hypotheses
  – Discussion - explain relevance of findings, do not simply repeat results or ignore alternative explanations, do include study limitations, discuss how findings agree/disagree with previous work, discuss practice implications, future research
Writing for Publication ...

- The case study manuscript should include:
  - Initial patient presentation
  - Diagnostic tests
  - Diagnosis and background information
  - Treatment modalities
  - Nursing care and implications/issues
  - Outcomes
Writing for Publication ...

• A disease-focused manuscript should include:
  – Pathophysiology
  – Epidemiology
  – Diagnosis
  – Treatment modalities
  – Nursing care and implications
  – Examples may supplement the “basics” above
Writing for Publication ...

• Focused manuscripts:
  – Usually short
  – Address a highly concentrated/specific topic
  – May be written as a special-interest column
  – Examples - pharmacology, specific research designs or issues, diagnostics, practice innovations, “Executive Summary”
Writing for Publication ...

• Other manuscript formats:
  – Opinion, reflection, perspective papers – valuable for ethical/legal issues, professional issues, may be written by a professional or a patient
  – “How to” – valuable for equipment, procedures
  – Literature review
  – Concept analyses/theory building
Writing for Publication ...

- Submitting the manuscript - either to online publishing website (this is the only option for JANN), via email or on paper:
  - Read the author guidelines
  - Send the manuscript to only one journal at a time
  - Submission should include:
    - Cover letter
    - CTAs for every author
    - Title page/Author(s) identification - specify primary contact, affiliations, funding disclosure(s)
    - Text files
    - Permissions
    - Artwork, tables, figures
Writing for Publication ...

• Permissions:
  – Necessary if a table/figure is an exact reproduction or if more than a single paragraph is reproduced. If you “adapt” a table/figure, it should be substantially different in appearance.
  – Permission request must include the name(s) of those requesting permission, for what content, from whom permission is requested, and for what purpose(s) the material is to be used.
  – Grantor may “direct” a specific permission statement.
Writing for Publication ...

- Permissions (cont’d):
  - Fees may be involved
  - Keep a copy of all permissions granted
  - Journals cannot publish your manuscript without these

- "I love being a writer. What I can’t stand is the paperwork." (Peter de Vries)
Writing for Publication ...

- When the Editorial Office receives the manuscript:
  - Receipt is acknowledged, a time frame for review and response is outlined, a contact person (either the Editor, Editorial Assistant, or another individual) is identified for questions
  - Editor selects reviewers
  - Manuscript is sent out for blinded peer review by subject matter experts
  - Editor summarizes reviews, adds her/his own reviewing comments and editing suggestions, and makes a decision re: publication
Writing for Publication ...

- Reviewing - what do we look for?
  - Relevance to practice - new findings, nursing implications
  - Substantiated statements - data, literature review
  - Logical flow, clear language
  - Complete citations
  - Tables and figures that are easily understood and which add detail, clarity to the narrative
Writing for Publication ...

- Reviewing - what we don’t want to see:
  - Lack of references
  - Single spacing
  - Disorganized text
  - Illogical flow - “Write your first draft with your heart. Rewrite with your head.” (*Finding Forrester*)
  - Busy tables and figures
  - Jargon
  - Imprecise language
  - Unsubstantiated claims or conclusions
Writing for Publication ...

- The publication decision:
  - Acceptance
  - Revisions requested – this = conditional acceptance and assumes revisions will be acceptable or the manuscript could be rejected later
  - Rejection
Writing for Publication …

• If revisions are requested:
  • Incorporate comments and suggestions of the reviewers and editor
  • Respond to each remark - if you don’t agree, explain or suggest an alternative. It is ultimately the author(s) choice as to how/what to revise
  • Seek assistance - work with co-authors, a mentor, or call the editor

“I’m not a very good writer, but I’m an excellent rewriter.”
(James Michener)
Writing for Publication ...

• To resubmit a revised manuscript:
  – Enclose a cover letter - required in online submissions as well
  – Create a table or bulleted list of revisions
  – Delete all “track changes” or “comments” in the e-files re-submitted
  – Return the revised manuscript promptly. In our current EM system, failing to return the work within the set time frame requires the author to start again as a “new submission”
Writing for Publication ...

- Acceptance ...
  - Copyright transfer
  - Disclosure statement:
    - Paid for endorsement of service/product?
    - Employed by manufacturer/provider of service/product?
    - Other financial interest/relationship with manufacturer?
    - Received financial support for preparing manuscript content?
    - Research funding?
    - Association membership?
- Copyediting
- “Proofs”
Writing for Publication ...

• Copyright transfer:
  – Copyright = legal device that provides the creator of a work with the right to control how that work is used
  – All authors must complete a Copyright Transfer Agreement (CTA) - for JNN, this must be included with the initial submission of work into EM. If not the manuscript is returned as incomplete
  – Once a manuscript is accepted, the author transfers print and electronic rights to the journal
  – Protects against infringement
  – Underscores the importance of seeking permission prior to submission for figures/tables/tools
Writing for Publication …

• Copyediting process:
  – Assures proper, formal English grammar, US spelling and word usage
  – Assures that manuscripts conform to in-house, journal-specific style
    • Style rules enhance readability
    • Use of hyphens, italics, upper case letters, numerals, acronyms is consistent
    • Doesn’t change the author’s voice, content, or organization of the manuscript
Writing for Publication ...

• Copyediting (cont’d):
  – Corrects misspellings and punctuation errors
  – Queries author(s) for missing information or clarification
  – Reconciles reference list with in-text citations (this includes checking the availability of all websites cited)
  – Formats tables and figures for “fit” within the page specifications of the journal
Writing for Publication ...

- Final publication process:
  - Author and editor approval of proofs - answer all queries, supply missing information, return prior to deadline. This is typically completed electronically. Turnaround time very short.
  - Publication - currently acceptance in JNN results in actual print in ~12 months with some exceptions
  - Keep in mind that publication in JNN in either print or online only means your work is indexed in OVID and other major indexing resources
  - Reprints
Writing for Publication ...

• Other writing and publishing opportunities:
  – Serve as a peer/expert reviewer for a journal or publisher
  – Contribute a book chapter
  – Write/review books
  – Write/review grants
  – Serve as a textbook editor or writer
  – Develop educational materials for a professional organization or your own employer
  – Write a book
Writing for Publication ...

- Publishing ethics:
  - Duplicate publishing
  - Complete disclosure
  - Multiple authorship
  - “Ghost” authorship
  - “Sponsored” work
  - Plagiarism
  - Confidentiality
  - Open Access (not *necessarily* an ethics issue but could be)
Writing for Publication ...

- *JNN* has recently added guidelines for publishing specific types of papers to the Information for Authors section of EM.

- *JNN* now requires IRB approval or “disclaimer” for papers that report QI projects.
Writing for Publication ...

- *Journal of Neuroscience Nursing* relevant websites:
  - Editorial Manager
  - *JNN Online*
    - [http://journals.lww.com/jnnonline/pages/default.aspx](http://journals.lww.com/jnnonline/pages/default.aspx)
  - *JNN Editor-in-Chief*
    - susan.carroll25@gmail.com
  - *JNN Editorial Assistant*
    - inn@aann.org
It’s impossible to discourage real writers - they don’t care what you say, they’re going to write.” (Sinclair Lewis)