



## Writing for Publication

Wouldn't it be nice to see your name in print? You know that you have all kinds of important knowledge to convey to your colleagues. You have a dim memory of being creative, wiped out years ago by nursing school. Starting an article can be daunting. I have compiled a few tips that may help, and I encourage you to contact me via e-mail at CJONeditor@jsobel.com for further assistance.

**What should I write about?** If you are having difficulty conceiving a topic, think about what area of your practice interests you the most. Is there a surgical procedure, for instance, that requires sophisticated nursing management? Perhaps you have developed expertise in that nursing management and your colleagues come to you for help. If so, a manuscript is waiting to be born! New procedures, wound care techniques, patient care dilemmas, and unusual patient reactions are a few topics that could be developed into potential manuscripts. Think of the discussions that you have with colleagues at report, for instance. The questions posed by nurses when discussing a particular procedure or patient problem are often suitable for development into a manuscript.

**I have an idea. Now what?** Jot down a few ideas on paper. Ask yourself what are the most important points you want to convey about your topic. Let us use nursing care of a patient with a new Indiana pouch as an example. (By the way, I would like to see a manuscript on this topic!) Imagine that you are teaching a new nurse about the care of a patient with the pouch. What would you tell her or him first? How would you describe the anatomy of the surgical reconstruction? What are the most important nursing actions for postoperative days 1, 2, and 3? What are the potential complications, and how would the nurse assess for those complications? Develop a short outline. A quick method for

developing an outline is to write one word that describes the content for each section of the manuscript—assessment, for instance.

**I have a short outline. What should I do with it?** Select a journal. Of course, the *Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing (CJON)* would be my first choice for your manuscript! Or choose among other journals, each of which has a specific focus. Always, always, *always* query the editor. A short e-mail to the editor to determine interest in the topic can save you a great deal of effort. The editor may have a manuscript or two on your particular topic in the pipeline, and then you would need to select a different journal. Be accurate with the name, spelling, and credentials of the editor. Read the journal's Author Guidelines carefully. If the editor encourages you to submit the topic to the journal, set yourself a deadline for the first draft.

**When writing the manuscript, is help available?** Yes. You may want to consider the *CJON Mentor/Fellow Program*, which pairs novice writers with experienced writers who will guide them through the publication process. This program is very successful, and many issues of *CJON* contain the products of that program. Another option is to solicit someone with publishing experience from your workplace. Having an objective person read your manuscript and give guidance is always helpful. Please do not use a medical writer. There is absolutely no reason that a very intelligent, experienced, and thoughtful person such as yourself needs someone else to write his or her paper.

Do a literature search on your topic. The hospital librarian can help you in this endeavor and ensure that you get the most focused literature search. Librarians are wonderful, helpful people, and using them as resources will save you much wasted effort. The literature review in your manuscript should

be comprehensive and come primarily from peer-reviewed articles. Web sites are good sources, provided they are from a credible source such as the National Cancer Institute or American Cancer Society. For articles describing drugs, use peer-reviewed articles rather than drug manufacturers' Web sites.

**Get something on paper:** Now, just start writing. Use your brief outline to organize your thoughts, and develop a first draft. Do not edit yourself—just write. I personally write my first draft longhand. I enjoy the experience of using a fancy fountain pen (one of my addictions) on nice paper. You may prefer writing directly into the computer. Just get started, and write the draft.

The next step is essential—read your paper aloud. You will hear immediately what works and what does not. Revise it, and read aloud again. By that point, you should have a reasonable manuscript for someone else to read. Get the opinion of your experienced author, incorporate those suggestions, and then you have a manuscript!

**I am ready to submit!** Before submitting a manuscript to any editor, reread the journal's Author Guidelines, and ensure that you have followed them exactly. Double-check each reference. Errors in references are one of the primary reasons for rejection of a manuscript. Sloppiness in reference citation makes the reviewers and editor very nervous about the accuracy of a manuscript. If you cite a Web site as a reference, ensure that it is still accurate. You are now ready to upload your manuscript (if the journal uses an online manuscript system) or submit it. Congratulations! You did it!

The next edition of "Editor's Notes" will address the review process and revisions.