

Scholarly Writing: Your Professional Legacy

WENDY H. VOGEL, MSN, FNP, AOCNP®, and PAMELA HALLQUIST VIALE, RN, MS, CS, ANP, AOCNP®

As humans, we all want to leave our mark on this earth. In our professional lives, the same is true. What inheritance are you leaving those who will come after you? What part of your collective wisdom and knowledge are you sharing with the young people in your profession? One way to mentor many individuals at the same time is by scholarly writing. The editors of the *Journal of the Advanced Practitioner in Oncology (JADPRO)* are committed to mentoring fledgling writers. We want to share our passion for both oncology and writing about oncology.

Scholarly writing promotes the profession as well as disseminates opportune information that will promote positive health-care outcomes. Through scholarly writing, you can share expert knowledge with your colleagues. It can also be a way to advance your career in many job settings. Many of us find that it gives us a feeling of personal satisfaction and accomplishment.

Getting Started

Starting your article is often the hardest part of scholarly writing. If you have never written before, writing for a newsletter (such as for special interest groups of the Oncology Nursing Society and the American Academy of Physician Assistants) or a local newspaper is a great way to get your feet wet (Winslow,

2008). Perhaps your hospital or facility has a periodic publication that needs authors. Writing a letter to the editor on a current published topic will allow you to express your opinion or perhaps offer a different perspective on the topic. Many professional journals publish book reviews, just a few short paragraphs about a book that the readers would find interesting. If you have recently given an oral presentation, this could be converted into a manuscript—and you have already done the legwork! Generally a 30-minute lecture will convert to about 20 double-spaced typed manuscript pages (Loos, 1996).

Some authors are daunted by the publication style required by the journal. It is important to know what style the journal to which you are submitting uses. Each journal will have “Author Guidelines” or “Information for Authors” noted in the journal as well as on their website. For example, *JADPRO* adheres to the sixth edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) style manual (APA, 2010). An earlier *Tools and Technology* column entitled, “Writing for Publication: References Made Easier,” gave several suggestions for programs that assist in formatting manuscripts in various publication styles (Vogel & Viale, 2010).

Mentorship

Working with a mentor can be rewarding as well as beneficial. To further an effective

mentoring relationship, know your topic thoroughly, meet established deadlines, and be amenable to constructive criticism (Winslow, 2008). A mentor can help a new author strategize their approach to writing and provide guidance on the structure of a potential paper for publication (Tariman, 2009). Expect to have several rewrites. Writing is an acquired skill and even the most experienced writers can benefit from a critique of their work (Tariman, 2009).

Deciding on a Topic

Pick an idea that you are passionate about. After all, you are going to be researching and living with this topic during the entire writing process. You might examine a challenge you faced in the clinical arena and discuss how you solved it. You could focus on a unique and interesting patient case. Or perhaps you are interested in learning more about a certain topic. Development of an outline can assist the author in determining the content areas for a scholarly paper (Dixon, 2001). Organizing your paper into distinct sections can help keep you on track. Content sections may vary; however, the usual progression for a paper includes an introduction, scope of the problem or idea to be discussed, the literature review, implications for nursing practice, and a conclusion. Manuscripts may present original research or a review

paper containing a discussion of updates in clinical practice (Oermann, 1999). Reading your paper out loud to yourself or colleagues can assist the author in determining sentence flow.

Some authors will choose to approach an editor with an idea to query their interest before beginning the research and writing process. Others will write first, and then send the manuscript to an editor. It is important to remember that while multiple queries can be sent to various journal editors simultaneously, manuscripts may be presented to only one journal at a time.

Once the manuscript has been submitted, it will go through a review process if the journal editor considers it appropriate for the journal (Sylvia & Herbel, 2001). In peer-reviewed journals like *JADPRO*, the paper is sent blinded to an oncology professional with knowledge about the topic for evaluation. The peer-reviewers will evaluate the manuscript for its appropriateness for the journal, the evidence base, and the value the paper will add to current literature. The reviewers will also examine organization, writing style, quality of references, gaps or deficits, and any unnecessary information. The manuscript will be returned to the author with acceptance, acceptance with suggested revisions, or rejection. Rejection is usually given with a rationale and comments. Critiques given

by peer-reviewers are used to revise the manuscript.

Responsibility for the final product will belong to you as the author. Writing is a choice and takes time and you must make the time to get it accomplished. Plan dedicated time during each week to write. Schedule your writing at times when you are at your most productive and creative modes. Some authors find that breaking a manuscript into segments and assigning a due date to each segment will keep them on target.

Helpful Resources

There are many useful articles and books about writing for publication. The references for this article represent some that are available. There are government-sponsored medical literature databases listed in Table 1 to assist in a literature search. There are also medical information databases that provide the latest information, expert commentaries, links to drug information, and continuing education (Table 2). Many of these sites are accessible via a mobile device. Table 3 lists selected useful online sites for authors. Tables 1, 2, and 3 appear back-to-back at the end of this article so you can tear out the page and save it for easy reference.

JADPRO is committed to mentoring new writers and recognizes that advanced oncology practitioners have a wealth of knowledge to share with their

colleagues. This sharing process, provided in part by the publication of your work, is integral to bettering our practice. Our goal is to make the writing process more attainable for the advanced practitioner, both by mentorship and by publishing tools that can increase your chances of publishing success. So start writing! We want to hear from you!

Ms. Vogel is an oncology nurse practitioner, Kingsport Hematology Oncology Associates, Kingsport, Tennessee; and Ms. Viale is an oncology nurse practitioner and nursing consultant, Goleta, California.

REFERENCES

- APA. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Dixon, N. (2001). Writing for publication—A guide for new authors. *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*, 13(5), 417–421. doi:10.1093/intqhc/13.5.417
- Loos, F. (1996). Converting a presentation to a manuscript. *Nurse Author & Editor*, 6(4), 7–8.
- Oermann, M. H. (1999). Writing for publication as an advanced practice nurse. *Nursing Connections*, 12(3), 5–13.
- Sylvia, L., & Herbel, J. (2001). Manuscript peer review—A guide for health care professionals. *Pharmacotherapy*, 21(4), 395–404.
- Tariman, J. D. (2009). Mentoring in publication: A lifelong legacy. *ONS Connect*, 24(1), 8–12.
- Vogel, W. & Viale, P. H. (2010). Writing for publication: References made easier. *The Journal of the Advanced Practitioner in Oncology*, 1(1), 63–64.
- Winslow, E. (2008). Writing for Publication: You can do it! *Journal for Healthcare Quality*, 30(4), 12–16.

Table 1. Searchable Medical Databases

Database	Website	Comments
CDC	www.cdc.gov	Part of the NIH; offers email updates, podcasts, and RSS feeds
FDA	www.fda.gov	Information on food, drugs, medical devices, vaccines, cosmetics, tobacco, and radiation-emitting products
Medline	www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PubMed/	NLM electronic database; gives citation/abstracts for life science journal articles, particularly biomedicine
National Center for Health Statistics	www.cdc.gov/nchs	Part of the CDC
NIH	www.nih.gov	Multimedia information: radio, video, podcasts, newsletters, and RSS feeds
NLM gateway	http://gateway.nlm.nih.gov/gw/Cmd	Broader scope than PubMed covering journals, books, serials, and nonprint media of NLM collection

Note. NLM = National Library of Medicine; NIH = National Institutes of Health; CDC = Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; FDA = Food and Drug Administration.

Table 2. Online Resources for Medical Authors

Database	Website	Comments
BioMed Central	www.biomedcentral.com	Open access publisher of 212 peer-reviewed journals
CancerNetwork	www.cancernetwork.com	Free registration allows access to full text publications, <i>ONCOLOGY</i> and <i>ONCOLOGY: Nurse Edition</i> as well as the <i>Cancer Management Handbook</i>
Directory of Open Access Journals	www.doaj.org	Listing and links to over 6,198 free, full-text journals online
eMedicine	www.emedicine.medscape.com	Open access database with articles on 7,000 diseases and disorders; latest practice guidelines in 59 specialties; search box for medical images
BNET	www.findarticles.com	Searchable database for articles in journals, newspapers, magazines for health, business, technology, and lifestyle
Free Medical Journals	www.freemedicaljournals.com	Free medical literature service; includes journals, books, and podcasts
Google	www.google.com and www.google.com/scholar	Search engine for research on scientific and nursing information; can provide current snapshot on many topics; Google Scholar contains full text articles and book chapters on selected topics
MedicineNet.com	http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/hp.asp	Aimed at consumers; understandable medical information written by US physicians
MedPix	http://rad.usuhs.edu/medpix/parent.php3?mode=default	Free online medical image database
Medscape	www.medscape.com	News, conference information, continuing education; resource centers on various cancers, nurse practitioners, among other topics; specialty sites for hematology and oncology
OncologySTAT	www.oncologystat.com	Identifies the latest, most important articles in oncology; provides abstracts and free full access to selected journals after registration

Table 3. Useful Websites for Medical Authors

Database	Website	Comments
Adobe Reader	www.adobe.com	Free download for Adobe Reader X (10.1)
Bartleby.com	www.bartleby.com	Dictionaries, thesauri, <i>Gray's Anatomy</i> , and other useful references
Citing Medicine	http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/formats/recommendedformats.html	National Library of Medicine Style Guide for authors, editors, and publishers
Equator Network	www.equator-network.org	International resource supporting good reporting of health research; contains information for editors and peer reviewers
Merriam-Webster Dictionary	www.merriam-webster.com	Online medical dictionary
National Academies Press	www.nap.edu/books	Free NAP science, nutrition, and medical books online
NCI Dictionary of Cancer Terms	www.cancer.gov/dictionary	Online dictionary of cancer terms
Nurse Author & Editor	www.nurseauthoreditor.com	International publication for nurse authors, editors, and reviewers (free registration)
NursingWriting	www.nursingwriting.wordpress.com	Blog on scholarly writing and links to writing resources
OneLook	www.onelook.com	Online, searchable portal of every kind and type of dictionary including general, computing, science, technology, and medicine
Online Books	www.digital.library.upenn.edu	University of Pennsylvania's Online Books page
OWL Purdue Online Writing Lab	http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/	Online writing lab at Purdue University which contains information on general writing, research, and citation (APA Style) to assist writers of any skill level
Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association	www.apastyle.org	Online tutorials, frequently asked questions, other resources
Taber's Medical Dictionary	www.tabers.com	Online medical dictionary
University of Toledo	http://mulford.meduohio.edu/instr/	Links to author guidelines for over 6,000 journals in the health and life sciences
US Copyright Office	www.copyright.gov	Contains comprehensive information on copyright law
Vanguard	www.vanguard.edu/emplibary/files/proposal.pdf	Example of an undergraduate research proposal
WhoNamedIt?	www.whonamedit.com	An online, searchable dictionary of medical eponyms
WordsCount	www.wordscount.info	Contains the SMOG reading level calculator; can calculate up to 15,000 words of text