

Chapter 1

Introduction: The Book, Its Philosophy and Its Focus

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Introduction

The use of evidence has become a central part of both faculty (academia) and professional practice. For many, it has become a core element of their career development and opportunity for advancement. Therefore, producing this evidence has become an essential skill for nursing and midwifery academics and qualified practitioners; one that all undergraduate and postgraduate students need to develop as part of their curriculum and for their future careers.

Disseminating the evidence once it has been produced is at the core of this book, and we will not enter into philosophical debates on the nature of what is best evidence and what we do to obtain the evidence itself, nor about which approach is best for dissemination. This book is, arguably, a body of evidence in its own right; one that has collected a range of views and supporting material on writing for publication, different approaches and – most importantly – how to help you translate your ideas, opinions and research findings into meaningful dialogue with those who will want to read them and hopefully influence and contribute to the development of their professional practice.

This written evidence is found in a range of published works: books, peer-reviewed articles, opinion papers and research reports. Therefore, ‘getting this right’ with regard to writing for publication becomes essential for the future scholarship of the nursing and midwifery professions as well as the evidence-based rigour underpinning professional practice.

However, in the twenty-first century the ‘written’ word is no longer the main form of communication; technological advances enable us to disseminate research evidence and other forms of scholarly endeavour in numerous

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innovative ways, but which has also brought with it many new challenges. Maybe, we should now consider 'desktop typing for publication' as an adjunct to 'writing for publication', and offer the basics on not only how to write but also how to use the technology to engage in the dissemination of scholarship. Watson in Chapter 2 of this book refers to some of the practical issues of using a computer in the writing process.

Why publish what we write?

Although publishing in various forms is about sharing best practice and evidence of various kinds, we publish for other reasons. Many of you reading this will recall situations where you read something in a newspaper article that you disagreed with or something you feel strongly about and wished you had the courage to write a letter to the newspaper in reply (see Chapter 16). You may even have reached the stage of having written the letter, but something held you back and you did not send it; possibly having second thoughts that, maybe, the language was too strong!

In many journals, there are opportunities for a similar kind of communications, especially as editorials or guest editorials where, again, it is about having a strong or opposing view on a topic that you feel needs to be raised, resulting often in being a trigger for other responses to be published to further debate (if the editor allows!) or in some cases ideas for further research.

Many clinical practitioners will be developing new ways of nursing that others could benefit from, and unlike in the past, where publishing anything was viewed as the province of 'academia' or faculty staff, there has been a major shift in who is writing for publication. Publishing what you write is no longer the province of the few, evident by the plethora of journals published worldwide.

For colleagues in many countries, having the opportunity to publish what they write is not easy; in particular, where English is not the first language, they may not have journals to write in and most importantly no large publishers to take on the risk of developing new journals or publishing new books in an area such as nursing, which is still developing in many countries. This development also involves the undertaking of research, the writing and dissemination of their work in their own country and, most importantly, sharing this with the international community in their own discipline.

One country that is taking the risk, and publishing a new nursing journal, is Lithuania, with colleagues at the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences in Kaunas publishing their first issue of the journal *Nursing Education, Research and Practice* in September of 2011. The editorial by the editor-in-chief and the dean of the Faculty of Nursing highlights a very important reason for why they are supporting the promotion of publishing what their colleagues write, in relation to where they are in the 'bigger picture' of what most of us have taken for granted:

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[T]he journal specifically aims to become a platform available for Eastern European countries with post-Soviet nursing and midwifery systems to share new ideas and demonstrate rapid and significant advancements in the nursing and midwifery disciplines.

(Macijauskiene and Stankevicius, 2011, p. 1)

Given the fact that the journal was also published at a time of celebrating the 20th anniversary of their Faculty of Nursing, they should be congratulated on this achievement alone, let alone beginning a new journey in publishing what their peers have been writing about in isolation from each other. For many countries and disciplines worldwide, the question 'why publish what we write?' is more than simply a question of having to publish, but retains some of the altruistic stance that many of us began with in relation to helping others through sharing our knowledge and evidence as well-perceived wisdom.

For others, publishing what we write becomes an employment necessity with many jobs requiring applicants to have undertaken research and also published papers in journals. For others, retaining their posts also requires the same criteria, and this is often even more challenging for colleagues and takes them very often outside their 'comfort zone' both in terms of confidence in their abilities to write anything for publication and also needing additional skills to be gained to maximise their chances for success. Others among you will be postgraduate or even undergraduate students, for whom writing elements of their theses or dissertations becomes an integral part of that studentship. Many of you will be expected to write with your supervisors as a continuous process, but most of you will have a publication plan built into your personal and professional learning plans, including publishing at least one or two of your papers in a peer-reviewed international journal. For many undergraduate students, having an opportunity to write for publication may take a different form, as seen in the *Nursing Standard* journal (Lee, 2011, p. 29) where students write their reflection and actions as a result of a practice experience in the 'the real world of nursing'. This is an excellent starting point for the future in managing time, writing and also helping others to learn through their experiences.

We hope that this book will enable this group to gain in confidence and skills, while the more experienced colleagues will use it more for 'branching out' into new areas of publishing their work. Seeing your work, whatever form it takes, in print or electronically for the first time or in a different medium is a wonderful feeling and, in fact, for many of us that initial 'buzz' never really goes away. Mainly, it is because we remain committed, especially as editors, to writing and sharing our knowledge and experience with others, as well as actually enjoying the writing itself. It is not quite the same as having to write to order, when it possibly can be seen as a chore!

Therefore, if publishing what we write is important, either politically or professionally, why do so many people still find it hard to achieve success or even get off the ground?

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What are perceived barriers to successful writing?

In the chapters in this book, you will find examples of why individuals either set up barriers themselves to writing for publication or find obstacles placed in front of them. Many reasons also overlap and are often a combination of both. As mentioned, many of us have to begin somewhere, and all of us writing in this book will have come across barriers of one kind and another since we began to see our work being published for others to read and the material being used in some way in their work or their professional development.

To say that writing for publication is easy would not be the whole truth; however, depending on what you are writing and who you are writing for, some people find some forms of writing much easier than others. This could be writing an article for some, writing a book for others or writing conference abstracts and papers. Some of you reading this in order to learn new skills or knowledge may well be saying, 'it's all right for them, as they already do it', but even for us there are always new things to learn, and in today's publishing climate, there are new media to try out in terms of publishing what we write about.

Barriers written about in other books on writing for publication or articles in journals include:

- time and effort to write;
- difficulty in writing down what you need to say;
- lack of skills in writing for different audiences;
- lack of awareness of what is required for successful publication;
- 'writer's block' – situations where not only it is difficult to write anything at all but also you may be under pressure to write to a deadline and 'your mind goes blank' and panic sets in.

And one that most of us fear when first starting on this 'writing journey', and that is:

- fear of rejection – of having your work rejected and, therefore, self-perception that you have been rejected as well as the actual publication.

With all these barriers that could be affecting your personal commitment to write for publication, how can you be successful in your writing endeavours? Overcoming these barriers is considered in Chapter 2.

How can we succeed?

Books like this one will give you a basic foundation in learning 'how to be successful' at writing for publication. We will offer you links to numerous resources that will support a successful outcome of seeing your work published

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in a variety of different media, but all of which rely on the message you wish to convey and who the audience or readership is.

However, successful publication will for most of you take time to develop but for others it will be as with all those drivers who pass their test the first time, simply putting pen to paper (some of us still do use pen/pencil and paper to write down initial thoughts and outlines!) and writing 'just happens'! These are probably the rare ones but having known some of these they also can 'get stuck', and here they may enlist the help of colleagues.

Successful publishing will depend on some kind of review process, even in writing books or book chapters, and this is a positive aspect of the writing process. Asking a colleague with publishing experience or even asking someone who would be reading your work in a journal is an essential part of developing skills and expertise as an author in whatever capacity. Receiving critique from a colleague on your writing also enables you to refine and revise your paper/book chapter, if necessary, to ensure that, when an article, for example, is published, there is an increased likelihood of it achieving publication.

In addition to achieving success with an actual publication, it is important to consider that there are other things you can do in terms of developing successful writing skills as well as strategies when you are actually writing. Most of these are considered in the following chapters, and certain skills will apply to some and not others. One of the fundamental issues that crosses all of them is the good time management, including setting time aside specifically for writing on your own or writing with others.

Different media for publication will, of course, also have an impact on your writing for publication - and the use of various forms of technology and images as 'writing' is becoming more evident. Technology is to be found in articles themselves as well, through linking to other publications in reference lists as direct access links, and even technology within papers online to illustrate meaning and purpose.

Technology is now the main medium for actual submission of articles themselves, and book manuscripts are no longer sent ring bound to publishers in multiple copies and floppy discs. Regardless of how to convey the messages of our publications, the key is what the message is initially and this will tell us how and what we write as well as where and to whom we send the messages.

Summary

This book can be viewed as a 'lens' into these different kinds of writing media, as well as helping you understand and work with the processes involved in each case. It is also about giving you the confidence either to try something new or to try writing in any form for the first time.

We have experienced co-authors writing from their personal experiences for you. None is an expert at everything, but between us all we have a collective experience and enjoyment of both writing for publication itself and sharing that with you. The title of the book is *Writing for Publication in Nursing and*

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Healthcare: Getting It Right - we like to think that we can both help you on this journey and also travel with you on the journey. As editors ourselves, we are very much aware of how hard getting it right and being successful at writing itself are, and we look forward to feedback from you following publication.

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- Macijauskiene, J. & Stankevicius, E. (2011) *Editorial, Nursing Education, Research & Practice*. Kaunas: Lithuanian University of Health Sciences.

Further reading

- Gimenez, J. (2011) *Writing for Nursing and Midwifery Students*, 2nd edition. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Although aimed at an undergraduate readership, it is a useful book for those endeavouring to write for publication for the first time and also for potential authors where English is not the first language. It explains how to write in a number of different kinds of formats (genres) and offers clarity in terms of glossary of terms used in both academic writing and publishing articles.*
- Webb, C. (2009) Writing for Publication: an easy to follow guide for any nurse thinking of publishing their work, *Nurse Author Editor journal*. Available at: <http://www.nurseauthoreditor.com/WritingforPublication2009.pdf> [Accessed 12 April 2012].

Websites

- The Nurse Author Editor website for authors, editors and reviewers and edited by one of our chapter editors, Dr Charon A. Pierson. Available at: <http://www.nurseauthoreditor.com/> [Accessed 7 October 2011].
- These are links to Elsevier publication websites information for authors. Available at: http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/authorsview.authors/landing_main [Accessed 12 April 2012] and <http://www.nursingplus.com/> [Accessed 12 April 2012] (also has additional resource links to Nurse Author Editor material).