



# Pacific Rim International Journal of Nursing Research

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## Editorial: Why Do We Do Research and Publish?

Scholarly publications serve a crucial function in the research/dissemination/utilization chain, focusing on the dissemination aspect of this three-part chain. In order to be useful and impactful, research has to be of high quality. The *Pacific Rim International Journal of Nursing Research* (PRIJNR), as other scholarly journals, aims to publish high quality research. The aim is to contribute to the improvement of patient care through the advancement of nursing science. Secondarily and incidentally, such publications contribute to the prestige of nursing as a discipline and profession, as well as to the prestige and professional advancement of the scientists who author such publications. As a profession we should not allow these secondary aims to replace THE primary goal, which is the improvement of patient care. This, in the main, is the reason society supports nursing, and indeed, supports any profession – because a profession renders service in a specific area that society needs and values.

In the case of the PRIJNR, an important niche has evolved for it that both supports this goal of promoting the excellence of research, while supporting and recognizing that universities in Thailand and the region have established the requirement that students have to have published or accepted for publication their dissertation research in a peer reviewed international journal prior to the award of the doctoral degree. For the journal to publish doctoral dissertation research is a double-edged sword, in that while it attracts highly accomplished and energetic new scholars and fresh research, at the same time, they are inexperienced in publishing. This then requires major commitments of time and dedication on the part of the students' faculty advisors, the peer reviewers, some of who are editorial board members, and especially on the part of the editor. Without the dedication of these individuals, a submission from a novice writer is not likely to meet the high standards the PRIJNR is committed to.

The novice student/author faces the challenging task of reducing a dissertation with the length of a few hundred pages to a manuscript of approximately 20 pages. This is daunting even to an experienced author. How to capture the essence of a major research project within the boundaries of a journal manuscript and cover all the aspects of the work? Realistically, the journal manuscript cannot cover all elements included in the dissertation, but must focus on presenting the essence of the project in as tight a form as possible. That is to say, cover what is the research question posed, how was it designed to assure as valid an answer to the research questions as possible, and what were the findings; once these are done, the author has to discuss the meaning of the findings for the science in the area, for practice, education, next steps in research or other aspects of nursing.

To achieve this level of abstraction and brevity, the novice writer needs detailed guidance from experts. This involves multiple revisions, averaging 5 revisions, and the willingness of peer reviewers to engage in repeated reviews, and of course, great patience on the part of all involved. It thus speaks to the commitment of the editor-in-chief of the PRIJNR and the "team" she has assembled, that they have willingly and valiantly accepted this major responsibility to be the scientific gatekeepers and to assist in the publication process of doctoral student generated research.

How does the student/budding scholar experience this process? We asked three recent doctoral graduates who were successful in having their doctoral research published in the PRIJNR, using a brief questionnaire, submitting questions and receiving their responses via email. Several noteworthy comments are summarized here:

- they found the questions/suggestions from the reviewers highly beneficial;
- they found a workshop on writing for publication suggested by faculty to be very helpful;
- they appreciated the dedication of the panel of reviewers and all involved in the revision process;
- the process encouraged them to pursue their research in the same area as the dissertation; all three said they were doing so;
- they indicated that they plan to submit a manuscript to the PRIJNR soon, in view of their experiences with their first manuscript;
- they developed self-confidence through their experience;
- they appreciated the quick turnaround in the review process;
- one person found the submission and publication process complex and difficult.

There is no question that on the whole, while the process was challenging for these students/ graduates, the degree of learning and professional growth and confidence in their own abilities made the process highly worthwhile.

It is of note to see a shift here toward programmatic research, as all indicated that they were pursuing work begun in their dissertation, as they developed insights into gaps in existing knowledge, and the role they could play to fill that gap. This is a salutary development indeed; for some time the trend tended to be for nursing research to deal with any topic of interest to the individual at a given moment, without regard to its societal need, state of knowledge at that point and a variety of factors. The field has been advocating the value of programmatic research as each research serves as a building block adding to what exists and thus, creating a cumulative impact.

A comparative note: within the US, where publication prior to the conferral of the degree is not a requirement, but where students are strongly advised to publish from their dissertation research, many faculty members advocate and guide their doctoral graduates to publish several articles from their dissertation work, without engaging in duplication. This is feasible given the extensive coverage of the dissertation which typically does not have space constraints. For example, a main article can report on the research questions, methods and results with implications; another article can present a review of the literature, a more thorough review from the dissertation than can be included in a research paper which presents a summary of the literature; another article might involve instrument development if this was part of the dissertation; another one yet might elaborate on the implications for practice, and publish this type of work in a journal read by practicing nurses. This illustrates the distinct way each manuscript can be approached and published in different journals depending on who the target audience is.

Some dialogue on these issues will be welcome.

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