



Pacific Rim International Journal of Nursing Research

Editorial:

Writing an Appropriate Title and Informative Abstract

An author should never underestimate the importance of the title or abstract of his/her scholarly work. Both the title and abstract are the first introduction one has to the purpose and content of an unpublished manuscript or published article. In fact, if a title is not interesting and/or an abstract is not informative, it is likely a reader will not proceed with reviewing the remaining portions of the document. The title and abstract are what one sees when searching for published articles to review. If neither of these adequately or accurately reflects what is contained in the scholarly work, it may not be read by those searching for the content the article contains.

The title of one's scholarly work needs to be professional, brief and clearly stated. One should avoid making a title "cute" or complex. A "cute" title, while possibly enticing, may not adequately reflect the focus of the document's content.

The title of a complicated research project often requires multiple words to represent the content of the manuscript. As a result, scholars may be tempted to write long titles separated by a colon. While there is nothing wrong with this approach, it is highly recommended the author keeps the title as brief as possible without losing the essence of the document's content.

Writing a professional, brief and clear title is difficult, because the title needs to give adequate details about the contents of the scholarly work. If the details of the title are inadequate, the scholarly work may not be detected in a bibliographic search and/or the reader may fail to select the document to read.

Thus, it is recommended an author, during preparation of a manuscript, write at least three titles for the manuscript being prepared to submit for consideration for publication and then examine the pros and cons of each title. In addition, prior to selecting the title for one's scholarly work, the author needs to share the potential titles with his/her colleagues and ask for their opinions. The author should always be aware that after he/she has submitted his/her scholarly work to a nursing journal for consideration for publication, the journal's editors and reviewers may make recommendations regarding changes to the title or an entirely different title for the scholarly work. In addition, most international nursing journals limit the number of words allowed for the title. The journal's word limits and restrictions most often can be found in the journal's Instructions (Guidelines) to Authors.

When an author fails to comply with a journal's stated instructions or guidelines regarding the title or any other component of a submitted manuscript, the manuscript may be rejected and/or fail to be further considered for publication. Authors always need to keep in mind that the editors of the journal, to which the manuscript has been submitted for consideration for publication, make the final decision regarding the title and content of the articles published in the journal.

Like preparation of a title, writing an abstract can be a difficult task. Preparation of the abstract most often takes place after the content of the manuscript has been completed. However, some authors find it helpful

to prepare the abstract prior to writing the manuscript, so as to help them focus on the flow and sequence of the content they will write in the manuscript. It is up to the author to decide which approach to use. However, regardless of when the abstract is prepared, it must not contain content that is not been presented in the body of the manuscript, nor should it omit important information presented in the body of the scholarly work. In other words, the content of the abstract and the content presented in the manuscript must match. Thus, the author needs to keep in mind that the abstract should be a summarization of the critical content of the manuscript and provide, in a clear, concise and logical manner, the key points regarding the information contained with the body of the paper. In other words, the abstract should be written so as to provide the reader with a quick overview of what the manuscript has to offer. If the abstract fails to provide pertinent information regarding the content of the scholarly work, the manuscript may be overlooked or ignored by potential readers.

Like the title, the abstract is not easy to write and often requires several drafts before being acceptable for publication. Again, it is recommended that the author ask his/her colleagues to review the abstract and to provide him/her meaningful feedback as to whether it is clear, concise and provides enough information to entice them to want to read the content of the manuscript. If they cannot understand, from the abstract, exactly what is contained in the body of the manuscript, the abstract needs to be rewritten.

When preparing the abstract, the author needs to present the content in the same sequence or order as the content will be or has been presented within the body of the manuscript. For example, the content of a manuscript presenting a completed research study may contain the: nature of the field under study; purpose of the research and its design; study subjects and related ethical considerations; measurements and/or interventions used; and findings and their significance. Thus, the abstract for such a research study also should be arranged and presented in the same order.

As with titles, international nursing journals tend to limit the number of words that can be contained within the abstract from 50 to 250 words. Needless to say, the more limited the word count, the more difficult it is to prepare the abstract. Some journals also have requirements regarding the sequence and type of content required within the abstract. The word limit and other requirements regarding the abstract usually can be found in the respective journal's Instructions (Guidelines) to Authors.

Authors need to pay close attention to the journal's Instructions (Guidelines) to Authors regarding the journals' title and abstract requirements, as well as the journal's requirements regarding the other components of submitted manuscripts. Failure to adhere to the requirements of the journal may lead to return or rejection of the manuscript.

Keep in mind that a submitted manuscript needs to make the best impression possible on the respective journal's editors and reviewers. Manuscripts that have been prepared without adherence to the journal's Instructions (Guidelines) to Authors create a negative impression in the eyes of reviewers and editors and most often are found unacceptable for publication.

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