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Editorial: Why Nurses Don't Publish

In order for a profession to advance and grow, scholarly activities must take place. For the profession of nursing, scholarly activities include, but are not limited to: research, publications and expert practice (i.e. clinical, education and administration). If the scholarly activities of research and expert practice are not published, the outcomes of those activities are of no value to the professional community at large. In a sense, if the findings of a research study and outcomes of expert practice are not published, in the eyes of the professional community, they never took place! While this may seem harsh, it is reality.

Why don't nurse researchers, practitioners, educators and administrators publish? From the experience of the editors, the reasons are varied, but not always logical or justifiable. Although there are a number of reasons nurses do not publish, the one's the editors have found to occur most often are: a) "not enough time;" b) "manuscript most likely will be rejected by a professional journal;" c) "too much work to publish;" and, d) "have nothing to say that would be of interest to others."

One can always use the excuse there is not enough time to work on a manuscript to submit for consideration for publication. This probably is the most common excuse nurses use. Anything worth working on, or involves creating something of quality, takes time. Think of the hours professional musicians and athletes spend practicing and perfecting their skills. One does not become accomplished at anything without practice. Writing is no exception. Preparing and perfecting a piece of scholarly work takes time. As humans, we always figure out ways to make time for the things we want to do. Thus, when a nurse indicates he/she does not have sufficient time to write what he/she really is saying is, "I do not want to try to write and publish!" Time really is not the factor preventing someone from writing.

When nurses indicate they do not write because what they write most likely will be rejected by a professional journal, they are demonstrating a defeatist attitude. When was the last time you did something totally right the first time you tried it? For most of us, the first time we do something we do not do it perfectly. In fact, we may not do it very well a number of times, before we begin to learn, from our experience and the input of others, regarding our performance. Thus, just like most things in life, becoming an accomplished writer takes time, practice and input from others. Experienced authors will tell everyone they have had rejections and have needed to make numerous revisions to their work before being notified their work is acceptable for publication.

One does not become a writer by shying away from attempting to write because of fear of rejection. Rejection is part of normal life and we all deal with it on a regular basis. Nurses cannot become published authors if they do not try. When you receive a rejection notice from the editor(s) of the journal to which you have submitted your manuscript, you need to look at the reviewers' and editors' comments and then work on improving the work you submitted. Don't just get angry and feel dejected! Rather, think about what the

reviewers and editors have said and how you can adjust and improve what you have written. If your manuscript has been rejected, make the recommended revisions and submit the revised manuscript to another journal. Don't throw your rejected manuscript away and give up trying to get your work published. Be persistent, and revise and resubmit your work until it is accepted for publication. Always remember to closely follow all journals' "Guidelines or Instructions to Authors." When an author submits a manuscript that does not comply with a journal's guidelines or instructions to authors, the author is telling the journal's editors he/she "does not care about what has been written or the quality of the work submitted!" More than likely, manuscripts not in compliance with a journal's guidelines or instructions to authors will be rejected or returned.

Nurses who indicate writing is "too much work" really do not want to become authors. Yes, writing is a lot of work, but anything of value takes time and effort. Think about the hours nurses spend acquiring nursing knowledge and practice skills. These acts take a lot of time and effort. Think about professional artists and the laborious amount of time they spend perfecting their skills. Writing is an art form using words. Experienced and accomplished authors did not become this way overnight or in a few weeks. It took years of hard work, and long hours of commitment and practice.

Finally, nurses often indicate they "have nothing to say that would be of interest to others." Generally, this is far from the truth. Often practice issues (i.e. clinical, education or administration), in which nurses engage, may be unique, new or different from what other nurses do. There may be a patient care practice that hospital nurses use in their particular setting that would prove beneficial to nurses in other hospitals. However, others cannot implement the particular type of patient care practice unless they know about it. Publishing in a journal or newsletter is the most widespread and efficient way to disseminate information about patient care practices. Regarding nurse educators, maybe one or a group of educators have tried a new approach to teaching content to nursing students and found the approach to be effective. This information needs to be shared with other nurse educators who may be struggling with how to effectively teach the same or similar content. Unless information about the new teaching approach is shared, through publication, others will not know about it. A nurse administrator also may have found a new approach to orienting newly graduated nurses to his/her health care institution that seems to decrease their stress levels. Again, unless this information is shared with others, through publication, it fails to assist in the advancement of nursing practice and science.

In summary, writing for possible publication, although time-consuming and occasionally frustrating, is very rewarding, especially when one receives an editor's letter indicating his/her manuscript has been accepted. It is through publications that nurses contribute to the greater good of the entire professional community. Nurses often have a lot more to offer, in print, than they realize. Start writing so as to share your thoughts, ideas and knowledge with others!

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