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# Journal of Pediatric Nursing

journal homepage: [www.pediatricnursing.org](http://www.pediatricnursing.org)

## Editorial

### Editorial Reflections on Authorship

This editorial is born out of conference call held last month with the members of the Society of Pediatric Nurses Board. During the call, the topic of supporting novice authors was raised and an energetic discussion ensued. This conversation impelled me to think further about the topic as to what I could share with aspiring authors as an editor and author as I have observed and learned valuable insights about publishing over these many years. Many editorials of the past have been written on publishing either to provide readers with words of encouragement or with information to foster the envisioning of the possibility of becoming an author for the first time or embarking on a new writing effort (Betz, 2018, 2016, 2011, 2008, 2001, 1997, 1991; Betz & Green, 2013). This editorial is someone different from those of the past as encouraging strategies for authors are offered to approach authorship more realistically and positively.

First and foremost, becoming an experienced writer does not occur overnight. It really is a never-ending process fraught with stagnant moments of searching for just the right word or phrase; the prolonged periods of staring at the computer screen to generate the next few sentences that capture what is needed to communicate to others. Writing is, in small measure, akin to what the acclaimed inventor Thomas A. Edison's said about the work of inventing, "Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration." So too with writing, it is an undertaking that consumes time, energy and effort and it requires persistence and patience. I am reminded of a sharing by a colleague of mine of her initial writing endeavor many years ago. She shared that she was asked to revise one of her earliest papers more than 20 times. The editor obviously saw potential in the paper. Gratefully, this editor was very patient and supportive. Subsequently and I am very pleased to say, this novice author went on to become an internationally recognized expert in the field. One could speculate what might have been had that person become discouraged and receded from any further serious writing endeavors, perhaps not with her but with someone else. One must ask the question; how many individuals have been stymied in their earliest attempts at authorship?

Given the aforementioned thoughts about sharing an editor's perspective about publishing, I would offer these reflections to the novice authors, to those whose writing experiences have been somewhat laborious, and to those who are contemplating writing again. Here are the musings from an editor of many decades:

- You know more than you think.

Very often, especially with authors who have limited publishing experience, they will be somewhat hesitant to acknowledge the value of their experience and expertise. The combination of clinical acumen gathered through the daily work efforts coupled with the contextual supporting literature is powerful. More insights and information on the clinical "know how" are needed to share with our network of

colleagues. It is fascinating and most helpful to learn what others of our colleagues have developed and implemented in their clinical practices, not only here in the U.S. but internationally as well. As practitioners, researchers and administrators in the field of pediatric nursing, we have much to learn from one another. The reader only has to look at the Table of Contents of this Journal alone to view the number of articles being published by international authors, not only in this Journal but in most all the nursing journals. This phenomenon of publishing papers authored by international colleagues is relatively new in nursing; however, not so in the other sciences and professional literature. However, I would add for several decades we have published papers from international authors as peer reviewed papers, or in the past, in what was the *JPN International Pediatric Nursing* column. Illustrative of the international and global reach that now exists, JPN is published by Elsevier, the largest publisher of health and science journals, whose main offices are in Amsterdam, Netherlands. Our current Journal Manager, Rupesh Jayakumar is in India. Our editorial board is composed of international members from the United Kingdom, Belgium, and Canada.

- Set realistic goals for completion

It is prudent to be circumspect with your timelines for writing a manuscript. Setting unrealistic goals places additional pressures on authors that ultimately can have unfortunate outcomes. The author can feel overwhelmed with the expectations for completion of the manuscript and ultimately its journal submission. These feelings may result in an author choosing to abandon this writing effort altogether. Authors would be well advised to work with a timeline that is accommodating to other employment-related demands and lifestyle priorities. A timeline with an extended period for completing the manuscript is a harbinger for the eventual journal submission.

- Seek collective writing efforts

Collective writing efforts enable leveraging of resources and sharing of writing responsibilities among the authorship team. This approach enables the writing responsibilities to be delegated to each of the members. A collective undertaking enables not only the economy of individual efforts but it makes possible the efficient use of time to getting the work done. Additionally, the collective brainstorming and diversity of perspectives enrich the process itself wherein other writing and content areas are provided, which may not have been the situation with an individual effort.

- Choose individuals who are complementary to your work ethic

Collaborative efforts are not always ideal. One member of the authoring team may not fulfill the original commitment to contribute to the writing effort either by missing deadlines and/or submitting a section that is not comparable to the expected scholarship standard of

the paper. These experiences can be very disappointing and frustrating. Under these circumstances, the perceptive colleague will take note of these behavioral outcomes and act accordingly. It is most opportune to select colleagues who are responsive to deadlines, who produce acceptable narrative content, and complete the task that is requested. A written document detailing the writing responsibilities of each member of the authoring team before the initiation of the writing project can be most helpful to this collective effort.

- Rome wasn't built in a day!

This adage is a reminder that worthwhile efforts that are undertaken consume significant effort and are time consuming. It is important to remember that the expenditure of time for writing is not wasted time if the writer is patient with what appears to be the slow-moving progress of the writing project itself. Creating reasonable targets and allocation of time for the writing project will help to create this experience as being a satisfying, creative and purposeful undertaking. Also, here is one of those "helpful hints" for writing. Before concluding the writing session, add a few notes in the script of the manuscript of "where" or "what" you wanted to proceed with your writing. This prompt will enable the writer to easily proceed to the next portion of writing despite the lapse of time between the writing sessions.

- Reviewer feedback may not be as negative as it appears.

This comment is not met to be disparaging of the insightful and helpful comments most often offered by reviewers to the authors. Reviewers are critical to assisting authors in strengthening their manuscripts. Peer review serves as the cornerstone of publishing as a means of ensuring that the authors of manuscripts are rigorously challenged to improve them to achieve the journal's scholarship standards and is a contribution to the body of literature in the field. The number, depth and scope of comments made by reviewers can feel overwhelming. These comments are not only made to novice writers but to experienced and published authors. It is essential that novice authors not be demoralized when they encounter substantial number of review comments in their manuscripts. It is important to remember that the reviewers are providing guidance that will improve the scholarship and quality of the manuscript. Most reviewers are offering their highly valued expertise to provide genuine assistance and support to the author.

- Explore with others their own writing experiences.

Conferring with colleagues who are experienced authors can be most helpful in terms of providing both informed and unique perspectives on publishing. For example, a colleague may offer insights about submitting to a journal that would be very helpful such as speed of review, the readership audience, and types of manuscripts published. Another insight might be provided about the development of the manuscript itself, which had not been previously considered. Just as important, an experienced author may offer encouragement to the novice writer to embark upon writing the manuscript or share the personal experiences associated with a review that was not a favorable

critique of the work. All in all, reaching out to others who have engaged in the journey of authorship can be a worthwhile and eye-opening experience. Senior authors have considerable wisdom to share with those who are just getting started.

- Learning to write can be achieved in many ways.

Learning to become a writer can be enhanced through a variety of activities and other pursuits. Serving as a manuscript reviewer enables authors to read with a dispassionate perspective. Such an approach enables a writer to review the paper with a fresh pair of eyes enabling a far more objective critique of the manuscript. The reviewer can appraise the paper from a more objective perspective in terms of its organization, the logical flow of the narrative, the way content is presented, sentence structure, and grammatical usage. It is also an opportunity for the reviewer to learn from other authors stylistic approaches not previously considered, the use of expressions, and terminology that is not typically used by the reviewer. It is easier to judge objectively what constitutes a narrative that is well constructed and written by another. Reading is another venue for learning to write for professional purposes. Careful reading "between the lines" beyond the professional purposes of keeping current with the developments in your field of practice is another learning opportunity for writers. Exposure to the style of writing of others and other authors' approach to organizing the narrative beyond the editorial and publishing guidelines of the journals can provide writers with ideas for their own writing projects. Lastly, authors are encouraged to carefully review articles published in journals, particularly journals targeted for the manuscript submission. Every article published in the journal is an example of writing success.

It is my sincere hope that some of these insights and suggestions can be helpful to others who embark upon the journey at whatever stage of writing for professional audiences and contributing to the science and practice of pediatric nursing. Invite the world to learn what you have to offer to your colleagues, your profession and your contribution to the body of knowledge to improve care for infants, children, adolescents, young adults and their families.

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