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# Writing for publication

An easy-to-follow guide for any nurse  
thinking of publishing their work ...

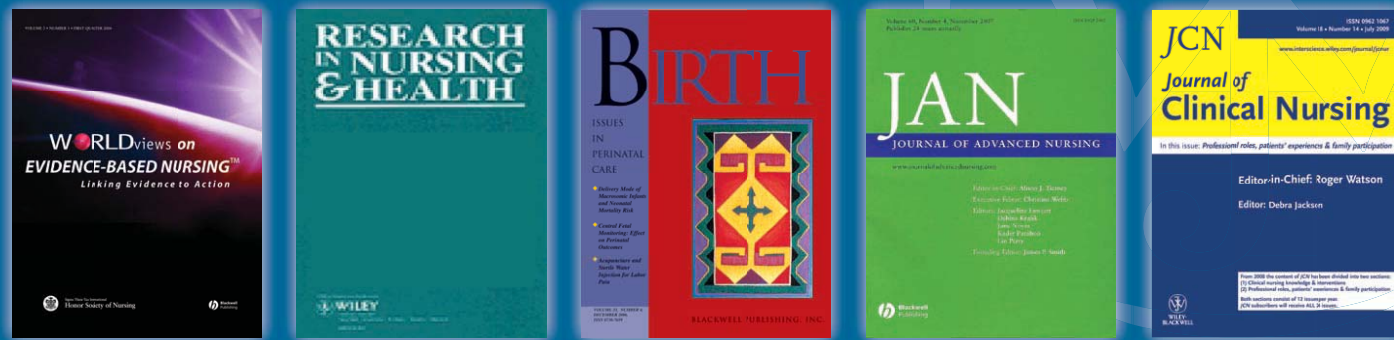
By **Christine Webb**

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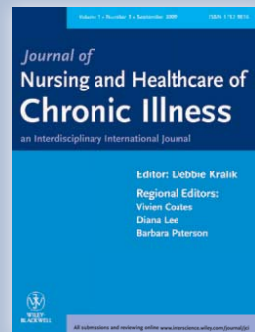
### The Journal of Nursing and Healthcare of Chronic Illness

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- Supports the integration of theory and practice
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Print ISSN: 1752-92816  
Online ISSN: 1752-92824  
Frequency: Quarterly  
2010 Volume: 2

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## INTRODUCTION

Wiley-Blackwell first produced this complimentary *Writing for Publication* booklet in 2005. It was extremely well received by the nurse author community that we have continued to reprint this publication, including relevant updates.

It aims to give useful information and helpful suggestions to nurses who are thinking of writing and publishing an article to help demystify the process. More and more nurses want to do this as nurse education is becoming integrated into universities in many countries, and evidence-based practice is increasingly emphasised in healthcare. Within this reprinted version, the information on Impact Factors, copyright and the finishing touches have been updated. And a new section on Publication Ethics has been added. Thanks are extended to Anthony Watkinson for his contribution to this reprint.

Wiley-Blackwell has an extremely broad range of nursing journals and there is likely to be one for any kind of article that you may be thinking of writing. But the guidelines in this booklet are relevant to almost all kinds of writing, whether for our journals, for other publishers, or for assignments if you are studying on a course.

Wiley-Blackwell provides a free online publication *Nurse Author & Editor* which is available at [www.NurseAuthorEditor.com](http://www.NurseAuthorEditor.com). It will provide a ready source of advice for authors, editors and reviewers as well as reporting on new developments within journal publishing. Throughout this booklet, we have provided you with further resources. There are other excellent reference books in print, such as: *How to Write a Paper*, 4th edition, by George M Hall. For a list of books on writing papers and on peer review, including this one, see [http://authorservices.wiley.com/bauthor/more\\_resources.asp](http://authorservices.wiley.com/bauthor/more_resources.asp).

We hope that you will see this booklet as a useful resource to keep and consult in the future as you set out on your writing endeavours, and we wish you every success.

**Christine Webb**

Technical Editor, *Journal of Advanced Nursing*

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## 1. WRITING FOR PUBLICATION

### How do you get started?

You have decided that you want to publish an article because you want to get your ideas across to as many people as possible. The first step is to work out your strategy for the article, and to do this you will need to ask yourself a number of questions and write down your answers on a sheet of paper. We have suggested some of the most important of these questions below to help you to draw up your strategy.

At this point you might also consider finding a writing mentor. This is someone who has published before, whose opinion you respect and whom you can trust to provide honest feedback and guidance during the various stages of writing your article. It may be a higher degree supervisor or a work colleague. Talk with the person to ensure that they are willing and able to fulfil a writing mentor role.

### Why should you write an article for publication?

Nursing practice should as far as possible be evidence-based, and many nurses are involved in generating evidence about their practice – in practice development projects, doing literature reviews to find the best evidence for their particular specialty, or carrying out research themselves.

We need to share the knowledge that is built up in this way so that others can benefit from our efforts and we can learn from each other on a worldwide basis. In addition, publications may be required for career advancement.

### Who do you want to read your article?

The answer to this question is crucial because it will help you to decide which journal is most appropriate so that you aim the article accurately and it reaches the right readers.

If you want to reach clinical staff who give direct care, then you need to choose a journal that is attractive to and read regularly by this kind of readership. Articles published in this kind of journal will be written in the kind of style that appeals to them and contains the right amount of detail. They are likely to be shorter, use straightforward language, and include easy-to-read features such as boxes and lists of bullet points.

The implications of the article for clinical practice will be clearly stated. These journals may also include commentaries on articles to help readers to understand and critique them.

If your intended readers are researchers, then a more specialised ‘academic’ journal may be appropriate. Some of these journals accept longer articles up to 5000 words long, and they are structured in a conventional format for research reports. However, more ‘popular’ journals also publish research reports, perhaps in a simpler format designed to be reader-friendly for clinical staff and less experienced researchers.

It is important to be clear about your target readers at the outset. Many people make the mistake of writing their article and then looking around to see which journal to send it to. This can mean that time is wasted having to ‘readjust’ the article to fit the journal’s requirements.

### Which journal to publish in?

Researchers may want to pay particular attention to journal impact factors (see page 18) to help establish their reputation for winning further research grants and gaining promotion. However, they might also adopt a ‘dual’ strategy, and publish parallel articles in clinical as well as academic journals so that their work reaches ‘frontline’ practitioners who might use it to develop their practice.

Before starting to write, therefore, check the aims and scope of a range of journals to see which would fit your article best. You can do this by browsing in a healthcare or university library, or on the internet.

To find the aims and scope of Wiley-Blackwell Publishing Nursing journals, go to [www.wiley.com/go/nursing](http://www.wiley.com/go/nursing).

From here you can also see how each journal editor wants their articles to be presented and submitted by looking at the Author Guidelines section of the individual journal’s website.

For example:

- Can you submit the article online, or do you need to send a disk and paper copies (if so, how many?).
- Which referencing system does the journal use – Harvard, Vancouver, etc?

- How long should the article be?
- How should the article be structured – which headings should be used?

### **How will you put your message across?**

There are several different types of article and each journal will have its preferred types and may not accept other types. The most common types are:

- Literature reviews • Clinical articles
- Research reports • Discussion papers
- Short reports • Letter • Opinion pieces

In the following pages we give more guidance for writing the main types of articles and on writing style and presentation.

### **Are you ready now to plan your article?**

Having worked out your answers to these questions and drawn up your strategy, you need to turn this into a plan for the article. This will be very similar to the plans you have written for assignments for courses you have taken.

Having a plan before you start writing helps to make sure that:

- You include everything that you need
- You work efficiently
- You do not have to spend time later making cuts, adding things, and making major changes

### **What should your plan look like?**

Write down:

- The main headings of the article
- The subheadings in each of these sections, if needed
- The number of words you will use for each section

Then check against your chosen journal's guidelines to make sure that you have got it right.

### **Now you are ready to start writing!**

We give more details about many of these aspects in the following pages, so you might want to read through them before putting pen to paper – or fingers to keyboard!

## **2. WRITING A REVIEW ARTICLE**

### **Why write a review article?**

Review articles are very important because they are a useful resource for:

- clinical nurses – by summarising the evidence and giving pointers for practice development
- researchers – by identifying previous studies in the area of interest, and critiquing their methods. This is a great help in planning future studies.
- teachers and students – by summarising and discussing existing knowledge
- the authors of reviews themselves – by making their work accessible to a wide readership. Review articles are the most likely to be read and cited by other people

### **What exactly is a review article?**

The best kind of review article today is probably a systematic review, which is like a research project in itself and is most likely to focus on quantitative studies. A narrative or integrative review is less systematic and all-inclusive. A meta-synthesis is similar to a systematic review, but includes qualitative as well as quantitative studies. Meta-analysis combines the results of a number of clinical trials in order to draw conclusions about treatment effectiveness. There are as yet few nursing research trials which give enough data for a meta-analysis, but it is increasingly common in medical research.

A useful guide to meta-analysis is: Egger M, Davey Smith G and Altman DG (2001), *Systematic reviews in health care: meta-analysis in context*, 2e. BMJ Books, London, available from Wiley-Blackwell.

When planning to write a review article, look at examples already published in your chosen journal.

### **What are the essential points to remember when writing a review article?**

Although there may be differences for each type of review (see below), certain principles apply to all review articles:

- state the question that your review aims to answer

- give as much information as possible on how you searched for the articles in the review, including databases, keywords, dates and languages covered, inclusion/exclusion criteria
- use tables to summarise the articles included
- include a methodological critique of the articles included
- make clear what your review adds to existing knowledge. This means that you must analyse the material and come up with new conclusions. It is not enough just to describe what other people have reported.
- use headings and subheadings to present your analysis of the articles included
- identify the issues arising from your review for nursing practice and further research.

### **Writing up a systematic review for publication**

The methodology of systematic reviews is well-established, as is the appropriate way to write them up. You can find information about this at <http://cochrane.co.uk/en/collaboration.html>. This site will also give you information about their Handbook for carrying out and reporting systematic reviews. Table 1 also shows the information needed in a published report of a systematic review.

### **Writing up a narrative or integrative review for publication**

Some journals may also have guidelines for presenting systematic reviews, and an example can be found at <http://www.journalofadvancednursing.com/default.asp?file=guidereview>

### **Writing up a meta-synthesis for publication**

Meta-synthesis is a more recent development but the general principles for reporting a systematic review apply to this too. A useful resource is:

Paterson BL, Thorne, S E, Canam, C and Jillings, C. (2001) *Meta-study of qualitative health research: a practical guide to meta-analysis and meta-synthesis*. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.

**Table 1. Systematic Review Report**

Evans, D. (2003) *Collegian*, Journal of the Royal College of Nursing, Australia. 11, 2, 8-11. Reproduced with permission.

Review Activity	Information Required in Published Report
Review focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explicit statement of review questions or hypothesis</li> <li>• Rationale for conducting the review</li> </ul>
Search strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Database searches</li> <li>• Search terms</li> <li>• Any restrictions in the search</li> <li>• Journals hand-searched</li> <li>• Organisations and topic experts contacted</li> <li>• Internet search strategy</li> <li>• Bibliography and reference list search</li> <li>• Outcome of the search process</li> </ul>
Study selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion criteria</li> <li>• Exclusion criteria</li> <li>• How the criteria were used</li> <li>• Outcome of the selection process</li> </ul>
Critical appraisal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criteria used to determine study quality</li> <li>• Processes used to appraise studies</li> <li>• Outcome of appraisal process</li> </ul>
Data abstraction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process used to abstract data</li> <li>• Strategies used to manage missing data</li> </ul>
Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Methods used for meta-analysis</li> <li>• Investigation of heterogeneity</li> <li>• Comparisons undertaken</li> <li>• Sensitivity analyses</li> <li>• Sub-group analyses</li> </ul>
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Characteristics of studies included in the systematic review</li> <li>• Summary of data for each treatment group of the included studies</li> <li>• Pooled data from meta-analysis</li> </ul>
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of major findings</li> <li>• Limitations of review</li> <li>• Implications for research</li> <li>• Implications for practice</li> </ul>

Other helpful references are:

Glasziou P (2001) *Systematic reviews in health care. A practical guide*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Khan K, Kunz R, Kleijnen J and Antes G (2003) *Systematic reviews to support evidence-based medicine. How to review and apply findings of healthcare research*. Royal Society of Medicine, London.

### 3. WRITING A CLINICAL ARTICLE

Writing a clinical article is an important way of getting your message to frontline healthcare staff. This is, after all, what nursing is all about.

#### **Why nurses do not read about and implement research in their practice**

Unfortunately, we know from a wealth of studies on implementing evidence-based guidelines and other research material that most practising nurses:

- do not read research reports
- do not read nursing journals regularly
- are 'turned off' when they do try to read them
- find the language too complicated and full of jargon
- do not understand statistics because they are not used to them
- do not understand the majority of these papers
- cannot evaluate the quality of the research

You can read more about these problems and suggestions for overcoming them in:

Adamsen L, Larsen K, Bjerregaard L and Madsen JK. (2003) *Danish research-active clinical nurses overcome barriers in research utilization*. *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences* 17,1, 57-65

Estabrooks CA, Floyd JA, Scott-Findlay S, A. O'Leary KA and Gushta M (2003) *Individual determinants of research utilization: a systematic review*. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 43, 5, 506-520

#### **How can you try to avoid these pitfalls?**

If busy clinical nurses are to read research, understand and evaluate it, and consider whether it is suitable to be implemented in their practice areas, it needs to be made as user-friendly as possible.

Your publication strategy might include writing two articles on the same topic – one in a professional or clinical journal aimed at practitioners, and another in a more academic journal for researchers – but see the advice on Publication Ethics.

Many of the suggestions in other parts of this booklet will help with this, but here are some points to bear in mind when planning and writing a clinical article:

- Make the article easy to follow
- Use headings and subheadings to point the way for readers
- Use bullet points, boxes, trigger questions, etc to liven up the article and stimulate readers' interest
- Use simple and direct language
- Write in the first person
- Address readers directly, e.g. in your clinical area you may like to consider ...
- Avoid research 'jargon' and if technical terms are needed, explain them or give explanations in a glossary or box
- Do not make the article longer than it needs to be – include the essentials but do not 'waffle'
- Say why the points you are making are important and how they might be used to improve nursing practice
- Explain why the research you are quoting is rigorous and suitable for clinical application, if appropriate
- Consider whether the technical details you plan to include are really needed and understandable by non-specialists, e.g. research methodology, statistics
- Consider omitting technical material, but giving a reference to another article reporting this aspect in more detail
- Give clinical examples
- State the clinical relevance of what you are writing about
- Give suggestions about how to find out more about the topic, including websites

► For more advice on English and writing style, see page 15.

### Get some consumer feedback

Find some practitioners who are possible 'consumers' of your article. Tell them about your ideas and ask them what they would like to read about in the article. Draw up your plan based on their suggestions and then check it out with them again.

When you have written your first draft consult your mentor, and perhaps also ask at least a couple of your 'consumers' to read it and tell you frankly what they think:

- Can they understand it?
- Is it interesting?
- Is it relevant to their practice?
- Give them red pens and ask them to write in suggestions, corrections, comments – whether positive or negative

Consider their feedback carefully and not defensively, and make the necessary changes, checking back with them again. Put their names in an Acknowledgement to the paper – this will reward them and encourage them to help you again next time. Give them a copy of the article when it is published.

## 4. WRITING AN EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

When carrying out a research study you need to think carefully about your publishing strategy. It is best to start planning this when you first begin the research in order to avoid misunderstandings as the work progresses to publication stage such as who will be listed as authors on published articles and where to submit them.

### Structuring the article

Consult your chosen journal's website to see if there is a preferred structure or format for headings and subheadings. If these are not specified, Table 2 is a general guide to how to construct your article:

**Table 2. General author guidelines for structuring an article**

Taken from the *Journal of Advanced Nursing* (available at [www.journalofadvancednursing.com](http://www.journalofadvancednursing.com))

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	• Rationale, context
<b>BACKGROUND</b>	• This should be a substantial, critical literature review • Should end with conclusions drawn from the review for the study
<b>THE STUDY</b>	<i>(subheadings preferably in the following order)</i>
<b>Aim/s</b>	• Include research objectives/questions/hypothesis(es) if appropriate
<b>Design/Methodology</b>	• For quantitative studies this should be, for example, survey, randomised controlled trial, quasi-experimental, descriptive, cross-sectional, etc • For qualitative study this should be, for example, grounded theory, phenomenology, ethnography, etc
<b>Sample/Participants</b>	• Type – random, stratified, convenience, purposive (state what purpose), etc • Size • Description • Justification for the above • Was a power calculation done, if appropriate, and if not, why not? • Response rate
<b>Data collection</b>	• Subheadings for different types if appropriate, e.g. questionnaires, interviews, observation • Pilot study – if done, what changes (if any) did this lead to for the main study? • When the data collection was undertaken
<b>Validity and reliability/ Rigour as appropriate</b>	• Statement of criteria used – should be appropriate to the design/methodology • Steps taken to ensure this – if audit trail, research journal, peer assessment, etc, mentioned then give the results of this – do not just mention that it was done
<b>Ethical considerations</b>	• Ethics committee approval • Information and guarantees given to participants • Any special considerations, and how dealt with
<b>Data analysis</b>	• Including software used, if appropriate
<b>RESULTS/FINDINGS</b>	• Start with description of actual sample studied • Subheadings as appropriate • For qualitative research – findings and discussion/literature may be integrated
<b>DISCUSSION</b>	• Start with limitations • Must be linked to the literature
<b>CONCLUSIONS</b>	• Real conclusions, not just a summary/repetition of the findings • Recommendations for practice/research/education/management as appropriate, and consistent with the limitations

## 5. PRESENTATION OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Here are some tips to help you with designing tables and figures for your article.

### All tables and figures

- Simple and easy to follow tables and figures are best. Too much 'clutter' gets in the way of understanding your main message.
- Check the journal guidelines
  - Is there a limit on the number of tables or figures you can use?
  - Does the journal use colour, or black and white?
  - What guidelines should be followed when producing electronic artwork?
- Place the tables and figures at the end of the article. Do not put them within the text – they will be placed appropriately when the printers draw up the proofs.
- Refer to all tables and figures in the text, for example – See Table 1, Figure 2 shows that ...
- In the text of the article, pick out the highlights or main points that the table/figure is telling your readers.
- Number tables and figures in separate sequences, e.g. Table 1, 2, etc, Figure 1, 2, etc.
- Give each table/figure a concise heading that summarises its content.
- Try to avoid abbreviations. But if they are essential, give them in full in a footnote to the table, even if you have already explained them in the text.
- Each separate table/figure should 'stand alone', i.e. should be understandable without having to refer back to the text
- Give the number of cases/sample size to which the table/figure refers, e.g. N=120
- Do not put a 'box' around tables and figures.

### For tables

- Make sure that numbers, especially if they have decimal points, line up properly – using right justification for these columns is the easiest way to do this.
- Round numbers to 2 decimal places, except for statistical significance levels.
- If you are indicating that some numbers represent statistically significant differences, give the test used and significance level – preferably in columns of the table rather than footnotes.
- Give column and row totals where appropriate.
- Avoid 'busyness' - do not use lines to separate columns.
- Only use lines to separate rows if the rows deal with different types of variable, e.g. age, income, nursing qualification.

### For figures

- With figures, avoid decorative 'background', e.g. shading, patterned bars – use plain white, grey or black.
- Two-dimensional figures work best
- Label both axes of figures in a sans-serif font (e.g. Helvetica).
- If multiple parts exist in a figure then each part should be labeled with (a), (b), (c), etc. and have an explanation in the legend.

## 6. PUBLISHING FROM A RESEARCH THESIS

### Agreeing a publication strategy

It is important to discuss publications at the very beginning of your work on a Master's degree dissertation or doctoral thesis. Your supervisor(s) will play a major role in helping you to develop your ideas, carry out the work, and write up the thesis. Therefore it is appropriate that you agree a strategy with them in order to ensure that it is sound and issues such as co-authorship have been discussed and agreed.

Journals are likely to have a policy on who can be included as an author and who should be acknowledged as making a contribution, but not as an author (see Publication Ethics). When your supervisor(s) have participated in writing an article, then it is probably most appropriate that you are the first named author, followed by their names in the order agreed with them. It is conventional that the first named author is recognised as doing the major part of the work, and the others are seen as making a lesser contribution.

You can find out more about publication strategies from theses, other aspects of doing a research degree, and having constructive supervisory relationships in:

Dunleavy P (2003) *Authoring a PhD. How to plan, draft, write and finish a doctoral thesis or dissertation*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

Rugg G and Petrie M (2004) *The unwritten rules of PhD research*. Open University Press, Milton Keynes (2nd edition due 2010).

### When should you publish from your thesis?

It is usual to wait until your thesis is finished before writing papers for publication. However, it might be appropriate to publish an article while you are still working on the study:

- If you have discovered something genuinely new and want to establish your intellectual property rights (see page 20) and show that you are the originator of the discovery or invention.
- If you are doing a multi-stage study and one part is completed.

- If you have material for a methodological article.
- If it is a requirement of your doctoral programme that you publish articles before the examination or defence of your thesis.

It is essential to discuss this with your supervisor(s) in order to judge whether it is a good idea to write an article at this stage, or whether it would divert you from the main objective of finishing the project or thesis. It may also be premature to publish ideas or data that later need to be modified.

### Implementing a publishing strategy

This may be the biggest piece of work you will ever do, and it is vital to publish your findings while they are still fresh and relevant. It is tempting, once the relief of finishing the thesis, having the examination and celebrating your success are over, to move on to new work. After three or more years on the same project, you may feel burnt out with it. But you have so much material already there and it would be a great shame not to use it.

Discuss with your supervisor(s) how many articles you will write, what will be included in each, the timetable for writing and submitting them, and how you will collaborate on the writing.

### You might be able to write:

- A literature review article
- A methodological article
- One or more articles on study results

However, it is important to bear in mind the issue of 'salami slicing' (trying to get too many articles from the one study – or duplicating the material in more than one article (see Publication Ethics).

### Is it easy to turn a thesis into articles for publication?

Unfortunately, even after you have done such a great job writing your thesis, you cannot submit it in the form of articles without sometimes quite major modifications. Resist the temptation to do a 'cut and paste job'!

A journal article is quite different in many respects from a thesis in terms of:

- Length and amount of detail needed on a topic
- Depth of methodological discussion needed
- Language and style
- Interest-value of the material
- Audience

This brings us back to several vital issues:

- Work on the publications with your supervisor(s) - they are likely to be experienced writers and so will have a feel for how to develop articles from the thesis
- Consult libraries or journal websites to identify the most appropriate journals for your articles
- Make sure that you follow the journal author guidelines closely to improve the chances of acceptance of your article.

### **Caution!**

Unfortunately, not all student projects are suitable to be turned into an article for publication. Some are just too small-scale and/or local. This does not mean that your work was not valuable – after all, you were awarded the degree! But a piece of work done for one purpose does not always lend itself to another. If in doubt about whether to spend time turning your work into an article, write an abstract of the proposed article and email it to the journal editor asking if it will be suitable.

## 7. PUBLICATION ETHICS

If an author fails to conform to the ethical standards which are now becoming the norm in formal scholarly communication (in this case in journals) the failure will not usually be discovered before publication. The article will be published if the quality of the science is good. However if the authors are subsequently found to have transgressed the ethical code, at the least they will be asked to agree to a retraction (see below) and, in certain cases, the university or department will be involved with resulting danger to jobs and promotion and it will prove difficult for the authors to have further articles accepted.

Most publishers have responded to concerns in the academic community by promoting publication ethics. The Wiley-Blackwell Best Practice Guidelines can be accessed from the Author Guidelines and is often called Blackwell Publishing Ethical Guidelines in the list of useful websites immediately before section 1 of the Guidelines. The full title of the actual document is *Best Practice Guidelines on Publication Ethics: A Publisher's Perspective*.

### **Redundant publication**

It is possible to publish what is substantially the same article in more than one journal. It is called redundant publication. It is easy to forget that one presentation of results can, for example, have been published in the proceedings of a conference and sometimes in a very similar form offered for submission to a journal. Sometimes it can be allowed e.g. if one version is in a different language. There should always be attribution i.e. the first publication should be referenced. Examples of allowable duplication are given in *Best Practice Guidelines on Publication Ethics* (see above). Editors of journals should always be consulted. Unfortunately there are scholars who are desperate to get published and who consciously offer articles (with small alterations) to a number of journals at the same time. Publishers now offer editors software which should enable earlier publication repeated in a submission to be spotted but it is impossible to detect more or less simultaneous publication until later – but it is almost always detected sooner or later and the consequences can be severe.

Why is there so much fuss about this sort of practice? It relates to the gate keeping role of journals. It is not just a matter of wasting valuable space – more and more

important in an age of information overload – it is a matter of skewing the scientific literature which can have important consequences, for example where meta-analyses inadvertently cover the same results more than once. Redundant publication undermines science.

### **How many articles can be published from a research study?**

This raises the thorny question of 'salami slicing' – the term used when the same study or data are used across more than one article so that the resulting articles are thin on original findings. Decisions do need to be made on how to 'slice up' a research project for publication. It is important to be aware of the danger of trying to publish small sections of a study in several separate articles, simply with the objective of collecting publications rather than with addressing in depth different aspects of the same study, or reporting that study in different ways for different kinds of reader. This 'salami slicing' can lead to misrepresentation, for example by decontextualising the findings or losing the benefits of using triangulation in the research being reported.

Now that articles are published online, this is much easier to detect. Authors must be honest and act with integrity because editors and reviewers cannot be aware of everything that is published. All manuscripts are considered on the understanding that they have not been published previously in print or electronic format nor are under consideration by another publication or medium. If you do not point out possible duplications or other potential problems to the journal editor, your reputation will be damaged and the article may not be published.

### **Plagiarism**

The big topic for discussion is Plagiarism which is usually dealt with by the simple statement that the submission must be an original article. It is important to avoid plagiarism. What does it mean? In practical terms the following two sentences represent a good way of looking at the real meaning, though only the second refers to what is actually an act of plagiarism:

- Do not offer work for publication that has already been published elsewhere.

- Do not pass off the work of someone else as if it were your own.

It is against national law and international conventions to use copyrighted material without permission or acknowledgement. One legal definition is “passing off”: pretending work is yours when it is in fact done by someone else. Again it is not as difficult as those outside the scholarly community might think to commit plagiarism in error. We all cut and paste and may forget where we got material from. This is a good reason to carefully document any data creation your research activities and those of your staff have led to.

### Transparency

Other ethical issues covered by the document mentioned above can be and is indeed summed up by the word Transparency. There is a growing insistence among journal editors in medical and health related disciplines that certain publication policies have to be understood, accepted and followed by authors.

In particular there are policies relating to:

1. Conflict of interest – it is important to declare all the funding which made the research possible. Journals differ in the way in which they want funding to be acknowledged. Read the Author Guidelines to find out how the journal you are submitting to wants the declarations to be made.
2. Registering clinical trials – clinical trials should be registered in publicly-accessible registries. There is a growing tendency for journals also to insist on any data referred to in the article to be deposited in an appropriate repository but not all journals as yet have a firm policy on this point
3. Respecting confidentiality – protecting patients from being recognised if used or photographed in the research and in the publication.
4. Protecting research subjects, patients and experimental animals. Journal editors are not responsible for policing practice in these areas but many journals do ask that authors commit to following specific codes of practice and journal editors specifically reserve the right to reject articles on the grounds that the authors are not able to confirm observation of such codes

### Authorship

Finally there is another area where misunderstanding is possible and this concerns the authorship of the submitted article. This is a complex issue. This is not always as obvious as it may seem at first sight who the authors of the article will be. There is a great deal of pressure on researchers to gain as many high quality ‘outputs’ as possible, but a number of ‘cautions’ are needed.

Only people who have contributed to writing the article should be named as authors. These are likely to be all those who have made a substantial contribution to the work. All those named as authors must read and check the final version, and some journals will require signed consent from all authors as evidence that they have played appropriate roles in the work. Agreeing authorship at the start of a project avoids embarrassment at the later stages.

Normally, the person who has played the major role in research design, data generation and analysis, and writing the article will be the first named author. Research teams may divide up the publications so that each member has one for which they are the first name. Publications resulting from student projects should have the student as the first named author, and the supervisor(s) afterwards if they have made a major contribution both to the work and to the article.

Others, who have played a part in the study, but in a more minor way, could be mentioned in the ‘Acknowledgements’. This includes, for example, managers who have granted research access, or patients / clients who have provided data in the case of empirical studies. Some journals have an ‘author contribution form’ asking for:

- the names of all authors and details of the contribution each made to the work described in the article
- details of any funding
- details of any acknowledgements
- a statement indicating whether ethical approval was granted for the study described

## 8. ENGLISH AND WRITING STYLE

It is important to write in a ‘reader-friendly’ way so that people can understand your article easily and enjoy reading it. For international journals, this is essential because many readers will not have English as their first language.

The principles for readability are the same as those that you may have used already when writing patient information leaflets and health education materials – simple words, short sentences, direct speech, no jargon.

### Academic writing?

So-called ‘academic writing’ style is often difficult and boring to read! This is a pity, because it is possible to communicate quite complex ideas in a straightforward way and make them accessible to readers. After all, if they can’t follow what you are writing about, they may not persist with reading it and your message will be lost. Even worse, poor writing style puts people off reading journals – in almost all studies of using research to inform practice, nurses say that they find these articles difficult to read and full of jargon (see below). Remember that your style and language must be universally meaningful and culturally sensitive.

### Reader-friendly writing

A simple style with short words and short sentences is nearly always best. Avoid trying to impress people with long words, and do not use a thesaurus to find alternative words – this often results in using a word incorrectly or simply baffling readers!

Write in the first person – I or we – rather than the third person – the author, the researcher, etc. So in a research-based paper, for example, write ‘We interviewed patients postoperatively...’ rather than ‘The researchers interviewed patients postoperatively’. Use a direct approach. Again, ‘We interviewed patients ...’ is better than ‘Patients were interviewed’.

### International Relevance

While writing your article, think constantly about your chosen journal’s potential diverse international readership and keep asking yourself whether a reader or region or country very different from your own will be able to make sense of everything in your article.

Also, think constantly about how you present your work in a way that will emphasise its contribution to knowledge. If you only have ‘information’ to present that has relevance to your own locality, then you should be publishing in a local or national journal and not an international journal. For more information see <http://www.journalofadvancednursing.com/default.asp?file=guideIntRelevance>

### Singulars, plurals and gender

Writing in the plural avoids several kinds of problems:

- Frequent repetition of his/hers or she/he, etc. Instead use the plural – they.
- Overuse of ‘the’, as in ‘the patient with diabetes ...’ or ‘the nurse should ...’ Instead write ‘patients with diabetes ...’ or ‘nurses should ...’

### Jargon

One person’s jargon is another person’s specialist, technical language. Sometimes we need to use technical terms, but these need to be explained to make sure that non-specialist readers can understand them. Examples of jargon are ‘D & E grades’ instead of ‘staff nurses’, and ‘scope’ instead of ‘endoscope’.

### Abbreviations

Explain abbreviations the first time you use them, for example:

- National Service Framework (NSF)
- American Academy of Nurse Executives (AONE)
- National Health Service Executive (NHSE)
- Coronary artery bypass graft (CABG)

Some of these may be obvious to you, but not to someone working in another specialty or from a different country.

It is also important not to use the single word ‘nurses’ as shorthand for ‘nursing staff’. ‘Nurse’ should always refer to a Registered Nurse (note the capital letters). If others kinds of workers are included, such as nursing aides, then ‘nursing staff’ is the correct term.

### **When English is not your first language**

When English is not your first language, the advice often given is to write the drafts of the paper in English, even if this causes real difficulty, rather than writing in the language of birth and then having the paper translated. The key need is for 'polishing' the paper, and there are now many services set up to provide this work, to help make the text clear and comprehensible. Wiley-Blackwell recommends such services. This list is given at [http://authorservices.wiley.com/bauthor/english\\_language.asp](http://authorservices.wiley.com/bauthor/english_language.asp). There is a limited choice here and many authors will want to look locally. Most researchers will have departmental contacts with individuals, often native English speakers, who can do this job.

### **Use your word processor**

Use the spelling and grammar checkers on your word processor to help you avoid most of these errors.

### **Checking and re-checking your article**

When you think you have finished writing your article, there are still several steps to be taken. Read it out aloud to yourself to check that it makes sense, has a logical order, and the punctuation is in the right places – if you can breathe naturally as you read it out, then the punctuation is in the right places.

Ask your writing mentor to 'peer review' the article for you. Also, find someone to represent your target readers, such as a staff nurse if it is a clinical article or a new researcher if it is a research report. Ask them to read the article and tell you if they can understand it easily, or whether there are parts that need to be written more clearly or in more detail.

### **Resources to help you to write well**

Some journal websites have sections for this. See, for example, <http://www.journalofadvancednursing.com/default.asp?file=guidereadability>

Other useful resources are:

Plain English Campaign. A–Z of alternative words. Plain English Campaign, New Mills. (available at <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/files/alternative.pdf>)

Silverman J, Kurtz S and Draper J (2005) *Skills for communicating with patients*, 2e. Radcliffe Publishing Ltd, Oxford.

Turnbull A (2001) *Plain Words for Nurses: Writing and Communicating Effectively*. Foundation of Nursing Studies, London

## **9. THE FINISHING TOUCHES**

Some things are best left until the main part of the article is written. It is often easier then to decide on the title, construct the abstract, add the keywords and insert the references.

### **Discoverability**

With the majority of readers accessing your article online, it is essential they are able to find or 'discover' your work. Search engines have their own algorithms for ranking sites but many use the Google model and rank on relevancy of content and links to the site from other websites. Most search engines scan a page for keyword phrases, giving extra weight to phrases in headings and to repeated phrases.

### **The title**

Construct a clear, descriptive title. It should be concise and informative, but contain the essential words that will grab readers' attention and let them know what your article is about. The search engine assumes that the title contains all of the important words that define the topic of the piece and thus weights words appearing there most heavily. This is why it is crucial for the author to choose clear, accurate titles. Think about the search terms that readers are likely to use when looking for articles on the same topic as yours. There should be no abbreviations in the title.

### **The abstract**

Journal styles for the abstract vary, so again it is essential to check the precise guidelines for your chosen journal. For example, some require a structured abstract (with subheadings), while others may ask for bullet points. A maximum number of words will also usually be specified. You should reiterate the key words or phrases from the title within the abstract itself. Although we can never know exactly how search engines rank sites (their algorithms are closely-guarded secrets and often updated), the number of times that your key words and phrases appear on the page can have an important effect. Use the same key phrases, if possible in the title and abstract. Note of caution: unnecessary repetition will result in the page being rejected by search engines so don't overdo it.

### **Keywords**

The choice of keywords is also important for computerised searching purposes. People who need to access your article to inform their own writing or research will only be able to do so if you use keywords that indicate the essential aspects of its content.

For example, you may need to give keywords for:

- the patient/client group who feature in the article, e.g. children, carers, older people
- the setting that it applies to, e.g. acute care, community, nursing homes
- the type of paper, e.g. concept analysis, literature review, instrument validation
- the research design or methodology, e.g. randomized controlled trial, grounded theory, survey
- the research approach or methods used, e.g. discourse analysis, questionnaire
- the professional group involved, e.g. nurses or nursing, midwives or midwifery

### **References**

As you are writing the article, it is vital to keep a record of the exact details of all the sources you cite (articles, books, chapter, theses, etc). Again, journals vary in the format they use for references and so it is essential to follow the author guidelines closely. The main variations are the Harvard and Vancouver systems, but even within these, journal styles may differ slightly. When you have written the article and added the lists of all the sources you have quoted, it is vital to double-check that:

- The references in the main body of the article and in the references list match exactly the format stated in the journal's author guidelines
- All details of the references are correct in both places, e.g. spelling of names, publication details
- The references in the list are the same ones that you have cited in the article. Make sure that you do not have any in the list that are not mentioned in the text, and conversely that all those in the text appear also in the references list.

## 10. THE IMPACT FACTOR

Awareness and the perceived importance of the Impact Factor have increased considerably in recent years. However, exactly what an Impact Factor means and what it tells us is often the cause of considerable confusion and debate.

The following is intended to help allay some of the misunderstandings surrounding the Impact Factor.

### **What is an Impact Factor?**

The Impact Factor was devised by, and is calculated by, the Institute of Scientific Information (ISI). ISI, part of Thomson Reuters, lists over 8,500 journals under various categories within the Sciences and Social Sciences disciplines.

Broadly speaking, the Impact Factor is a measure of the 'worth' of a journal – as measured by the number of citations it receives. Specifically, the Impact Factor for a given year is defined as the total number of citations received by the journal in that year to articles published over the previous two years, divided by the total number of citable items published by the journal in that two year period.

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### **What does a journal need to do to get an Impact Factor?**

To merit inclusion in the ISI database (and therefore to receive an Impact Factor) a journal must pass a vetting procedure which begins with an ISI in-house editor, with appropriate subject expertise, and concludes with a review and confirmation by the entire ISI editorial team. The assessment involves a number of parameters, including regularity of publication, profile of the editorial team, whether the journal is peer reviewed, the relevance and topicality of the contents, and whether the specialty is sufficiently covered already within ISI.

### **Are Impact Factors important? If so, why?**

For some authors – rightly or wrongly – the Impact Factor is a significant criterion when selecting a journal for the article they want to have published. The reason for this is that, for many people, a journal which has an Impact Factor/high Impact Factor is deemed to be one of high quality (relatively speaking). Historically, this has been the view of those who allocate research funding or determine academic promotion. But this is changing: more and more, the quality of an article is considered on an individual basis rather than on the basis of the journal's Impact Factor in isolation. Assessing articles at an individual level makes a lot of sense as, in theory, a journal could receive a high Impact Factor by publishing one heavily cited article, alongside a number of articles that are seldom cited.

What is more, not only is it contentious to assume any link between citation numbers and the quality of material published, it may be that a journal receives fewer citations because the material it publishes has been less widely disseminated compared to competitor journals (not that the quality of the journal is any worse than other journals in its field). Pleasingly, the number of citations received by articles published in Wiley-Blackwell nursing journals, as a percentage of the total citations received by nursing titles, stands at 42% (2007) (source: ISI).

### **What about those journals that do not have an Impact Factor?**

So where does this leave journals which do not have an Impact Factor? Firstly, not having an Impact Factor does not automatically mean a journal is not publishing material equal to, or even better than, material published in journals that do have an Impact Factor. In addition to the above, the journal could be new, and so yet to have published sufficient material to have received a full ISI assessment. Likewise, it could be that the journal focuses on material that is less likely to gain (or indeed increase) an Impact Factor – for instance, case reports which tend to be less frequently cited. This does not necessarily mean that the journal is of any less value – perhaps just that its editorial team have chosen to publish articles more suited to a specific target audience.

In addition, some subject areas (including nursing) are less time sensitive. Consequently, the two year time-frame for assessing a journal's Impact Factor is not always a true reflection of the worth of a journal: some journals have articles which continue to be highly cited – or start being cited – three or four years after publication, but are not included within the current ISI calculation for assessing an Impact Factor.

The Impact Factor has tended to dictate which journal some authors (particularly academics) choose to submit to, and this is likely to continue for the reasons (and misunderstandings) outlined above. Given that there is no obvious alternative for measuring the 'worth' of a journal, this is understandable. However, the Impact Factor should not be the only factor considered when choosing which journal to publish in. Referring back to the earlier section entitled "Who do I want to read my article? Is a better starting point.

### **Alternatives methods for measuring impact**

There are also other metrics and methods for evaluating the impact of journals. Most rely on the same data as the Impact Factor, used in a slightly different way.

The Five Year Impact Factor looks at citations from a certain year to articles published in the previous five years, rather than the previous two years as the Impact Factor does.

The EigenFactor (and related metric Article Influence) also look at a five-year window, but additionally seek to resolve some of the problems of the Impact Factor by removing self-citations from the calculation and weighting citations by the impact of the citing journal.

The Scimago Journal Rank does not rely on ISI's data but rather Elsevier's competitor index, Scopus. Like the Impact Factor, it essentially measures citations per article, but removes self-citations and weights cites as the Eigenfactor does.

Not all metrics look at journals. The H-Index is used to evaluate individual authors; an author has an H-Index of, say, five when he or she has published at least five articles, each of which has been cited at least five times, or an H-Index of ten when he or she has published at least ten articles, each of which has been cited at least ten times. There are numerous similar metrics that evaluate authors in the same way.

## 11. COPYRIGHT ISSUES

### What is Copyright?

The general purpose of copyright is to provide the holder with rights to control the way in which the material they 'own' can be used. The rights can cover any number of things including how material is distributed, copied and adapted.

A Copyright Transfer Agreement, which is a legal document, is generally used to transfer the copyright of journal articles from one party to another. Moreover, once signed, the signatory is contracted to the rules governing the agreement. In most cases, this will mean that the author is not permitted to submit the same material to more than one publication, without explicit permission.

By definition, what constitutes the same work can be a subjective area; however, anything that uses the same research study as the basis for a paper could be a breach of copyright. If in any doubt, authors are strongly advised to speak with the relevant journal staff. Breach of copyright is taken very seriously and, with the ever-more sophisticated ways of tracing the origin of articles (particularly online), there is a fair chance that those breaching copyright will be caught and reprimanded.

### Why is it important to sign a Copyright Transfer Agreement?

It is a legal requirement for Publishers such as Wiley-Blackwell to receive a signed Copyright Transfer Agreement before publication of an article can proceed.

There are a number of reasons why a Copyright Transfer Agreement is sought; not least the fact that under European copyright law we must have explicit authority from the copyright holder to post an Article online. If we did not have this authority for all articles, it would prevent us from being able to easily disseminate articles in electronic format, and, consequently limit the amount of exposure your articles receive. The policy also has the following advantages:

1. it facilitates international protection against infringement, libel or plagiarism;
2. it enables the most efficient processing of licensing and permissions in order that the Article can be made available to the fullest extent both directly

and through intermediaries, and in both print and electronic form;

3. it enables Publishers to maintain the integrity of an Article once refereed and accepted for publication, by facilitating centralised management of all media forms including linking, reference validation and distribution.

### What rights do you retain?

The essential features of the Wiley-Blackwell Copyright Transfer Agreement are as follows:

1. You will be identified as the author whenever and wherever your article is published.
2. You or, if applicable, your Employer, retains all proprietary rights other than copyright, such as patent rights, in any process, procedure or article of manufacture described in the Article.
3. You are permitted to do the following with your Article:
  - ▶ After publication you are free to self-archive your submitted version (i.e. pre-peer review) on your personal (or your employer's) website provided you include an appropriate acknowledgement to the journal.
  - ▶ You may not post the edited version as accepted (i.e. the peer-reviewed version) on a website, subject or institutional repository, unless this is covered by a separate agreement with a funding body, government agency, etc.
  - ▶ You may use the final published version in e-reserves, in teaching duties, and in course packs. You may share print or electronic copies with colleagues.
  - ▶ You may reuse all of your tables, data, figures and artwork without any restrictions other than those mandated by scientific ethical practices (e.g. credit must be given and modifications must be noted).
  - ▶ You may not self-archive the post-peer reviewed versions.

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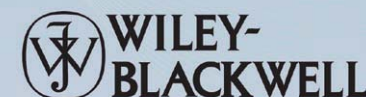
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