

How and Why to Write Your Article and be Published

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Abstract.

The author has over fourteen years' experience in higher education facilitating teaching and learning to undergraduate and post graduate students in Nursing, Assistant Practitioners, Nursing Associates and non-professional degree courses. He has been a regular contributor to The British Journal of Healthcare Assistants since 2011 and has been published in a number of other journals here in the UK and internationally.

Within this article the author sets out the basic principles which will assist the aspiring writer to become published author. Areas discussed are why you should write and be published, where to send your article, content and finally the importance of following submission guidelines for authors, set by the individual editor and journal.

Support workers are experts in what they do, bringing a wealth of knowledge, experience and skill to their role. This expertise needs to be recognised and disseminated both within the support worker community and the wider health and social care team of professionals. Support workers have a voice which needs to be heard and writing for publication is one important way this voice can be heard and quality care shared both locally, nationally and internationally.

Key Words: Author, Publishing, Support Workers, Writing.

Why Should You Publish?

Support workers are at the front line of health and social care, delivering hands on quality care in every environment and at every stage of their patients/clients lives. With the on-going developments of the profession from support workers and health care assistants to assistant practitioners and now nursing associates, there is a real opportunity for individuals and teams to share good practice and expertise.

This is also supported by The Code of Conduct for Healthcare Support Workers and Adult Social Care Workers in England (Skills for Care and Skills for Health, 2013). Section 3.1 states that you must "understand and value your contribution and the

vital part you play in your team.” How better can your vital contribution be recognised than by sharing it through writing and reflection to the wider support worker community. Section 3.6 goes on to state that you must “actively encourage the delivery of high quality healthcare, care and support.” High quality care and how this can be delivered needs to be promoted and shouted from the roof tops, so everyone can adopt and adapt it for their own practice. Section 6.6 makes it even more clearer, stating you must “contribute to the learning and development of others as appropriate.”

On a more individual level, writing an article for publication actually improves your own knowledge and practice. You have to research your topic of discussion, reading around the subject. This allows you to develop and expand your knowledge for the good of your team and patients.

Having an article published also looks very good on your C.V. If you are moving roles and jobs then this can be a big selling point for you. It demonstrates that you know your stuff, if only in the area you have written about. There is also going to be a need for support workers who are academics in the near future. At present nursing associates are being taught largely by nursing academics, however this will need to change. Being a published author will assist you greatly in making the move from hands on clinical practice into academia.

Where to Publish?

Before you start writing it is a good idea to identify where you are going to submit your article for publication. Clearly, your first place to look is here, the British Journal of Healthcare Assistants. This is your professional journal. However before you can just settle on your choice you need to do a little bit of research first. If you already have a subject in mind, you need to check and see if your preferred journal has recently published on this topic. If it has then this does not automatically bar you from sending them your article, but you will need to make it significantly different. Perhaps taking the discussion further, or in a different direction? A safer bet would be to choose a topic that has not appeared in that journal for a few years.

Do your research on the journal and its intended readership. From this you will know who to aim your writing towards. Is it other support workers, or maybe managers, nurses, or physiotherapist?

Articles published in the very top academic journals are written by professors for other professors. They are written in such a way which, unless you are the top of your profession, it is unlikely you or I would be able to understand them. Very few actual people will read these articles. However, articles published in journals which are aimed at the actual workforce, will be written in a much more readable and accessible way. They will also be read by a much wider population of people. Publishing here you will be reaching a much wider audience of actual people doing

the hands on job. You will therefore be potentially making a much bigger contribution to improving the delivery of quality care of the highest standard to patients.

Write About What You Know

You have a vast amount of knowledge and expertise. Write about that. What are the issues and key topics that face you and your team in your clinical area today? Write and reflect on care that you deliver. If you are on a nursing associate programme then you can write about your experiences of being a student. The challenges and opportunities of this new role, direct from the students pen, or computer.

Lecturers in university should be identifying students who have produced excellent written assignments. They should be approaching students and offering to support them in developing their assignment into an article for publication. One course I am involved in actually asks the students to write an article for their assessment, as if it is to be published. Those scoring in the high 80's and 90's should be being encouraged and supported to publish these.

As a student you can also approach one of your academic staff and ask their guidance to support you in writing for publication. You would need to do some research to identify who amongst the academic team is an experienced writer and the most appropriate person. See where they have been published and read some of their articles. Do you like their style of writing? Are they approachable and friendly and have the time to be able to mentor you?

If you are unsure about publishing alone, then see if other members of your team would like to co-write an article together. This will share some of the work load and writing. You will be able to divide up areas of research and then can pool your resources and knowledge and support each other.

Your article needs to be the best it can be. Therefore take your time and do your research. Search out the most up to date sources as possible, to reference and discuss. Make your discussion relevant to your practice and it will be relevant to other support workers as well. Importantly write it in such a way that it can be understood by your own peers, the people who read the journal.

Finally proof read your article. Ask a trusted colleague or friend to read it. They will spot errors which are not obvious to you. Check everything over and over again. Are all the references used in the text, listed as sources in the reference list?

Follow the Guidelines for Authors on the Journals Website

Every journal has guidelines for authors. I cannot stress how strongly these need to be exactly followed. Editors are very busy and important people. They have a very stressful job with strict deadlines to meet. By following the guidelines and writing your article in the most acceptable way makes their role easier. Remember however, that every journals guidelines will be slightly different, some will be completely

different. The best way to see how an article should be presented, is by looking at the most recent edition of the journal. How do articles look like in there? How long are they? The number of references and how are these recorded. Are headings used?

You Have Sent Your Article Off. What Happens Now?

This is the nervous waiting time. Most journals employ a peer review systems where two separate people will review your article on behalf of the editor. This is often done blind where the reviewers do not know the name, or anything about the author. You will then be notified about their comments and any recommendations. Sometimes, your submission will be rejected, but do not loose heart. Take on board the feedback and move forwards. Often they will ask you to change and alter certain parts or add further clarification. If you want to be published, which of course you do, it is a good idea to make the suggested changes. However, if you feel very strongly that something should not be changed, then you need to defend your reasoning. The editor will then have the final say if the article will be published or not.

You will often be sent a final draft for your approval. Once you have replied saying you are happy, then you are waiting for it to finally be published. Don't be disappointed if it is not in the very next edition of the journal. Journal contents are often planned in advance and you may have to wait. It could also be that the editor feels your article is better suited going in an different edition that has other similar articles, making it a special edition.

Conclusion.

So to conclude, the purpose of this article has been to encourage you to write about your knowledge, skill and experience. To share your reflections and best practice. You are the experts in your job and role. You deliver high quality care every day. Your voice needs to be heard and the excellent practice you delivery needs to be spread far and wide. Through this, quality care and best practice can be achieved for all patients, clients, their families and carers. Lastly being published is also an amazing buzz. The first time you see your name in print or on-line alongside the words you have written is an amazing feeling. Good luck and don't give up.

Key Points:

1. Support workers have a voice and important things to say and share.
2. One way this can be achieved is through writing articles for publication.
3. Academic assignments can often be re-written up as articles.
4. The British Journal of Healthcare Assistants is your journal and your voice should be being heard here.

Reflective Questions for Your Continuing Professional Development

- Identify one area of your practice that you feel you could write about.
- Research around this topic, finding relevant articles on the subject.
- Decide where you would send your writing for publication.
- Write 500 words on your area of chosen practice.
- Could this then be expanded into a full article?

References:

Skills for Care and Skills for Health (2013) Code of Conduct for Healthcare Support Workers and Adult Social Care Workers in England.

<http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/images/services/code-of-conduct/Code%20of%20Conduct%20Healthcare%20Support.pdf> (accessed 31 July 2018)