Are you suffering from the “Competency Curse” (Shellenbarger, 2014)? This affliction arises because you have expertise in a particular field or aspect of practice. As a result, you receive so many requests, assignments, and demands to apply your expertise to various projects and issues that you have little opportunity to do much of anything else professionally. Shellenbarger (2014) recommends an antidote: try something new.

One way to try something new might be to join the Editorial Board of *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing* (JCEN) and review manuscripts as a part of our peer-review process. When you seize this opportunity, you do not abandon your previous expertise. Instead, you bring it with you into a new and stimulating context.

From the perspective of someone who has been reviewing JCEN manuscripts for 20 years, I can assure you that every manuscript presents an opportunity to learn and an opportunity to give back to our profession. The manuscripts offer virtual visits to different aspects of our practice in different parts of the country and the world.

Also from the perspective of someone who has been reviewing JCEN manuscripts for 20 years, diversity among our reviewers and a regular infusion of fresh eyes enriches our review process. Experience as a reviewer benefits the process in some ways. However, new perspectives and experiences in the many diverse dimensions of our profession strengthen our ability to fulfill JCEN’s purpose: [to provide] “information on continuing education and staff development programs; planning, implementing, and evaluating educational activities; and current research and new developments in clinical practice.”

What other benefits might you obtain in addition to another line in your resume or curriculum vitae? Many JCEN readers have rich experiences in education and expertise in providing constructive feedback. Reviewing manuscripts puts this expertise to work in the peer-review context and helps authors to strengthen their skills in writing and in reporting research and evaluation findings in a clear, precise fashion. When authors attend to your reviews and revise their work accordingly, you gain a clear sense of your contribution to publication in our literature.

Manuscript review offers an opportunity to learn from both the content and the process. The content opens windows into a host of practice settings and may introduce you to new models in practice and education, and new evaluation and research methods. While engaged in the process, you see and learn from what other reviewers critiqued and learn the context of this journal, its purpose, and readership.

As an Editorial Board member, you will recommend topics, columns, and manuscripts to present as continuing education courses. You also will nominate candidates for awards such as the Innovation Award, which recognizes excellence in writing and evidence of the expansion and dissemination of knowledge in our field related to creativity and innovation in the design, delivery, and evaluation of professional development activities, and innovative strategies based on best practices and evidence-based nursing education.

Service as a reviewer may meet continuing competence and competency requirements for your State Board of Nursing and certification. Many JCEN readers hold certifications in Nursing Professional Development, or the certifications Nurse Executive and Nurse Executive Advanced. For these three and other American Nurses Credentialing Center certifications, review of manuscripts in a peer-review process contributes to
maintenance requirements. Another certification that many JCEN readers hold is the Certified Nurse Educator (CNE) certification, which is granted by the National League for Nursing’s Academic Nurse Educator Certification Program. CNE certificants also can obtain credit for manuscript review in recertification requirements.

Other certifying bodies also offer credit or are considering such a policy. Examples include, but by no means are limited to, those that grant recertification credit for manuscript review, such as the Radiologic Nursing Certification Board, American Midwifery Certification Board, Canadian Nurses Association, and Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation. Others would consider this service within their practice requirements (such as the National Certification Board for Diabetes Educators), or their volunteer service category (such as the Hospice and Palliative Credentialing Center, formerly the National Board for Certification of Hospice and Palliative Nurses). Other boards indicate that they plan to consider including this service in requirements for maintaining certification (such as the Medical-Surgical Nursing Certification Board).

If you practice in the academic setting, service as a reviewer may contribute to your progress toward tenure. If you practice in a clinical setting that features a clinical promotion or clinical ladder system, manuscript review may satisfy requirements.

Take these action steps:
• Contact an editorial board member (listed in the front matter of each issue) and ask about his or her experience with the process and its benefits.
• Reflect on what might be in it for you. This editorial suggests some possibilities, but you best know your own internal and external motivators.
• Find out whether your State Board of Nursing, your certification organization, or other pertinent credentialing organizations award credit for manuscript review. If not, prevail upon them to consider recognizing this form of professional volunteer service.
• For more information and to apply as a reviewer for JCEN, visit the journal’s website at http://www.healio.com/nursing/journals/jcen.

REFERENCE


The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing Innovation Award

This award is to recognize excellence in writing and evidence of the expansion and/or dissemination of knowledge in the field of nursing continuing education and professional development related to:
• Creativity and innovation in the design and delivery of professional development activities
• Innovative educational strategies based on evidence-based nursing education
• Evaluation methodologies used to assess effectiveness of the education
• Documentation of changes in practice that have occurred as a result of an educational experience
• Contribution to the development of new knowledge or best practices in nursing professional development

The winner will receive:
• The Innovation Award
• Monetary recognition
• 12 months of free access to continuing education in the Journal
• Recognition in the Journal and on the Journal’s website

Submissions welcome January 1 to December 31, 2015. Please submit your manuscript, indicating your desire to be considered for the award, to Jaime Harker, Managing Editor, at jcen@healio.com.