Submitting Your Manuscript
Tips for Success

We try to encourage our readers to become writers by inviting them to submit manuscripts; these invitations regularly come at the end of editorials or in correspondence about other inquiries. The International Academy for Nursing Editors (INANE) held its conference in Cork, Ireland in late July 2013. The topic of problems with manuscript submissions was on the program agenda, and discussions continued throughout break times. The goal of this editorial is to provide straightforward tips for success by listing points to keep in mind as you write, and also to caution you to be aware of potential hazards or roadblocks. The points are relevant to publishing in any journal, but specific points about submitting manuscripts to the *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services* (JPN) are offered.

**GENERAL POINTS**

1. Editors are your friends, not your enemies. Editors are experts at finding contexts/substance, ideas, clinical practices, innovations, critiques, reviews, and other materials in manuscripts submitted that are the “germs of ideas,” which may be developed into full, well-designed articles. Often the original submission is not well written and needs considerable work to see the “light of day” as a published work, but if the germ is there, the editor can help with suggestions for revision.

2. Reviewers represent all dimensions of clinical practice and are geographically represented. When you submit your manuscript for review to *JPN*, one of our inside editorial staff identifies the domain or category of the subject, compares this with the expertise of our review board and panel, and assigns it for review. Most nursing journals use similar processes.

3. Decisions about your manuscript are made by me, *JPN*’s Editor-in-Chief, after reviews are completed. The letter that you receive, via our online peer review system, lists specific points and issues that need to be addressed, if the decision is to revise. If the decision is to reject, reasons are listed. If the decision is to accept, there often are minor points that need to be addressed. After the first version of the manuscript, communication between authors is with me, individually.

**SPECIFIC TIPS**

1. Our readers are primarily clinicians in various domains and settings of practice. Manuscripts that address clinical issues, innovations, new ideas, critiques about current practice, or reviews of literature, whose aim is to inform practice, are valued most highly. We have found that nurses who are actively engaged in clinical practice offer the best, most salient ideas for our readers.

2. Provide evidence for your content. Whatever domain or strategy you are addressing needs to have evidence provided. The form for this evidence can include: (a) a small study on one unit or a small cluster of units or patients; (b) a report of a study funded by an institution or outside agency; (c) a critique of existing practice, with sources for the opinion noted; (d) collaborative efforts with current or former users of mental health services; and...
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Reviewers expect to see that these guidelines have been followed. Paying attention to page length, formatting, adherence to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (2010) regarding reference citations, numbering pages, having clear tables and graphs, and using recent references are all important. Avoid plagiarizing yourself or others.

4. Indicate who the authors are, and if more than one, what each contributed. Reviewers do not see this information, as we use a double-blind review, where the authors and reviewers do not know each others’ identities. Conflicts of interest need to be identified.

5. Invite your colleagues to do a “first review.” Having feedback from your colleagues gives you the opportunity to make improvements before actually submitting your manuscript. In fact, new ideas often emerge for future manuscripts from within this group of nurses or other colleagues.

BEWARE: SOME CAUTIONS

1. Papers submitted for coursework of any kind (baccalaureate and higher degrees) are not the same as manuscripts. A sure path to rejection is to submit a paper exactly as it was submitted for a course requirement. A good idea is to read many articles in JPN and become familiar with the design and format of the articles, and how authors present their persuasive statements. INANE editors at the Cork conference listed this as their chief complaint about submissions.

2. Review course requirements carefully. Pay attention to the course syllabus, and be aware if requirements are all important. Avoid plagiarizing yourself or others.

3. English as a first language. It is expected that the potential author is able to write well in English. However, if there is that “germ of an idea” present, but language use and expression are awkward, we are willing to work with the author. If problems are minimal, we might provide help within our staff. If considerably more work needs to be done, we will suggest that the author seek help from a colleague.

HAS THIS HELPED?

We will know the answer to this question, as we track the number of manuscripts submitted from month to month and year to year. If you have a question or concern that has not been answered above, please contact me at Smoyak@docs.rutgers.edu. Thanks for reading!

REFERENCE


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