

# Writing for professional publication.

## Part 10: publishing a project report

John Fowler



If you take a look through this and past issues of the *British Journal of Nursing* you will note that there is a wide spectrum of articles. Many people think about publishing an article only when they have carried out a literature review or undertaken a piece of research. However, publishing an interesting or unusual project in your area would be just as useful. The following lists some of the benefits of publishing an account of a local project that you have been involved in:

- Other units may be able to learn from your experience
- Formally writing up a project can bring completion to the piece of work
- Formally writing up a project can help you learn from the experience in new ways
- The formal writing up and publication of a project can help in formal audits and quality assurance programmes as it demonstrates a high level of commitment and completion.
- Published reports can be used when requesting funding for follow-up work
- There is a great sense of satisfaction in seeing your team's work recognized.

I have been involved with groups that have been working on various projects. Some of these groups are ward based, some unit based, some speciality based and a number are multidisciplinary. From day one, I have encouraged them to build into their project the eventual aim of publishing what they are doing and what is achieved. This will reinforce the focus of the work and increase its rigor.

Dr John Fowler published his first article as a staff nurse 30 years ago. Since then he has authored over 50 articles in various publications and edited seven textbooks. He has supported over 40 nurses in writing for publication.

### Abstract

This series of writing for professional publication has, so far, presented the preparation you need to do before starting to write an article. This was followed by the practicalities of writing the abstract, creating interest in the reader's mind, how an article for publication differs from that of an academic essay, how case studies can be used in publications, and choosing the correct journal for your particular article. This article discusses how you can present project reports for publication.

**Keywords:** Publication ■ Professional development ■ Project report

Even if your project does not achieve what you had wanted or expected, it can still be valuable to publish the process and identify why.

Publishing only success accounts introduces what is called 'publication bias', where published material tends to record predominantly that which worked well.

### What counts as a project report?

Think about what has happened in your area of work recently. Have you developed a new care pathway or assessment procedure? What about that process you introduced to ensure everyone washes their hands? How about that unusual dressing that you use? What have you developed or implemented in a structured, evidence-based way, that would be interesting and valuable for other people to know about?

### Structuring a project report

The principles of a project report are that it is concise, factual and can be read with relative ease. Imagine you are writing it for a busy manager; ideally the manager would want to grasp the essential information in about four or five minutes. The following headings could be used for most project reports:

- Aims
- Objectives
- Literature and evidence base

- What you did
- Time scale
- Cost
- Permission required
- How you measured outcomes
- Outcomes
- Reflections on the process
- Future work.

### Journal submission

Part eight in this series (Fowler, 2011) examined more fully the importance of targeting articles to specific journals. A project report will be of particular interest to the clinically-focused journals. It is unlikely that such projects will have a pure research base, thus it would not normally be relevant to research-only journals. If you are unsure look up a number of journals and see if any of them have published similar articles and make sure you read the author guidelines for that journal.

The next part in this series on writing for publication will examine the writing of a conference abstract and its subsequent publication. This is another valuable way of communicating your clinically-focused project work.

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