



Writing for professional publication.

Part 8: targeting the right journal

John Fowler



Abstract

The previous articles in this series of writing for professional publication focussed on the preparation you need to do before starting to write an article, ways to create interest in the reader's mind, the importance of the abstract, and how the structure of an article differs to that of an academic essay. In this article, John Fowler, an experienced nursing lecturer and author, discusses the importance of submitting your article to the appropriate journal.

Keywords: Publication ■ Professional development ■ Career development

Although I've been a nurse for over 30 years, I still discover nearly every week a journal that is related to health or nursing in some way that I have never heard of before. There is an enormous amount of journals out there that you could potentially submit an article to. How do you choose which one? Custom and general standards dictate that you do not submit your article to more than one journal at a time, so which one do you choose? As the time between submission of an article and receiving the response—whether rejection or acceptance—is on average 8–12 weeks, you cannot afford to keep submitting your work to random journals in the hope that one of them will eventually accept it. In the same way that there are the five 'right' ways to give medication to patients, there are the five 'right' ways to get an article published in the right journal:

- Right content (see Part 2 of this series)

- Right level (see Part 4)
- Right time (a topical subject is more likely to get accepted than one they have just run a series on)
- Right style (see Part 7)
- For the right journal!

If you haven't read the previous parts of this series, then it is worth finding the back issues and reviewing the steps that lead up to this one.

As a general rule, nursing and healthcare-related journals target one of the following areas in their publication:

- A variety of clinical issues for all types of nurses, e.g. *British Journal of Nursing*
- A specialist medical focus, e.g. *British Journal of Neuroscience Nursing*
- An educational focus, e.g. *Nurse Education Today*
- A management focus, e.g. *Journal of Nursing Management*
- Topical news and generic issues, e.g. *Nursing Times* and *Nursing Standard*.

Secondly, journals can be categorized according to their 'research impact' factor. This is the importance that university research funding bodies associate with publications in certain journals. For example, the *Journal of Advanced Nursing* is recognized as having

a higher research impact factor than the *Nursing Times* or the *Journal of Nursing*.

Finally, journals can be viewed in terms of their 'readership impact': that is, the amount of nurses that actually read that journal. These two factors do not always overlap: an article in the *Nursing Times* or *British Journal of Nursing* will be read by a far greater audience of clinically-based nurses than an article in some of the high research impact journals.

Thus you are left with choices of where your article best fits in terms of the speciality of its subject matter, its level of originality and research base, who you want to read it, and finally, why you want it published. You may end up writing two articles for two different journals, one detailing the research base of your work and the second the more general application of your subject to the working staff nurse. If you are still unsure which journal is appropriate for your work, then view the author guidelines (Part 3 of this series) for the potential journals and make sure you read some of the articles published in these journals so you are aware of the style and standard required.

As a note of caution, beware of online publications that charge you to publish your work. They may offer easy publication, but the financial cost to you is often hidden in the small print.

One of the main skills of writing for professional publication is to be organized: assess what, why and how you are going to write, and then submit it to the appropriate journal. As with the 'five rights' for medications, the right article content, pitched at the right level, at the right time in the right style submitted to the right journal will almost certainly achieve successful publication. BJN

Dr John Fowler wrote his first article for publication as a staff nurse 30 years ago. Since then he has published over 50 articles in a variety of publications and edited seven nursing text books. He has supported over 40 nurses in writing for publication.

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