

## 2016 Kaleidoscope Conference

**HARRISHEALTH**  
SYSTEM

# “The Magic of Writing for Publication”



**Kenn M. Kirksey, PhD, RN, ACNS-BC, FAAN**  
Director, Nursing Research & Sr. Nurse Scientist  
Harris Health System

# Getting Started







# Today's Objectives

- Delineate the reasons why nurses should write for publication
- Identify barriers to writing for publication
- Describe strategies to facilitate success with the writing process
- Outline key steps in writing for publication

# Reasons to Publish

- Share **innovative ideas** and **expertise** with others
- Disseminate **evidence** and **nurse-driven research** findings
- Conducting a meaningful **project without dissemination** is a big **NO NO!!!**
- Job **requirement** (particularly in academia)
  - Tenure/promotion; consider in clinical evaluation
  - Peer-reviewed – “gold standard”
  - Non data-based articles, book chapters, editorials not as valued
  - Double-blind reviews – independent, critical assessment of quality, identify areas for revision, make recommendations to the editor (accept, revise, reject)



# Reasons to Publish

- **Develop own knowledge and skills**
  - Completing thorough **review of the literature**
  - Need **knowledge** that far exceeds the skills required in writing for publication
  - Engage **co-authors or coaches** who have skills that differ from yours (e.g., leaders, clinicians, researchers, experienced writers)
- **Personal satisfaction with completing the manuscript**
- **Celebrating the actual publication!**







# Barriers to Writing

- **Lack of understanding about how to write for publication**
- **Pitfalls to avoid:**
  - Using a paper from graduate school that received an A+
  - Writing level may be “too low” for journal readers who have specialized knowledge or advanced understanding
  - Inappropriate writing style for the journal
  - May be too theoretical or the literature review may be too long
  - May not contribute anything new to nursing knowledge



# Barriers to Writing

## ➤ Writer's Block

- Driven by anxiety about a project, uncertainty about how to proceed, past unsuccessful experiences with writing
- Writer needs to be clear about the topic and intent (**what is the** eventual **"so what"** you are trying to convey to your readers?)
- Suggest **brainstorming with trusted colleagues/coach**
- **Outlining** your ideas is a great strategy
- You **MUST** review the literature before you begin to write

# Barriers to Writing

## ➤ Lack of Time

- Time needed for preliminary work
  - Reviewing the literature
  - Developing the idea
- Prepare the draft
- Re-writing...tweak, tweak, tweak!!!
- Get feedback (probably NOT from your best buddy)
- Revisions suggested by the editor and reviewers



## ➤ Procrastination





# Barriers to Writing

## ➤ Fear of rejection

- Opening your work up to criticism from peers or the targeted journal
- Receiving requests for revisions is fairly standard
- Possible rejection – YIKES!!!
  - Does NOT necessarily mean that the idea is bad or that the paper is poorly written
  - May not be well suited for a particular journal
  - A similar article has been published or is in the journal's queue
  - Manuscript may not be adequately developed
  - Sometimes is due to flawed design, questionable findings, or poor presentation



## ➤ Set due dates

- Due date for completing the final copy for submission
- Should be realistic; consider work and personal responsibilities (“3X longer rule”)
- Do NOT modify the due date unless absolutely necessary, or the manuscript may never see the light of day

## ➤ Divide into manageable parts

- Due dates for each of the parts (e.g., think of the parts of your paper like parts of the body)

# Parts of the Paper

## ➤ Brain

- Idea of the article (narrow, narrow, narrow it down)

## ➤ Skeleton

- Structure of the article (beginning, middle, end)

## ➤ Heart

- Flow of the article (tie it together – outline is imperative)!

## ➤ Intestines

- “Guts” of the article (examples, case studies, anecdotes, sidebars, write to your audience)

## ➤ Kidneys

- Editing the article (invite a subject matter expert; representative of target audience; honest, objective reviewers; good writer or editor)





# Strategies for Success

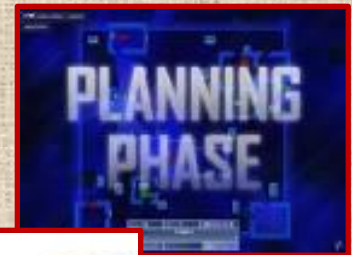
## ➤ Identify prime time for writing

- When you are the most **productive** and **creative...protect that time!!!**
- Consider whether large or small segments of writing time work better for you
- Avoid interruptions and distractions...turn off your **cell phone** and **NO checking emails**
- Can affect your concentration and distract from thinking about the topic at hand...it's also a form of **PROCRASTINATION!!!**
- **Comfortable** chair, good computer screen, candles, whatever it takes to get you in the mood to write



## ➤ Planning phase

- Identify the purpose of the manuscript – the “so what” question
- You probably already have a specific goal in mind at the outset
- What is the “primary message” that you are communicating to readers? Hone in...avoid being too global!
- Some questions to consider:
  - What is the purpose of writing the manuscript?
  - Why is this information important for readers?
  - What difference will it make to the world of nursing knowledge?



# Steps in Writing for Publication

## ➤ Decide on importance of the topic

- Is it **worth writing** about?
- Does the manuscript present **new ideas**?
- Is it already in the literature? Can you offer a **new “swing?”**
- Who is the **audience**? Will they be interested in the topic?
- Will the **journal** likely be **interested**?



## ➤ Search for related articles

- Is it a new idea or have you made an old **idea “sexy?”**
- Determine this by conducting your literature review
- Maybe the new “swing” has been around, but the application is “new” (e.g., specific to a specialty area)
- If it’s research...does it **add to nursing knowledge**?





## ➤ Review journal guidelines

- Legitimate peer-reviewed versus predatory journals
- Check the reference style (e.g., APA, AMA, Chicago, others)
- What is the journal's impact factor?
- What is the acceptance/rejection rate?
- How long does it typically take for review, a decision, and actual publication?



# Steps in Writing for Publication

## ➤ Writing Phase



- Develop an **outline** to guide your writing
- Write the **first draft focusing on** presenting the **content** rather than on grammar, spelling, punctuation, and writing style
- Revise the first and subsequent drafts...focus on manuscript content at this point
- **Eventually**, you will **revise for grammar, spelling, punctuation, and writing style**
- Prepare tables, figures, references...pay close attention to the **journal's format for references** (e.g., APA, AMA, Chicago)
- **"Do it Your Way"** reference style

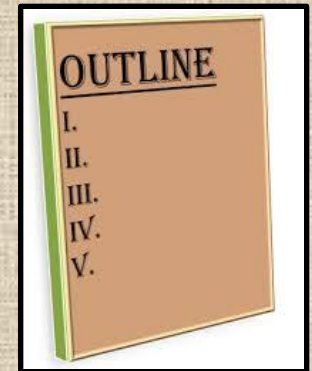
# The All-Important Outline

- I. Working Title: Pain Assessment and Management in Critically Ill Older Adults
- II. Authors: Kirksey, McGlory, Sefcik
- III. Writing Assignments:
  - Abstract - Kenn
  - Key Words - Kenn
  - Introduction - Kenn
  - Pain Assessment in Older Adults - Liz
    - Multi-dimensional Nature of Pain - Liz
      - Physical (subjective versus objective pain)
      - Psychosocial
      - Knowledge Deficiency
    - Pain Homeostenosis - Kenn





# The All-Important Outline - cont'd



- Evidence-based Pain Management Strategies
  - Interprofessional Team Approach – **Gayle**
  - Best Practice Recommendations – **Gayle**
    - Individualizing the Plan of Care – **Kenn**
    - Pharmacological Management – **Kenn**
    - Non-pharmacological Management – **Kenn**
- Case Study – **Kenn**
- Communicating with a Patient who cannot Communicate Verbally (e.g., cognitively impaired, intubated, etc) – **Gayle**
- Address Family Members' Concerns – **Gayle**
- Educating the Patient about Pain Management Modalities – **Gayle**
- Conclusions – **Team**
- Implications for Practice – **Team**
- References – **Team**

# Examples of Poor Writing Style

- One description was a description of a 75 year old man and the other description was a description of elderly women
- For female seniors, 66.9% never used helmets while only 6.2% used
- Data were collected with interview survey from 350 elderly that were randomly selected from 14 municipal areas of central district, [city deleted]. In order to alleviate the bias rooted in literacy and visual problems of the elderly, questionnaires were read and written down by the research assistants trained by the principal investigator

# Examples of Poor Writing Style

- Participants ranged from 18 to 32 with a mean of 14 and a standard deviation of 2.87
- The participants were 140 male ( $n = 140$ ) and 139 female ( $n = 139$ ) students conveniently selected from [blank] University
- For research articles, please ensure that the total numbers in the tables add up
- Avoid cluttering the tables (e.g., descriptive, t-test, Chi-square)

Let's eat grandpa.  
Let's eat, grandpa.

Correct punctuation can  
save a person's life.



# Steps in Writing for Publication

## ➤ Writing Phase - continued

- Prepare the **final version** of the manuscript
- Prepare accompanying materials required by the journal (e.g., **conflict of interest form, copyright transfer, statement of author contributions**)
- Prepare a **cover letter**...use statements like “Thank you for your time and thoughtful review of our manuscript.”
- **Submit** the manuscript!



## ➤ Publishing Phase

- Critique by peer reviewers
- Editor makes the final decision; considers peer reviewers' comments
- Carefully consider and address the **feedback from reviewers**
- USE that invaluable feedback! Even if a particular journal rejects...the reviewers usually give great feedback that you can use to improve it before submitting to another journal



# Why Manuscripts are NOT Accepted

- Picked the wrong journal
- Did not follow manuscript preparation instructions
- Poor writing
- Getting carried away with the discussion
- Suboptimal reporting of the results
- Inadequate description of the methods
- Poor study design
- Failure to revise and resubmit following peer review





# Steps in Writing for Publication

## ➤ Publishing Phase - continued

- If accepted, you will eventually receive **galley proofs**...usually have a short turn-around time
- Not the time to be making big changes
- Do you want to purchase **reprints**? Usually receive a few free copies
- **Open-access journal**? Fee involved
- **Predatory journals**...avoid them!!!
- Jeff Beall's website



# Reference



Oermann, M., & Hays, J. (2011). Writing for Publication in Nursing. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Springer Publishing Company. Retrieved on February 4, 2015 from [https://writing.ku.edu/sites/writing.drupal.ku.edu/files/docs/Writing\\_Publication\\_Nursing.pdf](https://writing.ku.edu/sites/writing.drupal.ku.edu/files/docs/Writing_Publication_Nursing.pdf)



# Questions?

**HARRISHEALTH**  
SYSTEM



**Kenn M. Kirksey, PhD, RN, ACNS-BC, FAAN**

[Kenn.Kirksey@harrishealth.org](mailto:Kenn.Kirksey@harrishealth.org)