Writing an Editorial—You Can Do This!

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Writing an Editorial--Outline

1. Why write one?
2. How to write one
3. How to pitch one
4. Your turn to write one!
Acknowledgements

- Council of Public Health Nursing Organizations
- The Op-Ed project (theopedproject.org)
- Catherine Cubbine’s 2017 presentation at APHA
Who am I?

Not an expert, but LOTS of experience:
• Over 100 publications written with a variety of writing teams
• Over a dozen editorials
• Two books and several book chapters
• Journal editor for past six years

Still get emails with “revise and resubmit” or “reject”
WHY WRITE?

• Spread far and wide the unique experiences and contributions of nurses, ESPECIALLY public health nurses!!

• Editorials
  • Opinion essay for professional journal
  • Goals: inform, stimulate thinking, ideally move reader to action
  • Can also introduce/summary journal issue
  • OR can praise a luminary in the field, past or present

• Op-Ed
  • For local or national (!) newspaper

• Clinical/thought article
  • Longer, perhaps less persuasive, goal more to inform/consider

• Blog piece
  • Less competitive; nice starting place
Who’s Writing?

- Are you sure you want to do this alone?
- Partner or team helps to get you out of your own head
For whom/what are you writing?

• Pick your journal or newspaper
• Match your topic with target journal
• Word count will be determined by this—generally 500-1500 words
• Word choice will also be determined by this—avoid jargon!!
Getting Started

• Have your facts/statistics ready
• Line up your target journal
• Allocate time
• Shut off your email!
• Set a goal for your session (I’m going to write the first three sentences of an initial draft)
• Finish with noting a task with which to start your next session
• Perfection is the ban of productivity
HOW TO WRITE?

• Title
• General structure
  • Opener
  • Solutions
  • Call to action
• Start with this
• Use it to keep your focus
• Revise for catchy-ness factor at the end
Opener

• Present the problem with strong opening sentence (relevant catchy quotation, question, statistic to grab reader’s attention)

• Really try to avoid jargon

• Make it personal
  • Who you are
  • A story illustrating the issue

• Data + personal = POWER

• Closing sentence to this section might hint at solution/idea that this problem preventable—transition to next section
Solutions/Alternatives

- What can be done?
- What is being done?
- Why would these actions be effective?
- Perhaps start with restatement of problem and possible solution
- Provide examples of solutions, where they have worked
- Consider solutions on multiple levels—individual, local community, school/university, profession
- Must also include counter-argument—what others are saying, why this will not work
Call to Action

• My favorite. And most frustrating
• Solving most problems takes time, dedication, cooperation
• Invite readers to be part of the solution
Review

• Look for flow—each sentence should have some connection to the previous
• Check grammar, punctuation
• Ensure jargon level appropriate for audience
• Give it to a cold reader
• Reconsider your journal
• Review a final time before submission (start reading from the middle)
HOW TO PITCH?

• Query letter to editor
• If no response, submit anyway
• If negative response, consider another journal
• If negative response x2, get a new cold reader to review
• Consider blog alternatives
You’re Published!!

• Do NOT stop here
• Disseminate your work
  • Professional organizations
  • Social media
  • Worksite
Questions?
Write me with your ideas—really!

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