

Nurse Executive Mentorship Supporting Professional Development Through Publication Success

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Nursing is a unique profession in its universal support and recognition of the value of professional development. Offering diverse opportunities for professional development has been cited as important in sustaining nurse engagement and retention.^{1,2} Professional development is actualized in multiple pathways, varying by the individual interest of the nurse, the value of specific accomplishments by employers, and the benefits to



patient care. Establishing mentoring relationships with nurses at all levels with a primary goal of developing a peer-reviewed publication is one way a nurse executive can support professional development for nurses within their organization. This article presents an overview of a framework for nurse executives with the primary goal of supporting publication success in national and international peer-reviewed journals through mentorship.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Nursing has a variety of diverse career tracks. Nurse executives can utilize multiple avenues to enhance nursing career development along these tracks as well as facilitate engagement. Opportunities include support of nursing certifications in primary and secondary specialties; professional presentations at the local, state, and national levels; and publication of research studies, evidence-based practice and pilot projects in peer-reviewed journals.¹ Surveys report that nurses want “to cross-pollinate training opportunities and expertise across a mix of traditional tracks”^{1(p.62)} while having the option to remain in direct care roles. Relationships based on professional development initiatives are opportunities for nurse execu-

tives to collaborate with and mentor direct care nurses. This serves to substantiate and expand new competencies within a preferred clinical track; promote engagement through scientific inquiry and interdisciplinary collaboration to improve outcomes; and disseminate significant findings through presentations and publication.

PUBLICATION AS A COMPETENCY SUPPORTING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Publishing articles in peer-reviewed journals is a way to support professional development of the nurse author as well as facilitate the application of research to clinical nursing practice.³ Brockopp et al.³ reported high levels of staff

nurse involvement in producing peer-reviewed publications through a formal mentoring program and education related to writing skills. Writing skills are essential for nurse leaders to support effectiveness in executing numerous aspects of their roles. Nurse executives, who have refined their writing expertise as demonstrated by successful publication of their own work, can use the concept of mentoring as a way to support the professional development of their nursing leaders and direct care nurses (writer protégé). As nurse-led teams within the organization generate empirical findings from scholarly projects, experienced nurse executive authors can seize this opportunity to reinforce the importance of disseminating new credible knowledge; mentor nurse writer protégés on the process of developing and submitting a professional manuscript to both national and international peer-reviewed journals; and support the development of podium presentations. The nurse writer protégé can gain experiences and lessons learned that will support future manuscript development and their own mentoring relationships with others.

THE APPLICATION OF MENTORSHIP IN PUBLICATION DEVELOPMENT

Mentorship is defined as a relationship where “a seasoned senior person guides and encourages the development of another.”^{4(p.533)} Mentorship has been identified as being important in the development of publications.³ A mentoring relationship to support publishing success may be developed based on the initiative of the nurse writer protégé or at the suggestion of the nurse executive.

Mentoring and supporting successful publication has multiple short- and long-term professional benefits for the nurse executive. Personally, the process of mentorship in the development of a manuscript is a way to form professional networks within an organization on a new level. Identifying a process to construct and revise a manuscript is a beneficial exercise in preparation for the development of other specialized documents including Magnet[®] and Pathway to Excellence[®] standards. In addition, nurse executive mentoring demonstrated by manuscript development leads to long-term benefits including: development and advancement of internal and external professional relationships; establishment of a higher standard of nursing practice and professionalism within the organization; enhancement of writing skills; and sustainment of a culture of nursing excellence through professional development.

Mentoring in the publication process also has benefits for the nurse writer protégé. The experience between the nurse executive and protégé in a writing relationship forms a professional bond that is unique and affirming. The nurse executive becomes aware of the scholarly skills and capabilities of the nurse leader or direct care nurse. This awareness may provide insight for the nurse executive in supporting career sculpting or opportunities for the nurse writer protégé. The protégé can experience an elevated organizational presence from the time spent with the nurse executive. Publication of an article in a well-respected peer-reviewed

journal may lead to queries from nurse leaders and health care professionals from other organizations to present the information in new venues, thereby supporting and providing additional benefits of enhancing presentation skills on the part of the protégé. Through this experience, the nurse protégé is exposed to a greater level of professional networking and collaboration.

SUGGESTIONS FOR A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP SUPPORTING PUBLICATION

Although mentoring by a seasoned writer does not guarantee publication, it has been cited as increasing the chances of success.⁵ Suggestions for a collaborative process between the nurse executive and a nurse writer protégé include:

Identify the topic. The nurse executive should set the expectations for publication as the final step of a project or research initiative from the onset. Ownership and interest in a particular topic or subject area increases the likelihood of the nurse writer protégé in realizing benefits from the project. Selection of a project or topic of clinical interest also provides an opportunity for the protégé to be recognized as a subject matter expert in the organization.

Collaboratively delineate the steps in the project. Editors typically want to know if a project has been submitted to an institutional review board (IRB) for additional credibility and subject protection. If not submitted, this decision should be addressed directly in the manuscript. This enables nurse executives to advance skill development for the nurse writer protégé by mentoring the individual throughout the development and submission process of an IRB application.

Identify pre- and post-data. Research and project teams should identify the indicators that will be measured as part of the project to include in the IRB proposal. Working with a statistician prior to the initiation of the project ensures the targeted data will be appropriate for entry into a statistical program and subsequent analysis and testing.

Schedule time to review a process for the construction of the draft manuscript. Steps include:

1. Conduct a thorough review of current literature to support the importance of the issue at hand and assess previous related publications.
2. Review appropriate journals for possible submission of your manuscript, including identification of the targeted reader for the journal.
3. Review articles with similar topics to check for saturation of the subject in the targeted journal.
4. Familiarize the protégé with author guidelines (most journals do have these posted on websites or in the print journals).
5. Identify 1 or 2 articles from the selected journal to serve as a best practice example(s) regarding approved writing styles when developing the manuscript.

Query the editor. This step is one that should be done together between the nurse writer protégé and the nurse executive to teach the novice writer about constructing an appropriate e-mail or query letter. Specifically, the letter

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