

Authors & Publishers: A Partnership

New authors often are unsure where to submit their manuscript. Rather than tuck this on after content on developing a manuscript, I like to “front-load” this discussion. Why?

1. It is important to consider the relationship between you (the author) and publisher (the journal and editor). Both of you will spend a lot of time on each of your manuscripts and will develop a sense of ownership and protection for that work. And once they publish your work, they will have a degree of ownership over your work—shared ownership because you will always be its author.
2. When you write a manuscript, it can be helpful to the target publisher. Each journal has some differences in what they publish, label different types of articles, and require adherence to factors such as word count, reference style, and use of tables or figures. You save time and rework by knowing this up front. Moreover, in my experience, I have learned that publication should work as a respectful partnership between the author and publisher.
3. It is valuable for new authors to understand the importance of avoiding “predatory journals”.

Prospective authors should recognize that being published should result in a “win-win” partnership between the author and publisher. The following is a very simplistic list of the goals of each party.

Author’s Goals

- Disseminate information
- Effect change
- Meet course or promotion requirement
- Achieve professional goal

Publisher’s Goals

- Meet needs of specific audience/readers
- Coverage of specific settings, practices
- Enhance readership
- Advance good writing & knowledge

Overall, publishers NEED content—good, timely, relevant content. The following bullets highlight some interests. For instance, they are not looking for content that has been published time and again but might want manuscript presents a new slant or additive knowledge on the older topic. They may look for content on newly emerging knowledge that has yet to be published. Or manuscripts with titles and formatting that grabs interest. The following are potential hooks, but the last is critical:

- Fresh slant on “old” topic
- Hot topic not yet published
- Content to pull new readership
- Significant research or findings
- Provocative discussion
- Graphics, pictures, style to support content
- **Well-written manuscripts**

When you select a journal, you may be most comfortable with the one with which you are familiar, one that covers topics like your intended one. Alternatively, you might select based on the journal's standards, reputation, as well as their published content interests and style guidelines. Even if you are familiar with a target journal, as an author it is ideal to start a manuscript knowing their style guidelines to avoid the heavy lifting at the end—avoiding changing your reference style, cutting back word count, etc. However, this is not essential and if you are unsure about a target journal or publisher, start your manuscript and keep this in mind as you work on it.

As you develop your manuscript, continue to consider the best target audience. Journal readerships differ along several lines such as specialty and experience levels, preferred types of articles. Some want straight-forward clinical discussions, others gravitate to detailed translation of research and science to practice, discussion of relevant policies, or academic topics. And don't forget journals that are not specific to NPs but cover content relevant and/or interdisciplinary content.

The journal websites provide a wealth of information for prospective authors. While considering a publisher, start exploring their journal's tables of contents from the past year or two. These are usually available year and issue. Consider the journal's mission or goals statement. Then review the website section with "information for authors".

This is where they might post details regarding any upcoming special issues relevant to your topic. Look for information on their circulation and readership demographics, selection/rejection rates, and the anticipated time for review and publication. Most bona fide journals also publish some form of reader metrics, along with how these are determined.

If in doubt regarding whether a topic will be of interest, contact the editor with a query message or letter. Provide brief details on your broad topic and any hook about what is new or unique about your topic. The editor may save you time by letting you know they've already saturated this topic for a while. Alternatively, the editor may reply that your topic would be of interest for review or that there is an upcoming special issue to consider. Make sure your letter or message is very professional, well-written, and respectful (you are writing to an editor). And realize "interest" does not imply selection.

While you are at journal's website, be attentive to signs of predatory practices . . .

Beware of Predatory Journals

Awareness of the risks associated with PREDATORY JOURNALS is important to mention. They also are known as pseudo, fraudulent, or deceptive journals. Sounds bad and they are. So, what does this mean?

These “journals” have PROFIT as their main concern. Not quality, not currency, not importance, not accuracy of their content. Their business model (the way they “make money”) is simply soliciting manuscripts. They actively solicit potential authors and then charge to receive and process manuscripts. This is not something a respected journal will do. They have little if any interest in the editorial aspect of journalism. They have no qualms about charging authors, then rushing the work through to print without reasonable peer review. In fact, often just “as-is”. And “publication” by a predatory journal reflects poorly on the author. In fact, you should never cite literature from these in your work as you cannot account for the quality of their peer review and content.

They benefit by new authors who believe you must “pay to play” OR that their work is so phenomenal it warranted no editorial feedback or edits. Neither of these are accurate. They also benefit from authors who feel pressured to turn out yet another publication and/or are tired of rejections. There is a lot of good information out there about predatory journals. I have included one from 2015 which lays out the relevant issues and consequences.

One caveat: If a “legit” journal reaches out to you mentioning an upcoming special issue relevant to your work, they will not charge you for submitting or guarantee acceptance. They simply let you know of this if you are known in the area.

So how do you know when a journal might be predatory? There are often hints on their website. For instance, the website may have errors. They may target authors with strong solicitations, and processing fees, and/or rapid acceptance to publication rates. They often also ask that you submit your manuscript by email, not a secure manuscript submission portal. There are a couple of sites to help you discriminate. “Beall’s List”, <https://beallist.net/> while no longer being updated, maintains online listing predatory journals. The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) <https://publicationethics.org/> gives details. And articles on Nurse Author & Editor address predatory journals.

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