

More Great Clinically-Oriented Articles Are Appearing in Chiropractic Journals

Dr. Turner from Twin Falls, Idaho writes: "Thanks for your articles and insight in your column. In some of your articles you state the need for more chiropractors to publish. Could you please give us some references which would assist us in learning how to submit articles for publication? Also, if it could be geared toward the busy, practicing doctor, that would be much appreciated."

Writing for publication is easier than you think. Writing for publication in a chiropractic journal is not the arduous chore some would have you believe (e.g., the ivory tower types). Actually, it is very enjoyable, particularly when you see your name in print. And the prestige ... hmmm. As an author and busy practitioner, I have learned about what contributes to success in writing. The tips I'll be sharing here work for other authors and will work for you too.

First, Get a Couple of "How-to" Articles

Ask your librarian to order these articles. If you don't have a librarian, do not fret, you can order them from LACC's library (310-947-8755, ask for Mrs. Saab).

1. Hilebrant R. Scientific Biomedical Journal Writing, Parts 1,2,3. Am J. Chiro Med. 1988;1(1-3). Excellent step-by-step series.
2. Peterson B. Medical Writing. J Am Osteo Assoc. 1975; Nov:352-355. This provides a skeleton or framework for writing case reports.

Choosing a Topic

Many first-time writers are concerned that they don't have anything to write about. Nonsense. Every chiropractor has discovered a special insight into the clinical management of their patients. Chiropractic journals are constantly on the lookout for ways to improve patient care, or good ideas that can be implemented in the doctor's practice: what works and what does not work. Most authors start by asking themselves what they enjoy doing most in their practice. What they can share is how to help make someone else's patient care easier, more successful, or less problematic. You can do the same. Assess the ideas you have come up with. Talk about it to a few colleagues. Does your idea spark their interest? Jot down some notes from these discussions right away. Think it over for a few days. Chances are your insight is timely, new or at least presents a new slant on an old idea.

Start Writing

Find a quiet place where you can maintain your train of thought without being interrupted. Work for short periods at a time. Do not try to write the entire article in one sitting. Write a section at a time. Start anywhere you want, the middle, end or beginning. Since you have been thinking about the article for some time, you have a sense of what you want to say. Now is the time to jot the key points down which describe the specific principles you need to cover. At this time, eliminate the

nice-to-know in favor of the need-to-know. Get everything you need that is related to your project and put it in your quiet work area. Bolster your specific principles with references from the literature. The librarian or a nearby chiropractic student can be an invaluable help with this part of the project. Do not be intimidated with this step. Consider asking the librarian for a computerized search regarding the specific principles you need to cover in your article. Once they arrive, read them over, much like you would if you read a great mystery story while sitting by the fireside.

Choosing a Journal

This is a simple, but important step. Select the journal with the audience that would be most receptive to your ideas. As a general rule, journals with a smaller number of readers often accept more manuscripts because they do not get the huge volume of submissions that journals with a large circulation get. Write a letter to the editor of the journal you have in mind. Describe your idea clearly but in a very short fashion. An outline and an abstract help, but are not essential. By the way, make sure you ask the editor to instruct you on the journal's required writing style. If the journal requires structured abstracts, make sure you get a how-to sheet. Do not, I repeat, do not correspond with more than one journal at a time. Think of it as a monogamous relationship. Writing to more than one journal about the same article is cheating.

Polish Your Manuscript

Every journal has a "Guidelines for Authors" section, usually in the beginning of each issue. Pay particular attention to the instructions about references, tables, figures, etc. Do not be afraid to ask for help. Look at the articles in the journal you are submitting to. Follow their example. Be patient and you'll get it right. Once you have written the manuscript, ask your colleagues to review it: nothing fancy on their part. Just have them look for points that need clarification or expansion or what areas need to be shortened. Even if you wrote the manuscript on the computer, check it for spelling and grammatical errors.

Now all you have to do is make the appropriate number of copies and send the entire set to the editor. Congratulations, you just submitted your first professional article.

What's Next?

Next month we discuss what happens to the manuscript once it is sent off to the editor of the journal.

With each article I encourage you to write the questions you may have, commentaries on patient care, or thoughts to share with your colleagues, to me at the following address:

Author's note: I want to let our readers know how they can order Dr. Alan Rosenthal's excellent and very interesting children's book, *Show Me Where It Hurts*. (Dr. Rosenthal uses a storybook to show children about chiropractic care, the subject of my last column.) In my view, teaching children about spinal health is a great public service. *Show Me Where It Hurts* is published by Real Life Storybooks. Northridge, CA. They can be reached by calling (818) 887-6431. Thank you for all the letters complimenting this book and asking how to order it.

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Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Thank you.

