



FOURTH
EDITION

Anatomy of
WRITING
FOR PUBLICATION
FOR NURSES



CYNTHIA SAVER

An anatomical illustration of the human hand and forearm, showing the muscles and nerves. The illustration is rendered in white lines on a dark blue background. The hand is positioned on the right side of the cover, with the forearm extending towards the left. The muscles and nerves are clearly visible, and the illustration is positioned on the right side of the cover, with the left side of the hand cut off.

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Emory University

CYNTHIA SAVER, MS, RN, is an award-winning author with nearly 40 years of experience in nursing that includes more than three decades of publishing experience as a writer, editor, and editorial director. Before leaving to found her own company, Saver was Executive Vice President of Editorial for Nursing Spectrum/Gannett Inc. She has written for and edited many nursing publications, including *Nursing Management*, *Nursing Spectrum*, *American Nurse Journal*, *AORN Journal*, *NurseWeek*, *OR Manager*, *Journal of Nursing Regulation*, and *American Journal of Nursing*. She is President of CLS Development Inc. and is an Author-in-Residence for *Nurse Author & Editor*.



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ISBN 978-1-948057-91-2



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ISBN: 9781948057912
EPUB ISBN: 9781948057929
PDF ISBN: 9781948057936
MOBI ISBN: 9781948057943

LCCN
2020054423

First Printing, 2021

Publisher: Dustin Sullivan
Acquisitions Editor: Emily Hatch
Development Editor: Meaghan O'Keeffe
Cover Designer: Rebecca Batchelor
Interior Design/Page Layout: Kim Scott, Bumpy Design
Indexer: Larry D. Sweazy

Managing Editor: Carla Hall
Publications Specialist: Todd Lothery
Project Editor: Meaghan O'Keeffe
Copy Editor: Erin Geile
Proofreader: Gill Editorial Services

*To all my writing mentors over the years, my family
(especially my mother, who introduced me to the pleasure
of reading and writing), and Jackie and David.*

Acknowledgments

Thank you to my incredible team of contributors, most of whom have been with me through all four editions of this book. I am honored to be in such stellar company. The contributors bring a wonderful wealth of collective knowledge that reflects all the roles of publishing—author, editor, peer reviewer, designer, publisher—along with a strong commitment to help nurses share their expertise through publishing. I truly appreciate how they have generously shared their talents. I also appreciate the many others who read portions of the book and gave valuable feedback.

Thanks to Joan Borgatti for first linking anatomy to writing and to Patricia Dwyer Schull for her insightful comments and unfailing support.

Special thanks to the talented staff members at Sigma Theta Tau International, who always make authors look great: to Meaghan O’Keeffe and Erin Geile, for their expert editing; Karen Davis, for proofreading; Kim Scott of Bumpy Design, for outstanding design and page composition; and Rebecca Batchelor for designing an excellent cover.

Publishing is truly a team effort!

About the Author

Cynthia Saver, MS, RN, President of CLS Development Inc.

Cynthia Saver, an award-winning author, has more than four decades of experience in nursing, including more than three decades of publishing experience as a writer, editor, and senior vice president of editorial teams. Saver has written for many nursing publications, including *American Nurse Journal*, *American Journal of Nursing*, *AORN Journal*, *Journal of Nursing Regulation*, *Nurse.com*, *Nurse Leader*, *Nursing Management*, *Nursing Spectrum*, *The Nurse Practitioner*, and *OR Manager*, to name a few. Her writing experience includes a 10-part writing for publication series for *AORN Journal*, research reports, case studies, interviews, clinical articles, and continuing education programs. She has written materials for nurses, physicians, pharmacists, social workers, physical therapists, occupational therapists, dentists, and other healthcare professionals. Saver has worked with the top publishers as an author, editor, managing editor, and editorial director, and was an invited reviewer for the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed., 2020). Her writing for publication program for nurses has received excellent reviews, and participants have published many articles. She received her master's degree in nursing from The Ohio State University and is an author-in-residence for *Nurse Author & Editor*.

About the Contributors

Mary Alexander, MA, RN, CRNI, CAE, FAAN, Chief Executive Officer, Infusion Nurses Society

Mary Alexander was named Chief Executive Officer of the Infusion Nurses Society (INS) and the Infusion Nurses Certification Corporation (INCC) in 1997. She is responsible for ensuring consistent delivery of professional services to the 5,000 members of INS and 2,800 certificants of INCC. As Editor of the *Journal of Infusion Nursing*, Alexander writes bimonthly columns and has editorial responsibilities for *INSider*, the bimonthly membership newsletter. She is Editor of *Core Curriculum for Infusion Nursing* (4th edition) and Editor-in-Chief of the INS textbook *Infusion Nursing: An Evidence-Based Approach*. Alexander's areas of expertise include infusion therapy with an emphasis on patient safety, practitioner competency, and standards development. Her clinical experience spans a variety of practice settings, including home care, alternative sites, and acute care settings.

Nancy J. Brent, JD, MS, RN, Nurse Attorney in Private Law Practice

After practicing and teaching psychiatric nursing for more than 15 years, Nancy J. Brent graduated from Loyola University of Chicago School of Law in 1981. Her private practice is concentrated in professional licensure defense for nurses and other healthcare providers, consultation to nurses and school of nursing faculty, and educational programs in law and nursing practice for nurses and other healthcare groups. She has published extensively in the area of law and nursing practice. Brent is also the author of a legal blog at www.nurse.com and contributes to The Wound Care Education Institute blog at www.wcei.net.

Christopher Burton, DPhil, RN, Professor of Health Services Research, Health Foundation Improvement Science Fellow, Canterbury Christ Church University

Christopher Burton is a registered nurse with a special interest in supporting patients affected by stroke and long-term health conditions. As Professor of Health Services Research at Canterbury Christ Church University, he leads a program of research and scholarship that seeks to close the gap between evidence, policy, and practice. He works with researchers across the globe to develop knowledge of what works in implementation and improvement and networks to embed this within educational programs for nurses and other healthcare professionals.

Nan Callender-Price, MA, RN

Nan Callender-Price, who retired in 2019, worked in nursing and healthcare publishing for 24 years. During her career, she helped dozens of nurse authors develop continuing education programs. She holds a BA in English literature from University of California, Berkeley; a BSN from University of California, San Francisco; and an MA in education from San Francisco State University. She practiced in women and children's health at Kaiser Permanente, San Francisco, California.

Marianne Ditomassi, DNP, MBA, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN, Executive Director of Nursing and Patient Care Services Operations and Magnet® Recognition, Massachusetts General Hospital

Marianne Ditomassi is the Chief of Staff for the Senior Vice President for Patient Care and Chief Nurse, who oversees the operations of nursing, therapy departments, and social services. Ditomassi's key areas of accountability include strategic planning, professional practice environment development and evaluation, recruitment and retention initiatives, business

planning, fundraising, and communications. She also is the Magnet Program Director for Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) and coordinated MGH's initial Magnet designation journey in 2003 and subsequent Magnet redesignations in 2008, 2013, and 2018.

Susan Gennaro, PhD, RN, FAAN, Dean and Professor, Connell School of Nursing, Boston College

Susan Gennaro is an internationally renowned perinatal clinician and scholar whose research has improved healthcare for childbearing women and their families around the world. She is also the Editor of the *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, which is read in more than 103 countries and whose mission is to advance knowledge to improve the health of the world's people. Gennaro has been active in supporting that mission by leading an understanding of how best to promote global dissemination of nursing scholarship.

Pamela J. Haylock, PhD, RN, FAAN, Nurse Educator and Cancer Survivorship Consultant

Throughout her career, Pamela J. Haylock has held staff, advanced practice, management, nursing education, and consultation roles and is a past president of the Oncology Nursing Society. She contributes to professional and peer-reviewed literature as an author, editor, and manuscript reviewer and by serving on professional journals' editorial boards. Her introduction to writing for general audiences was as coauthor of *Women's Cancers: How to Prevent Them, How to Treat Them, How to Beat Them* (with Kerry A. McGinn), followed by *Cancer Doesn't Have to Hurt* (with coauthor Carol P. Curtiss), and as editor and contributor for *Men's Cancers: How to Prevent Them, How to Treat Them, How to Beat Them*. Haylock was a team member and writer for the National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship's award-winning *Cancer Survival Toolbox*—audio instructional programs for survivors and family caregivers. In 2002, Haylock received the Distinguished Alumni Award for Service from the University of Iowa College of Nursing and, in 2008, received a Distinguished Alumni Award for Service from the University of Iowa. She was inducted as a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing in 2011.

Lisa Hopp, PhD, RN, FAAN, Dean and Professor, College of Nursing, Purdue University Northwest

Lisa Hopp is internationally recognized for her work in evidence-based nursing practice. She has trained hundreds of faculty, advanced practice nurses, and library scientists in systematic review methodologies. Hopp is the founding director of the Indiana Center

for Evidence Based Nursing, part of a global collaboration of JBI (formerly Joanna Briggs Institute) centers and groups who aim to improve healthcare outcomes through evidence-based healthcare. She has been an educator for more than 30 years, helping prepare future advanced practice and registered nurses.

Shaké Ketefian, EdD, RN, FAAN, Professor Emerita, University of Michigan School of Nursing

Shaké Ketefian has had a rich academic, scholarly, and administrative career. She has worked extensively with US and international students and has consulted with many institutions worldwide, providing curricular consultation, conducting faculty workshops, and teaching. Ketefian's research and scholarly expertise and publications have focused on research utilization, ethical issues in healthcare, measurement of ethical practice, research ethics, global issues in healthcare and knowledge development, and graduate and doctoral education in the US and worldwide. She has been editor, associate editor, editorial board member, and reviewer for many international and domestic scholarly journals. Ketefian has provided extensive service to the professional community internationally and has received many awards and honors. She is a cofounder and Founding President of the International Network for Doctoral Education in Nursing. Ketefian is Professor Emerita of the University of Michigan School of Nursing.

Timothy Landers, PhD, RN, CNP, CIC, FAAN, Associate Professor, The Ohio State University

Timothy Landers is a researcher and nurse practitioner with more than 20 years of experience. His work focuses on epidemiology and prevention of antibiotic-resistant infections. Landers has served on the editorial board of the *American Journal of Infection Control* and was chair of the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology's Research Committee. His scholarly work has been widely featured in the media and lay press. Landers teaches evidence-based practice in the graduate program at The Ohio State University.

Deborah Lindell, DNP, MSN, RN, CNE, ANEF, FAAN, Professor, Assistant Director, DNP Program, Faculty Development Coordinator, Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing, Case Western Reserve University

Deborah Lindell has served as a nursing educator administrator (graduate entry and DNP) for over 17 years. Her teaching and scholarship are concerned with nursing theory, nursing education, and community/public health nursing. Lindell was instrumental in development and implementation of the

NLN Certified Nurse Educator Program and served as Chair of the CNE Commission. Since 2005, she has been a curriculum consultant, educator, and research supervisor in Vietnam and China.

**Tina M. Marrelli, MSN, MA, RN, FAAN,
President, Marrelli and Associates Inc.**

Tina M. Marrelli is the author of 13 healthcare books. These best-selling and award-winning books include *Handbook of Home Health Standards: Quality, Documentation, and Reimbursement* (6th ed.), *Nurse Manager's Survival Guide* (4th ed.), *Hospice & Palliative Care Handbook* (3rd ed.), *Home Health Aide: Guidelines for Care-Instructor Manual* (3rd ed.), and *A Guide for Caregiving: What's Next? Planning for Safety, Quality, and Compassionate Care for Your Loved One and Yourself*. Marrelli has also authored apps to assist with care planning. She received her BSN degree from Duke University and has master's degrees in health administration and in nursing. Marrelli has worked at Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services on Medicare home care and hospice Part A policy and operations, been the editor of three peer-reviewed publications, and practiced as a visiting nurse and manager in home care and hospice. She is President of Marrelli and Associates, Inc., a consulting and publishing firm, and Chief Clinical Officer of e-Caregiving Solutions, a web-based education and support system for family and friend caregivers.

**Cheryl L. Mee, MSN, MBA, RN, FAAN,
Director of Nursing Education and
Assessment Consultation, Elsevier**

Cheryl L. Mee leads the nursing education team who assist faculty with integrating digital products in the curriculum to promote critical thinking and decision-making in teaching strategies. In the role of Editor-in-Chief, she contributed to the professional development of nurses through the highest circulation national nursing journal. She wrote articles addressing the current, persistent, challenging problems confronting nurses delivering direct patient care. As Vice President of Nursing and Health Professions journals at Elsevier, she led a team of publishers serving the nursing profession and nursing societies. Mee's publications number over 130. She is on the board of *Americans for Native Americans*, where she has worked to provide scholarships, NCLEX fees, and varied clinical experiences for Native American nursing students, as well as planning annual health screening programs assessing hundreds of Navajo elementary schoolchildren.

**Patricia Gonce Morton, PhD, RN,
ACNP-BC, FAAN, Dean Emeritus,
University of Utah College of Nursing**

Patricia Gonce Morton is Dean Emeritus, University of Utah College of Nursing, where she served as Dean and Professor and held the Louis Peery Endowed Presidential Chair. Before her deanship, Morton served in various administrative positions at the University of Maryland School of Nursing. An educator and scholar who is known for her work in critical care nursing and nursing education, Morton has written multiple editions of three textbooks, numerous book chapters, and over 60 journal articles. She has served on the editorial board of eight nursing journals and for seven years was the editor of the journal *AACN Clinical Issues: Advanced Practice in Acute and Critical Care*, sponsored by the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses. Currently, Morton is editor of the *Journal of Professional Nursing*, sponsored by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing. She also is an author-in-residence for *Nurse Author & Editor*. In recognition of her contributions to nursing and healthcare, Morton was inducted as a Fellow in the American Academy of Nursing in 1999.

**Cindy L. Munro, PhD, RN, ANP-BC, FAAN,
FAANP, Dean and Professor, University of
Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies**

Cindy L. Munro has served as coeditor of *American Journal of Critical Care* for more than 10 years. An experienced peer reviewer, she has published more than 150 articles and presented at many national and international conferences. Munro received a diploma from York Hospital School of Nursing, a BSN from Millersville University of Pennsylvania, and an MSN from University of Delaware. She earned her PhD in nursing and microbiology and immunology at Virginia Commonwealth University. Her NIH-funded research on oral care in critically ill adults has had an important effect on clinical practice. In 2016, Sigma Theta Tau International inducted Munro into its International Nurse Researcher Hall of Fame. She is an American Academy of Nursing Edge Runner.

**Sandra M. Nettina, MSN, ANP-BC, Nurse
Practitioner, Owner and Founder of Prime
Care House Calls, Howard County, Maryland;
Editor, *The Lippincott Manual of Nursing
Practice*, Wolters Kluwer Health**

Sandi Nettina attended the Sisters of Charity Hospital School of Nursing in Buffalo, NY; completed a bachelor's degree at Marymount College of Virginia; and received her MSN from the University of

Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. As an adult nurse practitioner, Nettina's multidimensional career includes founding a nurse practitioner independent-house-calls practice; writing, editing, and reviewing for several publishing companies; providing leadership in her state nurse practitioner association; and volunteering for several health-related organizations.

**Leslie H. Nicoll, PhD, MBA, RN, FAAN,
Principal and Owner, Maine Desk LLC;
Editor-in-Chief, *CIN: Computers, Informatics,
Nursing and Nurse Author & Editor***

Leslie H. Nicoll has more than 43 years of experience in nursing and healthcare and has worked in clinical practice, research, and academia. She founded her own business, Maine Desk LLC, in 2001. Nicoll has been the Editor-in-Chief of *CIN: Computers, Informatics, Nursing* since 1995 and *Nurse Author & Editor* since 2014. She served as Editor-in-Chief of *The Journal of Hospice and Palliative Nursing* for eight years (2001–2009). She is the author of more than 130 published professional articles, book chapters, and books, including *Writing in the Digital Age: Savvy Publishing for Healthcare Professionals*, coauthored with Peggy L. Chinn and published in 2015. She is also the author of *The Editor's Handbook*, the third edition of which was published in 2019. She was the founding editor of *Perspectives on Nursing Theory*, the first edition of which was published in 1986. In the non-nursing literature, she is the author of four *For Dummies* books, the most recent of which was published in 2014: *Kindle Paperwhite For Dummies*. Nicoll thoroughly enjoys helping nurses and other healthcare professionals achieve their publication goals. She has done this through one-on-one support in her business as well as leading writing workshops for the National League for Nursing, a consortium of universities in Switzerland, and various colleges and schools of nursing in the US. Dr. Nicoll became a Fellow in the American Academy of Nursing in 2014. She is active in INANE: The International Academy of Nursing Editors and received its Leadership Award for Excellence in Editorial Publication in 2015.

**Susanne J. Pavlovich-Danis, MSN, RN, ARNP-C,
CDCES, Director of Clinical Continuing
Education, TeamHealth Institute**

Susanne J. Pavlovich-Danis has 39 years of experience in nursing and healthcare in diverse clinical, academic, and consultant-based settings. As Director of Clinical Continuing Education at TeamHealth Institute, she oversees the American Nurses Credentialing Center and Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education accreditations and serves in the

chief editorial capacity for more than 600 annual continuing education activities nationwide for a multidisciplinary audience. She also maintains a private adult primary care practice in Plantation, Florida, and is a certified diabetes care and education specialist. Pavlovich-Danis is an approved continuing nursing education provider for the Florida Board of Nursing and has been published in the nursing literature more than 500 times since 1996 and lectured nationally and internationally.

**Demetrius J. Porche, DNS, PhD, ANEF, FACHE,
FAANP, FAAN, Dean and Professor, Louisiana State
University Health Sciences Center School of Nursing**

Demetrius J. Porche is Chief Editor of the *American Journal of Men's Health*. He was Associate Editor of the *Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS* for 10 years. He is a Virginia Henderson Fellow of Sigma Theta Tau International and a Society of Luther Christman Fellow for Contributions to Nursing by Men. He is also a Fellow in the National League for Nursing Nurse Educator Academy, the American Academy of Nursing, and the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners. He is board-certified in healthcare by the American College of Healthcare Executives. Porche is author of *Health Policy: Application for Nurses and Other Health Care Professionals* (2nd ed.), and he has published many articles in peer-reviewed journals.

**Richard W. Redman, PhD, Professor Emeritus and
Ada Sue Hinshaw Collegiate Emeritus Professor of
Nursing, University of Michigan School of Nursing**

Over the years, Richard W. Redman has served as Director of the MS program in systems leadership, the PhD program in nursing science, and the DNP program at the University of Michigan. He also has held leadership positions as Academic Dean and Interim Dean in the university's School of Nursing. Redman received a BSN from San Jose State University in California and MA and PhD degrees from the University of Iowa. As a scholar, Redman has focused his career on quality and patient safety in nursing practice environments and their impact on clinical and organizational outcomes. During his career, he has participated in a number of research teams based on this focus, ranging in scope from the patient to the organizational level.

**Jo Rycroft-Malone, PhD, MSc, BSc (Hons),
RN, Professor of Health Research and Dean of
Health & Medicine, Lancaster University**

Jo Rycroft-Malone has a nursing background and is a health services researcher who studies the processes

and outcomes of evidence-informed service delivery in different health service contexts across the globe. She is also the Director of the National Institute for Health Research Health Services & Delivery Research Programme, which funds research to generate evidence to improve the quality, accessibility, and organisation of health and care services in the United Kingdom. She was the inaugural Editor of *Worldviews on Evidence-Based Nursing*.

**Nadine Salmon, MSN, RN-BC, IBCLC,
SME Writer, Clinical Nursing, Relias**

Nadine Salmon is an SME Writer for clinical nursing at Relias, a leading provider of online continuing education for healthcare, senior care, and disabilities professionals. Salmon obtained her BSN in South Africa more than 30 years ago and has worked as an RN in South Africa, England, and the US in various settings, including labor and delivery, postpartum, home health, and adult surgical units. In 2012, she obtained an MSN with an emphasis in leadership in healthcare systems from Grand Canyon University. Salmon has served as an appraiser for the American Nurses Credentialing Center, is certified in nursing professional development, and is an international board-certified lactation consultant.

**Patricia Dwyer Schull, MSN, BS, President,
MedVantage Publishing LLC**

Patricia Dwyer Schull has more than 30 years of experience in medical and nursing publishing. She has published, written, and edited many nursing journals, books, websites, and other healthcare publications. Her company offers publishing solutions that support and educate healthcare professionals, including developing and launching the award-winning publications *Nursing Spectrum* and *McGraw Hill Nurses Drug Handbook*, *American Nurse Journal* (official journal of the American Nurses Association), and *Journal of Nursing Regulation* (official journal of the National Council of State Boards of Nursing). Previously, Schull held executive management positions with Reed Elsevier (Springhouse Corporation) and Wolters Kluwer (Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins), where she was responsible for leading editorial, sales, marketing, and new product development of nursing publications. Before entering the publishing industry, she practiced as a registered nurse in direct patient care, hospital management, and staff education.

**Stephanie J. Schulte, MLIS, Associate Professor,
Assistant Director, Research and Education, Health
Sciences Library, The Ohio State University**

Stephanie J. Schulte is a Faculty Health Sciences Librarian who specializes in teaching students, faculty, and staff advanced skills to support evidence-based practice and research endeavors. Her research work focuses on librarians embedded in clinical and academic settings. Schulte teaches within the medical school curriculum as well as the biomedical sciences undergraduate program at The Ohio State University and leads a team of research and education librarians serving five health sciences colleges and a large academic medical center. She is active in university governance, the Medical Library Association, and the Midwest Chapter of the Medical Library Association.

**Rose O. Sherman, EdD, RN, NEA-BC, CNL, FAAN,
Emeritus Professor, Christine E. Lynn College of
Nursing, Florida Atlantic University, and Faculty
Member, Marian K Shaughnessy Nursing Leadership
Academy, Case Western Reserve University**

Before becoming a faculty member, Rose O. Sherman was a nurse leader with the Department of Veterans Affairs for 25 years. She edits a popular leadership blog (www.emergingrnleader.com) and is Editor-in-Chief of *Nurse Leader*, the official journal of the American Organization of Nurse Executives. Sherman has extensive experience with both podium and poster presentations at professional conferences. She has also served as an abstract reviewer for numerous professional conferences at the state and national levels. Sherman is a Gallup-certified strengths coach and author of the book *The Nurse Leader Coach: Become the Boss No One Wants to Leave*.

**Mary Ellin Smith, MS, RN, Professional Development
Manager at Massachusetts General Hospital**

Mary Ellin Smith received her bachelor's degree in nursing from Boston College and her master of science in nursing administration from Boston University. Smith has practiced as a clinical nurse in medicine, critical care, and neuroscience. She has practiced administratively as a nurse manager and nursing director in medicine and as the Director of Professional Practice Development at several large medical centers. At Massachusetts General Hospital, her areas of responsibility include oversight of the clinical recognition program, collaborative governance, and leadership development.

**Lorraine Steefel, DNP, RN, CTN-A, President
of LTS Writing/Mentoring & Editorial
Services for RNs and Students**

Lorraine Steefel is a professional writer and writing consultant who has presented webinars and writing for publication workshops to nurses across the country. Her experience includes teaching academic writing to all levels of nursing students, especially mentoring DNP students who are writing their capstone project papers and turning them into published articles. Steefel has been widely published in peer-reviewed journals, nursing magazines, and on websites. She served as the American Nurses Association

representative to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Work Group to update the CDC website on ME/CFS (myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome). Her book *What Nurses Know...Chronic Fatigue Syndrome* was published by Demos Publishers in New York. Steefel serves on the editorial boards of *Creative Nursing: A Journal of Values, Issues, Experience & Collaboration*, published by Springer, and *Journal of Nursing Practice, Applications and Reviews of Research (JNPARR)*, the official journal of the Philippine Nurses Association of America.

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Foreword

“It is none of their business that you have to learn to write.”

–Ernest Hemingway

Writing is hard work for many people. Writing for scholarly publication is a learned skill that can be particularly difficult. Most of us acquired basic writing skills as children, including sentence structure and appropriate grammar use. Later, we learned how little we knew about writing a paper suitable for publication, and although we understood that we needed help, we had few resources and perhaps minimal mentoring and encouragement. For many of us, there were few instructional manuals to aid our learning. Rather, we learned by writing, and sometimes failing, before finally succeeding in having a paper published. Thus, the need for this book, *Anatomy of Writing for Publication for Nurses*, first published in 2011 and now in its fourth edition.

Editor Cynthia Saver has once again compiled comprehensive chapters written by well-published authors and highly experienced editors. Saver herself is an accomplished nursing scholar with many decades of experience as a writer and editor. She has published both research reports and clinical papers, among others, and she has published widely in nursing journals and in the broader health professions literature. Importantly, she teaches writing on a regular basis; writing is a topic about which she knows much. Saver and the chapter authors are thus expert guides for the reader-writer through all aspects of the work required to write for publication.

As editor of the journal *Nursing Research*, I have the privilege of reading many well-written papers. It is exciting to receive these papers and a pleasure to assist in bringing them to publication. Unfortunately, I also receive papers with topics that are inappropriate for the journal, papers with good ideas that are poorly referenced, papers whose tables and figures are unnecessary, and papers that are not prepared in a journal-appropriate format. A review of the journal’s author guidelines or a query to the editor would have saved these authors time and the disappointment of rejection. At other times, our

reviewers recommend rejecting papers where the components are incongruous—title, abstract, background, methods, results, and discussion inconsistently “tell the story.” I am particularly disappointed when I have to reject papers with significant overlap with previously published work or because the authors have not adhered to the standards of quality research, such as obtaining human subjects review or registering clinical trials.

All these issues are important to people who want to be successfully published authors, and Saver and her colleagues have addressed them in this latest edition of *Anatomy*. There are also chapters on how to search research and other literature and how to organize references for ease of citation. There is advice for authors whose primary language is not English. Importantly, given the nature of today’s connected world, there is a chapter on promoting your published work using social media and other venues. Most notably, there are chapters on writing research papers, clinical papers, book chapters, continuing education programs, and other scholarly products important for conveying knowledge. There is also a chapter on reviewing scholarly papers, which most of us can benefit from.

Above all else, learning to write requires that one write on your own. However, you do not have to learn to write alone. The previous editions of *Anatomy* have helped countless students as well as novice and experienced writers develop the skills they need to begin and continue writing. For those who want to improve their writing, this new edition will meet your needs.

–Rita Pickler, PhD, RN, FAAN
Editor, *Nursing Research*

The FloAnn Sours Easton Professor of Child and
Adolescent Health
Director, PhD & MS in Nursing Science Programs
Martha S. Pitzer Center for Women,
Children & Youth
The Ohio State University College of Nursing
Columbus, Ohio, USA

Introduction

“I admire anybody who has the guts to write anything at all.”

–E. B. White

Writing well is not the result of luck or innate talent. Writing is a skill you can learn, just as you learned nursing skills such as venipuncture and suctioning.

However, nurses often find it challenging to write. After all, as Margaret McClure says in *Words of Wisdom From Pivotal Nurse Leaders*, “One of nursing’s biggest handicaps is that we are in a field where your basic practice requires that you never write in complete sentences” (Houser & Player, 2008, p. 70). *Anatomy of Writing for Publication for Nurses*, Fourth Edition, is designed to help you bridge the gap between incomplete sentences and a published manuscript. The book’s contributors include the best and the brightest from publishing today. Many of the contributors have experience as editors of nursing journals, where their role is to decide which articles to accept for publication. These decision-makers share important insights that will enhance the likelihood your manuscript is accepted for publication.

You also can draw a wealth of knowledge from the many years of writing experience that the contributors bring to this book. These authors have a long history of success in having their work published; the important tips they share will set you on track to seeing your work in print or online.

How to Use This Book

This book is divided into three parts, all of which have been updated for this new edition.

Part 1, “A Primer on Writing and Publishing,” describes the basics of publishing, from generating a great idea and writing the article to revising your manuscript and sharing your work. This section is packed with information on how to bolster the chance that your manuscript will be accepted for publication.

Topics include how to query a journal; writing and submitting the manuscript; legal and ethical issues; and effective use of tables, figures, graphs, illustrations, and photos. If English is your second language, don’t miss the chapter for global authors. Part 1 also includes a chapter on peer review, a great way to improve your own writing skills. Even if you don’t plan to be a peer reviewer, understanding the reviewer’s perspective will help you anticipate what comments reviewers might have about your manuscript.

Part 1 contains a new chapter on how to improve your writing, which you can use to hone your skills. Part 1 also has been revised to reflect current publishing trends. For example, the section on collaborative writing has been expanded as interprofessional writing becomes increasingly common. Team writing can be rewarding but also frustrating if not well managed. You’ll find practical strategies you can use to facilitate the process.

The section on the troubling trend of predatory journals also has been updated. You’ll want to read how to protect yourself from publishers who don’t have your best interests at heart. Visual abstracts, which are beginning to make inroads in nursing, are covered, and the general information about abstracts has been expanded.

Other new or expanded sections in Part 1 include cover letters, preprints, effective titles, citation styles, and promoting your work via social media.

By the time you complete Part 1, you’ll have a solid understanding of the entire publishing process.

Part 2, “Tips for Writing Different Types of Articles,” is where you can apply what you learned in Part 1. Each chapter takes you through writing a particular type of paper or article, including clinical articles, research reports, review articles, books, personal

narratives, continuing education, and materials for consumers. You can dip into the relevant chapter in Part 2 depending on your writing goals.

Part 2 features a new chapter on writing the review article, including systematic, scoping, and integrative reviews. The chapter on writing the research report focuses on qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method studies. Between these two chapters, you'll find what you need to craft an effective article about your study.

The chapter on turning your student project or dissertation into a publication has been revised to provide additional advice, and you'll find more information about how to create a poster in the writing for presentations chapter.

In the back of the book, you'll discover a wealth of resources. The appendices have been updated and, in some cases, expanded.

I've given a snapshot of some of the changes from the previous edition, but you should also know that each chapter has been revised by the authors (including updating references and providing new examples) to ensure it conveys the best possible information.

Writing Can Be Fun

The contributors and I have forgone the traditional textbook style of writing for something that we hope is livelier and more approachable. This doesn't mean we don't take writing seriously. We do. Writing is a core nursing responsibility, right up there with being a patient advocate.

Our goal is to show you that even though writing effectively takes work, it is within every nurse's reach to do so—and you can have some fun while doing it.

Special Elements in This Book

In each chapter of *Anatomy of Writing for Publication for Nurses*, Fourth Edition, you'll find these features:

- **Opening quotes:** Quotes at the start of each chapter provide pithy words of wisdom related to the craft of writing.
- **What You'll Learn in This Chapter:** This provides an overview of what's to come.
- **Q&A sidebars:** Here you'll find answers to some common questions related to the chapter's topic.
- **Confidence Booster:** Lack of confidence can hold nurses back from sharing their wealth of knowledge. These special sections are designed to inspire you and to encourage you to break down that barrier.
- **Write Now!:** These exercises at the end of each chapter help you apply what you have learned.

A Call to Action

Remember: The best way to become a better writer is to write! Like any other skill, practice is a key component to success. I hope this book inspires you to take on writing as a lifetime practice.

I also hope you use *Anatomy of Writing for Publication for Nurses*, Fourth Edition, as a guide to getting your work published. We have an obligation to share our knowledge with other nurses, other healthcare professionals, and the public; in essence, we have a duty to disseminate.

Reference

Houser, B. P., & Player, K. N. (2008). *Words of wisdom from pivotal nurse leaders*. Sigma Theta Tau International.

Part 1

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