

Building Your Scholarship Portfolio: One Brick at a Time

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Scholarship is a murky, intimidating term covering broad aspects of a nurse's career from novice to expert. What exactly is scholarship, and will I know it when I see it? Does it mean having an advanced degree? No. Does it require working at an academic institution? No. Does giving a great in-service on chest tubes to five nurses you catch before morning report have the same heft as giving a lecture to 1,000 in a conference hall? I think so—Both should be done well. Does writing a detailed REBOA procedure for your unit manual carry the same weight as writing a research article? I see them as equally challenging—Both should be done well. Does writing concise but descriptive quality improvement minutes equate to writing an impactful article? Absolutely. Does helping a nurse orientee learn the practical interpretation of blood gases have the same impact as teaching academically? Unquestionably. Learn to identify, embrace, and celebrate your scholarly side.

Years spent in the trenches delivering effective in-services prepare one for an eventual speaking engagement at a state or national conference. Years spent writing nursing procedures, quality improvement minutes, or administrative reports is great preparation for writing an article for publication. Communication, whether oral or written, is a highly prized skill set that requires continuous nurturing and investment. Having a learning mindset, seeking out and being receptive to critique and feedback, pushing yourself to a higher level of performance, always demanding more promote the development of an extensive scholarship portfolio, built one brick at a time.

You may be lucky to work in a renowned institution with famous trauma clinicians yet make minimal scholar-

ship impact. You may work in a less than famous institution, without the benefit of national trauma leaders or mentors, but you can have an outsized impact—immersed in clinical productivity, patient care, teaching, leadership research, writing, or mentoring. Or, perhaps you have climbed the ladder in your institution and find there is no room left for you to advance in position, stature, or reimbursement; yet, for a variety of reasons, you cannot leave. Consider soaring externally through scholarship. Don't be defined by your institution, peers, or your position. Define yourself through your scholarship portfolio, which knows no limits. Participate in regional or state trauma meetings. Become a member of the local chapter of a professional nursing organization and take on leadership roles. Consider a clinical teaching role for the local school of nursing. Orient new employees, mentor others, give lectures, volunteer for hospital committees, write for publication, or conduct research. Plot your scholarship trajectory; stack your bricks; you have agency.

To become a good writer, one must read; to become a good peer reviewer, one must write; to become a good speaker, one must listen; to become a good teacher, one must combine knowledge and passion; and to become a good leader, one must earn authority through actions rather than by title. I submit that scholarship is a combination of all of these, with no one aspect being more important than the other. It is not about a degree, a title, or a place. Scholarship is about a work ethic of continuous learning, achievement, and giving back to one's profession. The Society of Trauma Nurses and the *Journal of Trauma Nursing* are vehicles for your scholarship. We welcome your scholarship portfolio. Bring us your bricks.

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