

## Development of an Intraprofessional Scholarship Workgroup

### *Systematic Process for Creating and Disseminating Nursing Knowledge*

Rebecca Fay, DNP, APRN, CNM, WHNP-BC, CNE, FACNM; Charlotte Swint, DNP, MPH, FNP-BC, CNE; and Eileen J. B. Thrower, PhD, APRN, CNM, CNE, FACNM

The tripartite role of nurse educators requires that nursing faculty members are excellent teachers, clinicians, and researchers. Nurse educators are often motivated to contribute to the body of knowledge as part of their professional and career development and also to fulfill personal goals.<sup>1-3</sup> The creation and dissemination of scholarly works are important avenues for nurse educators to contribute to best practices and research in nursing education and practice.<sup>3,4</sup> Additionally, in academia, the publication of scholarly work may be necessary for individual career advancement.<sup>1-3</sup> However, nurse educators may experience reluctance to engage in the dissemination of knowledge and research, particularly those outside of research-intensive settings. While nurse educators at research-intensive universities are required to publish scholarly works, it is also important for educators at schools that are not research-intensive to contribute to nursing scholarship.

Collaborative scholarship groups, including collaborative writing groups, can be useful for encouraging nurse educators to engage in scholarship.<sup>3-6</sup> This article presents a 10-step process for collaborative scholarship as demonstrated through the work of a group of nurse educators at an online nursing university.

### The Problem

Nurse educators are astute observers of their environments and use the nursing process to generate evidence-based outcomes. Seldom is the rich knowledge that nurse educators have gleaned from their patient care experiences, academic teaching experiences, and community experiences disseminated beyond a limited scope. Reasons for this lack of dissemination include lack of knowledge related to sharing

their knowledge, lack of time to participate in and complete scholarly endeavors, and lack of confidence in creating scholarly works.<sup>2-4,7</sup> In addition, most articles in health care journals are written by groups of authors rather than by individuals. Working in a group requires trust in the team members and leaders, self-awareness, and strong communication skills.<sup>9,15</sup> Scholarly writing can be especially daunting for nurses in clinical practice. Barriers such as lack of time, lack of writing ideas, lack of research skills, and the fear of failure contribute to their ability to produce a manuscript.<sup>2-5,7-9</sup> Collaborative writing may lead to additional challenges. Problems such as differences in writing style, not adhering to agreed-upon timelines, the attitudes of collaborators, uneven distribution of workloads, and general coauthor disagreements can occur. These challenges may be avoided by employing excellent communication skills and through the setting of clear group expectations at the beginning of the project.<sup>3,9-11</sup>

### The Approach

Formulas for collaborative writing frequently include considerations issues such as team building, the sequence of authorship, purpose statement, audience, venue, action plan, timeline, revision, and response to the editor.<sup>11,12</sup> The works of Clark<sup>12</sup> and Frassl et al<sup>11</sup> were adapted by this intraprofessional writing group to create a systematic approach to collaborative scholarship. As many participants in this group were novice authors, the group approach was thought to be appropriate as writing as a group with 2 or more colleagues divides the work that might be overwhelming for 1 author into blocks of work that are more manageable for each team member.<sup>9</sup> Inexperienced authors gain new skills through mentoring from experienced nurse scholars.<sup>3,9,11</sup> Successful faculty writing groups are faculty-driven, have faculty-friendly timing for scheduling of meetings, maintain confidentiality within the group, model evidence-based practices, and provide beneficial experiences for the participants.<sup>13</sup>

Three collaborative writing methods are described in the literature.<sup>14</sup> The hand-off method, parallel writing,

**Author Affiliations:** Assistant Professors (Drs Fay and Thrower) and Associate Professor (Dr Swint), Frontier Nursing University, Hyden, Kentucky.

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**Correspondence:** Dr Fay, 1980 East Stoneridge Dr, Springfield, MO 65803 (Rebecca.fay@frontier.edu).

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and side-by-side writing are methods that groups may use to complete projects. After the development of the topic outline, the hand-off method begins with a writer starting his/her assigned section and then passing the document on to the next person to complete a section. This round-robin method allows for continuous editing and review. The paper circulates among the writing group until the writing is completed.<sup>14</sup> Parallel writing is an approach where writing is divided among the writing group. The advantage is different parts of the document are written simultaneously, and all writers are engaged in the process. The disadvantage of this method is the challenge of meshing the different writing styles and tone.<sup>14</sup> Writers using side-by-side writing may find writing together stimulating. As writers are engaged in side-to-side writing, there may be an opportunity for brainstorming and further creation of ideas. The disadvantage of side-by-side writing is the possibility of distraction if the writers experience differences of opinion or differences in writing styles.<sup>14</sup>

Systematic Process for Collaborative Scholarship

Regardless of the writing approach used, collaborative nursing scholarship can be facilitated by the use of a systematic process. The 10-step process presented in Table provides a framework for guiding collaborative efforts among nurse scholars. Coming together as a group of scholars with similar interests is the first step of the process. Groups may coalesce formally or informally. Writing workshops, scholarship retreats, and textbook writing bring nurse educators together with the intention of scholarly collaboration.<sup>11</sup> Groups may come together informally as colleagues share interests or expertise in a field. Regardless of the manner in which the group is formed, the next steps are to share ideas and then to identify an area of focus. This third step requires dialogue and compromise among group members to narrow the focus away from individual interests toward a shared mental model on the purpose of the work.

Table. Ten-Step Systematic Process for Collaborative Scholarship
1. Come together
2. Share ideas
3. Identify topic
4. Structure workgroup
5. Develop a timeline
6. Complete tasks
7. Leader support
8. Review and edit
9. Disseminate
10. Apply knowledge
<i>Adapted from Clark<sup>12</sup> and Frassl et al<sup>11</sup>.</i>

Once a topic is identified, roles are assigned to each group member.<sup>11</sup> A clear understanding of the tasks associated with each role is critical. This step is facilitated by the group leader who may lead from the onset or may be established at this point. The creation of a timeline with goals for completion of each task represents the next step in the collaboration. In order to reach an agreed-upon timeline by all group members, each member should suggest achievable deadlines for completion of their assigned tasks. As the group moves forward with its scholarly work, the leader checks in with group members, supporting their work, encouraging progress, and facilitating timely completion of tasks.<sup>11</sup>

Group members may need to come together at key points throughout the workflow to review progress, identify challenges, redistribute workload, modify approaches, and edit the output. Once finalized, manuscripts are submitted for publication, and results are shared via podium or poster presentations. The final step in the process is to follow through to ensure that results are applied appropriately. Scholarship related to nursing education is applied locally at members' institutions, as well as more broadly through dissemination. Similarly, clinical nursing scholarship impacts best practices and the evidence base for nursing care.

Application of Systematic Process in an Advanced Practice Nursing Program

This systematic process was used in 1 institution to facilitate scholarly collaboration among nurse educators. The group worked together to write a manuscript, which was subsequently published in a nursing education journal. The systematic process was applied as the group worked together and demonstrated its use.

Coming Together

During an annual research symposium at an online nursing university, a group of nurse educators came together to form a scholarly workgroup. The group consisted of 8 advanced practice nurse educators. Five members were certified nurse-midwives, and 3 were family nurse practitioners. Prior to the symposium, participants agreed to participate in a small group focused on the development of a scholarly project. The team consisted of a group of advanced practice RNs with varying amounts of publishing experience.

Sharing Ideas

Members suggested topics that were of interest to them individually. The group facilitator recorded all suggestions for the project. One face-to-face meeting was at the research symposium. Subsequent communication took place via email and Google Hangout (Google, Mountain View, California) meetings.

Choosing a Topic

The nurse educators in the group represented different disciplines and had different research interests, so the general topic of advanced practice nursing education represented

a common interest for the group members. During the face-to-face meeting, the topic of evaluating teaching and learning methods in nursing education courses was chosen by the group. One member had experience with collaborative writing and proposed a process that had previously been successful. The 8 group members agreed to work toward creating a manuscript for publication in a scholarly journal.

### Workgroup Structure

The workgroup members self-selected into groups to assume responsibility for tasks including completing a literature review, identifying a journal for submission, writing the manuscript, and editing. The group leader served as the writing project manager over the next 6 months. The responsibility for editing and revising the manuscript was divided between group members. The Google Docs, Drive, and Hangout applications were used for team engagement and participation.

### Task Completion

Two team members completed a literature review that informed the project. Databases including MEDLINE, Cumulated Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature, and PubMed were searched. Articles that were relevant were chosen to inform the background portion of the manuscript. Two members consulted the International Academy of Nursing Editors website for possible journals appropriate for the project. Using a systematic approach, the 2 group members evaluated 6 journals for appropriateness of fit.<sup>15</sup> Three journals were identified and presented to the entire group for a final decision. The workgroup unanimously agreed on a journal, voting via an electronic survey. Author guidelines from the selected journal were distributed to the writing group.

The group predominantly used the parallel writing approach. A Google document shared with all group members allowed for asynchronous work on the paper. A timeline was created that guided the completion of tasks. Group members volunteered to write different parts of the paper, and when written, their part was added to the Google document for review by the group. One section of the paper was written by 2 group members using the side-by-side method, fleshing out the idea and details, and cowriting the section during a day spent together. Although the project manager was the final editor, all members contributed to the editing process making grammatical corrections and verbiage suggestions.

### Dissemination Through Publication

The manuscript was submitted to a peer-reviewed nursing education journal and was initially accepted with minimal revisions for publication. The project manager created a table with the recommended revisions, and group members edited the sections they wrote. This collaborative effort reduced the turnaround time for the resubmission of the manuscript. Workgroup members reviewed, revised, and gave

the final approval for publication of the manuscript proof, which was ultimately accepted for publication.

### Dissemination Through Presentation

The group members chose to present their work at nursing conferences. Local and national conferences on nursing education were identified, and abstracts were written. The abstracts were submitted for podium and poster presentations in different regions. Not all group members were available to participate in these presentations but were credited for their contributions as applicable.

### Application

Nurse educators within the university became interested in systematically evaluating teaching and learning methods in other courses. Based on the information shared during the process of writing the paper, faculty began the process of systematically evaluating clinical simulation activities. A valid and reliable tool for evaluating learning outcomes from simulations was adapted, and the resulting data were used to make improvements to the student learning experience.

### Lessons Learned

The formation of an intraprofessional scholarship workgroup is a valuable approach to creating and disseminating scholarly works. Nurse educators have knowledge they would like to share, and working as a group facilitates this scholarship. Group members contribute different skills allowing novice and seasoned nurse educators to work together and build collegiality. Seasoned authors help guide the process, and novice authors provide insight and contribute knowledge, asking questions about the rationale of different steps of the manuscript writing process. Participation in a scholarly workgroup can be an intimidating process, but using a systematic process facilitates collaborative scholarship among nurse educators.

### Conclusion

Nurse educators are driven to be scholars, clinicians, and teachers. All nurses have a story to tell about the work that they do every day. There is a call for nursing education and nursing practice to be evidence-based, and nurses need to answer this call by sharing their knowledge and skills with others. Bringing groups of nurses together allows for the generation and dissemination of best practices through collaborative scholarship groups.

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## TEACHING TIP

### Utilizing Social Media for Nursing Laboratory Communication and Resources During COVID-19

During such an evolving time for nursing programs with the COVID-19 pandemic, the nursing laboratory staff needed an easy, reliable, and consistent method to communicate with nursing students. At the onset of remote instruction early in the pandemic, we immediately focused resources on our nursing simulation laboratory Facebook page. Laboratory educators posted resources, online classes, and nursing program updates daily (Supplemental Digital Content, <http://links.lww.com/NE/A858>, Facebook Use Guidelines). Nursing students enjoyed the convenience of having various study tools at their fingertips, with videos, websites, and articles being the most requested and used items. We used this platform to share virtual options for open laboratory sessions, review classes, and skills demonstrations. Students had transparency into nursing program updates, such as volunteer opportunities, material pickup, and policy changes. Finally, we used the Facebook page as an open forum where students could post questions about their nursing courses and/or simulation. Each course continues to use our Learning Management System for assignments and lecture resources, but these are required and grade dependent. The Facebook page is voluntary and provides the students an opportunity to develop their professional responsibility with respect to lifelong learning. Overall, using social media in a virtual environment facilitated increased communication and resource sharing and is a tool we will continue to use even after the COVID-19 pandemic is over.

By **Chelsea Lebo**, MSN, RN-BC, CHSE, and **Norma Brown**, MSN, RN, CHSE, School of Nursing, Health, and Exercise Science, The College of New Jersey, Ewing, NJ, [LeboC@TCNJ.edu](mailto:LeboC@TCNJ.edu), [NBrown@TCNJ.edu](mailto:NBrown@TCNJ.edu).

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