

**Writing and the Art of Medicine:
From Personal Reflection to Publication**

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Agenda:

Introduction of session leaders

Brief presentation on writing in medical education

Breakout Writing Session

Small Group Discussions

Criteria for and avenues for publication

Question and answer

Evaluation

Session Learning Objectives:

By the end of the workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Discuss several forms of writing as a means of promoting personal and professional development
2. Discuss how writing can be incorporated into medical education
3. Write a narrative (critical incident report, reflective or personal essay)
4. Discuss and give feedback on participants' narratives in small groups
5. Discuss criteria for publication, particularly qualities that increase the likelihood of publication
6. Discuss resources for publishing medical narratives

Background:

In 2001, the Institute of Medicine called for the creation of healing relationships between patients and care providers as the basis for quality health care. Some have previously considered this healing relationship the “art” of medicine, something that is innate and cannot be taught. However, integrating humanities and medicine in an educational endeavor such as a writing workshop may promote the observational skills, self-awareness, reflection, and empathy that help to form the healing relationship. Narrative writing in a variety of forms has been shown to encourage reflection among physicians and physicians-in-training. Healthcare providers at all stages may improve their humanistic skills and become better caregivers by first reflecting on patient care experiences, then writing, sharing, and discussing. The medical literature contains many reports of the use of writing to promote personal growth and professional development in medicine.

Two Types of Narrative:

1. Critical incident reports (CIRs) are short narrative accounts that focus on an influential event. CIRs are similar to journal or diary entries that focus on any challenging moment: a patient's death; an unpleasant interaction with a resident or attending; a medical mistake; and so on. These may be used in teaching sessions focused on critical incidents. CIRs often are springboards to longer written pieces. (1,2,3,4)
2. Reflective or personal essays are short essays exploring the emotive aspect of practice. The act of writing promotes reflection and has been shown to impact personal and professional growth. By reflecting and writing about patient care experiences, healthcare providers may improve their humanistic skills and become better caregivers. (20, 21, 24, 35)

Criteria for publication:

Many medical journals publish narratives.

Reviewers rate narrative manuscripts for the Reflective Practice section of Patient Education and Counseling on the following criteria:

1. The narrative provides a lesson applicable to caring, humanism, and relationship in health care
2. The narrative demonstrates reflection on practice, relationships, experience, and/or learning
3. Clarity of focus/ message/ theme of the narrative
4. Clarity of writing/ writing style
5. Extent to which the story is compelling, evocative, arouses strong interest and attention in the reader

The reviewer also writes narrative comments for the editor and author.

Good Narratives

(adapted from Patient Education and Counseling *Narrative Notes*)

1. **Good narratives “show”, they don’t tell.** A common problem with some narratives is that the authors essentially tell you what the story is about (“what follows is an account that taught me about the importance of physician-patient communication”) as opposed to telling you the details of the story and making the lesson of importance evident (“I thought that she had understood what I had told her; I could not have been more wrong.”).
2. **Narratives make observations, not conclusions.** Good narratives let you see what the author saw, but don’t tell you what to make of it (“I made a home visit for the first time. The house was dark, the curtains drawn, and day-old dishes were in the sink” as opposed to “the conditions of his unkempt house made it clear that his difficult social situation was contributing to his illness”). The whole story might lead you to conclude something about the situation, but authors can lead you to this conclusion by painting a clear picture, not telling you what to make of a certain situation.
3. **Narratives should have purpose.** There should be a reason behind the narrative or a point that the author is trying to make. Sometimes, if a writer is adhering to guidelines above, the intent or purpose of the story may not be clear to the reader. Consider what the underlying message is to the audience and be consistent with that message throughout the narrative.

Medical / Healthcare Journals with Narrative Sections

Journal	Title of Narrative Column	Word Count	Web site
<i>Patient Education and Counseling</i>	Reflective Practice	1500	http://ees.elsevier.com/pec
<i>BMJ (British Medical Journal)</i>	Personal Views Fillers	850 600	http://bmj.bmjournals.com/advice/
<i>JAMA</i>	A Piece of My Mind	1800	http://jama.amaassn.org/ifora_current.dtl
<i>Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine</i>	On My Mind	800	http://archpedi.amaassn.org/misc/ifora.dtl
<i>Annals of Internal Medicine</i>	On Being a Doctor On Being a Patient	1500 1500	http://annals.org/shared/author_info.s.html#onbeing
<i>CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal)</i>	The Left Atrium: Room for A View	1000	http://www.cmaj.ca/authors/preparing.shtml
<i>Health Affairs</i>	Narrative Matters	2500 + 100 word abstract	http://www.healthaffairs.org/1410_for_authors.php#narrativematters
<i>Annals of Family Medicine</i> (on-line journal)	Essays: Reflections	1000	http://www.annfammed.org/misc/ifora.shtml
<i>Journal of Palliative Medicine</i>	Personal Reflection		http://www.liebertpub.com/JPM
<i>The Medical Journal of Australia</i>	Personal Perspective	1500	http://www.mja.com.au/public/information/instruc.html#Categories
<i>Archives of Dermatology</i>	The Art and the Calling	600 - 1200	http://archderm.amaassn.org/misc/ifora.dtl
<i>Journal of General Internal Medicine</i>	Reflections	essays - 1500 poems - 500	http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/su_bmit.asp?ref=0884-8734
<i>Journal of the American Geriatrics Society</i>	Old Lives Tales	750	http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/su_bmit.asp?ref=0002-8614
<i>American Journal of Psychiatry</i>	Introspections	1000	http://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/misc/ifora.shtml
<i>Ambulatory Pediatrics</i>	In the Moment	2500	http://www.ambulatorypediatrics.org/

<i>Academic Emergency Medicine</i>	Reflections	750	http://www.aemj.org/misc/reflects.shtml
<i>Medical Encounter</i>	(3 sections publish narrative and poetry) Narratives and Health Pediatric Perspective Poetry Encounter	1500	http://www.aachonline.org/publications/medicalencounter/
<i>Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping</i> (Social Work journal; print and on-line)		Varies	http://www.csulb.edu/depts/socialwork/reflections/411.htm
<i>The New Physician</i> (American Medical Student Association)	On the Wards	800 – 1500	http://www.amsa.org/tnp/guide.cfm
<i>Academic Medicine</i>	Teaching and Learning Moments	250 – 500	http://www.academicmedicine.org/misic/informationpage.shtml
<i>American Journal of Nursing</i>	Reflections (\$100 honorarium)	800 - 1600	http://www.editorialmanager.com/ajn/

These tables were originally Prepared by: Elizabeth Rider, MSW, MD, 3/06; updated 3/07; 9/07; 10/08

Selected Health-Related Literary Journals

Paper	Online
<i>Bellevue Literary Review</i> http://www.blreview.org/	<i>Cell 2 Soul</i> http://www.cell2soul.org/index.php
<i>Blood and Thunder: Musings on the Art of Medicine</i> http://www.bloodandthunder.org/main/index.php	<i>The Yale Journal for Humanities in Medicine</i> http://info.med.yale.edu/intmed/hummed/yjhm/about.htm
<i>Medical Humanities</i> http://mh.bmjournals.com/	<i>Dermanities</i> http://www.dermanities.com/
<i>Literature and Medicine</i> http://www.press.jhu.edu/journals/literature_and_medicine	<i>Online Journal of Health Ethics</i> http://ethicsjournal.umc.edu/ojs/index.php
<i>ARS MEDICA</i> http://www.mtsinai.on.ca/arsmedica/	<i>Narrative Magazine</i> http://www.narrativemagazine.com (free subscription)
<i>The Healing Muse</i> http://www.upstate.edu/bioethics/thehealingmuse	<i>CCAHE, Canadian Creative Arts in Health, Training and Education eNews/journal</i> http://www.cmclean.com/
<i>Creative Nonfiction</i> http://www.creativenonfiction.org/	<i>Hospital Drive: A Journal of Reflective Practice in Word and Image</i> http://www.hospitaldrive.med.virginia.edu/
<i>Journal of Medical Humanities</i> http://www.springerlink.com	<i>The Healers Voice (AMSA)</i> http://www.amsa.org/humed/hv/
<i>The Legible Script</i> (for medical students) http://www.hsc.usf.edu/medstud/thelegiblescript/	<i>Mindprints</i> (field of disabilities) http://www.imindprints.com/
<i>Kaleidoscope: International Magazine of Literature, Fine Arts, and Disability</i> < http://www.udsakron.org/kaleidoscope.htm >	

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