

# The Editing Process—From the Personal to the Professional

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**A**long with my colleagues, I presented a number of sessions at the 2019 Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) Congress on publishing and how it contributes to career advancement and professional fulfillment. Ellen Carr, RN, MSN, AOCN®, editor of the *Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing*, Leslie McGee, MA, senior editorial manager at ONS, and I talked about various aspects of the publishing process and answered questions from enthusiastic audience members, many of whom had not published before. As we described the process of writing a manuscript, following the instructions for authors, and eventually finding a home for the work, I thought about the important role that editing plays.

Self-editing comes first, of course. There are times when I sit down at my desk and stare at the blinking cursor on my monitor and have little confidence that anything is going to result from my attempts that day—or perhaps ever—and certainly not by my informal deadline. But then I start, and soon the cursor is moving, and words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs fill the previously blank page in front of me. Of course, not all days go like that, and I do have days when the cursor just blinks for what seems like hours, and I am grateful that I have patients to see and meetings to attend. I certainly feel a sense of relief when I complete a writing task, but that sense of relief is followed by the realization that a self-editing step is needed. Like many of you, I often feel disinclined to edit myself; I worked so hard to get those

words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs complete, and now I have to go over my work, balancing every phrase with the next, and deleting or changing what I wrote. The horror! But, of course, this is an essential part of the process, and I always find ways to better express something, find a sentence or two that can be deleted, or even find a whole paragraph that needs to be moved to another place in the document.

Then, I submit whatever it is that I have written, and I wait. Much of professional writing goes through a peer-review process, and that can take a while. There are usually revisions required, questions to be answered, and clarifications to be made. That is followed by another wait until, hopefully, an acceptance email is received. Then it is time to celebrate and await the next steps.

Anything published in professional literature is going to go through an editing process, and this is where dedicated experts get to make our work look better than it perhaps started off as. In my role as editor of this journal, I have occasionally received pushback from an author who objects to the suggestions or changes made by the copy editor working on his or her manuscript. I understand that this can be painful; the author has worked hard through the process of writing and revision, and they are justifiably proud of what they have produced.

There is always a solution to disagreements about editing, and our copy editors are there not only to uphold the publishing standards and style of this journal, but also to make the work of the author the very best it can be. They are not experts in nursing, oncology, or the many topic areas that we publish, but they are experts in language, syntax, grammar, and spelling, and even the most experienced and widely published authors make errors in these domains.

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The works of all of those experienced and widely published authors have had the hand of copy editors correcting those errors. I have been embarrassed upon receiving the edited version of something I have written and seeing the many corrections and more than a few queries that the document now contains. My role is to express myself as best I can in communicating about what I have done. The copy editor's job is to make my efforts clear so that the readers will have a complete understanding of what I have written. These are two sides of the same coin, and the work of the copy editor should not be seen as judgmental or adversarial in any way.

We are fortunate to have a staff of excellent professionals who work diligently to make our words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and, ultimately, our published work in the *Oncology Nursing Forum* be the best that it can be. I see it every two months when I

receive copies of the manuscripts accepted for publication in this journal and observe the process of polishing them until they are ready to go to press. Within a few weeks, the authors receive a copy of their work in an issue of the journal, and it is time to celebrate once again. Publishing is a team effort by the editorial staff. I personally owe them all a debt of gratitude for making these words you are reading the very best they can be and for the work they have done on all the pages in this issue. Thank you, one and all.



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