Guidelines for Continuing Professional Development articles

These guidelines have been prepared for authors submitting CPD articles to the evidence & practice section of Nursing Standard

Structure and content
Editorial content will usually be agreed with you in advance of your submission by the commissioning editor. In writing the article, you should keep in mind the level of nurse at whom you are aiming the content and, where appropriate, the specialty in which they work.

You should start the article by stating clearly:
1. The overall aim.
2. The learning outcomes – four or five are usually sufficient.
3. Relevance to The Code – identify four or five ways in which the content of the article relates to the four themes of The Code: Professional Standards of Practice and Behaviour for Nurses and Midwives, published by the Nursing & Midwifery Council (NMC) (2015), which are: Prioritise people, Practise effectively, Preserve safety, and Promote professionalism and trust.

Examples include:
» An important component of mindfulness is reflection, which the Code states is important in improving nurses’ practice and performance.
» The Code states that nurses must ensure people’s physical, social and psychological needs are recognised, assessed and responded to. The article equips nurses to discuss the importance of weight loss and necessary lifestyle adjustments in the prevention and management of type 2 diabetes.
» The information provided about healthy lifestyle behaviours can be used to inform practice. The Code requires that nurses keep their knowledge and skills up-to-date.
» The article should end with a conclusion summarising the main points covered in the article.

Style and tone
The CPD articles require a consistent and user-friendly tone. The style should be professional, relate to current practice and be evidence based, but does not need to be overly ‘academic’ to get across information of a sufficiently high level and quality. Neither should it be too basic or patronising for the readers’ abilities and understanding. Aim to make it concise, clear, directive, factual and evidence based; you should seek to teach the readers, rather than suggest a particular course of action.

Think about the best way to present detailed information. It may be more clearly understood as a graph, table or pie chart or as a case study or list of points. However, it is important not to over-use these formats. Remember that after reading the article, the readers will be scrutinising it again to write a reflective account. It is important to ensure that the information you provide is available, accessible, accurate and unambiguous.

Time out activities
A minimum of five and a maximum of ten time out activities should be included in each article. The purpose of these is to encourage readers to stop and think about what they are reading and relate it to their current practice or experience, or to the four themes of The Code (NMC) (2015).

Each time out activity should have a clear purpose – for example, it may test whether readers have achieved one of the stated learning outcomes, or you could introduce a new idea by asking readers to think about, and then write down, what they understand by a particular term or concept.

You might suggest that readers discuss a particular aspect of nursing practice with colleagues, or ask someone from another professional group, for example a physiotherapist or pharmacist, what their understanding is of a particular patient’s health needs.

Another angle you might take is to ask readers to compare two views that have been presented. In another section, you might ask readers to apply national figures for, say, the incidence of a health problem in their local area.

It is good open learning practice to include some commentary, debriefing or feedback for each activity. This does not necessarily mean providing the right answer – often there are no right answers. Rather, you should give readers an indication of whether they are on the right track or comment on any difficulty they might have had. You could suggest where they might find further information or help as necessary. Equally, you might raise another aspect of the topic: ‘I wonder if you considered X when you thought about/discussed this issue. X is relevant here in terms of its….’

We suggest that you write the time out activity first and follow it with the text that relates to it.

Acknowledgements
If you wish to acknowledge a person(s) or an organisation, please contact the relevant person(s) or organisation and ensure they are happy to be named in your article and request that they provide confirmation of this in writing.

Conflict of interest
Please declare any conflict of interest involved in the writing or publication of the article.

Plagiarism
Plagiarism is the unreferenced use of others’ published work or unpublished ideas or opinions which are represented as your own work. For example, copying or paraphrasing text, a sentence, paragraph, table or figure from another’s work and not referencing it. This is considered unethical and dishonest.
The article must be your own work and should be written in your own words. All mention of others’ work must be attributed to the originating authors(s) and referenced in full. Any direct quotations must be included in quotation marks. If substantial sections of text or illustrative material are used in the article, you must obtain written permission from the copyright holder before submitting the article for publication. All articles are checked using an automated software package.

References
All written material should be referenced using current literature and primary sources. Please adhere to the Harvard style for writing references (see below). Please ensure that all the information required is included.

References in the text
Please ensure you use the Harvard system for references in the text. For example, ‘It has been argued that nurses should examine their own relationship with patients’ (Brown 2016). For three or more authors, print the first author’s name followed by et al, for example, ‘White et al (2016) suggested…’ Note that White et al is acceptable for White, Red and Blue but not for White and Red.

When several references are cited simultaneously the order should be chronological, from earliest to most recent. If there are two or more references to the same author, the order should also be chronological, for example WHO 2016, 2017.

References in the reference list
Each journal reference should include (in this order):
1. The author’s surname and initial(s); write the surname and initial of all authors for references with three or less authors. For four or more authors, write the first three and add et al.
2. The year of publication in brackets.
3. The title of the article.
4. The name of the journal.
5. The volume, issue number and first and last page numbers.
6. Use alphabetical order for references. If there are two or more references to the same author, use chronological order.
7. Each book reference should include (in this order):
8. The author’s surname and initial(s). Please indicate if the people cited are editors.
9. The year of publication in brackets.
11. The edition (if applicable).
12. The publisher.
13. The city of publication, and the state if in the US.
14. If you are citing a chapter in a book, supply the author’s name, chapter title and page numbers.
15. Use alphabetical order for references. If there are two or more references to the same author, use chronological order.

Examples


Deadlines
Editorial deadlines are set to allow time for the articles to be peer reviewed and edited. Articles are subject to double-blind educational and clinical review. It is imperative that authors keep to the deadlines agreed with the commissioning editor so production schedules can be maintained and the high-quality of the articles ensured. You will be sent word proofs for checking in advance of printing. If for any reason you are unable to meet the agreed deadline, please inform the commissioning editor as soon as possible.

Length
The articles should be approximately 4,000 words in length; excluding the references. Please be aware that articles exceeding this word limit may be sent back to the author to be cut before being sent for external peer review.

Diagrams/illustrations
Any diagrams, figures or tables required to illustrate the text should be supplied at the same time as the article. They may be redrawn in-house to ensure a consistent style and design but should be clear and easy to read and understand. Please supply an appropriate caption with each diagram. Illustrations from books and other journals can be used but, because of copyright restrictions, permission must be sought by the author in advance from the publishers and acknowledgement given in the text. Please allow sufficient time to gain permission since this can take up to 12 weeks. Diagrams should be clearly numbered and referenced within the text. Suggestions on other pictures or illustrations are always welcome.

Presentation of CPD manuscripts
Manuscripts should be submitted via the online submission system, Editorial Manager, at www.edmgr.com/rcnp-ns A tutorial to help authors use the system is available via the ‘Instructions for authors’ link on that page. The registration and submission process will ask for your contact details and the following information for all other authors of your article: full name, job title, institution, email address and country.

What happens next?
When we receive your article, it will be sent simultaneously to two external expert referees for double-blind peer review. You will be contacted by the commissioning editor with feedback and any suggested amendments.

On acceptance, you will be asked to sign and return a form releasing copyright to RCNi.
Your article may be repurposed for our e-learning platform. If this is planned, you will be offered the opportunity to update the text and/or the references as necessary.

Fee
An honorarium of £250 is payable following publication of the CPD article.

Contacts
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