

Research articles

These author guidelines will help you submit a research article for publication in the 'evidence & practice' section of RCNi journals. Separate guidelines are available for general clinical articles, continuing professional development (CPD) articles, CPD modules, 'How to' modules and the journal Nurse Researcher. For further information on publishing with RCNi go to rcni.com/write-us

Please note that your article must be submitted to one journal ONLY, whether published by RCNi or any other company. Submission to more than one journal will not increase your chances of publication. Editors will not consider articles that have been submitted or published elsewhere

Purpose

The main purpose of the 'evidence & practice' section of RCNi journals is to support nurses to improve patient care through evidence-based nursing. Research articles published in RCNi journals report and discuss the findings of studies that have relevance and implications for nursing practice. The studies must have been conducted within the previous five years.

For an overview of RCNi's journals go to rcni.com/write-us/explore-our-journals

Peer review

Research articles submitted for publication in the 'evidence & practice' section of RCNi journals are peer reviewed. Most RCNi journals use double-blind peer review.

Length

Research articles must be between 3,000 and 5,400 words including the abstract, body text, any boxes, tables and figures, and references. Articles exceeding the word count will be returned to authors for cutting before peer review.

Abstract

An abstract of between 80 and 150 words is required. The abstract should be structured using the following subheadings: Background, Aim, Method, Findings (or Results), Conclusion. It must not contain reference citations nor any information that is not in the article itself.

Structure

A research article should be structured as described below.

Background

The 'Background' section sets the context for the study and explains its rationale if needed. Some studies may include a literature review, in which case the 'Background' section can be followed by a 'Literature review' section.

The 'Literature review' section provides a critical analysis of published work, especially research, in your chosen area of study. It should encompass the most recent and relevant publications in your chosen area as well as any seminal work; identify any gaps in the literature; and outline the importance and relevance of your study.

If you are writing an article to report and discuss the findings of a literature review, please follow the 'general clinical articles' author guidelines, available at rcni.com/write-us-general-guidelines

Aim

The aim of the study should be clearly stated here. The aim can usually be summarised in one sentence, unless there are additional objectives that need to be stated.

Method

The 'Method' section should state when the study was conducted and describe the methods used, including:

- » Design and setting – What was the study design? Did you use a quantitative or qualitative approach? In what setting(s) did the study take place? What month(s) and year(s) was the study undertaken in?
- » Research question – What was the research question (if relevant)? What method was used to formulate it (for example, the PICO or PEO tool)?
- » Participants or respondents – Who were they? How were they selected? The required sample size and rationale for it, characteristics of participants or respondents that could have influenced the findings or results, risk of bias and sample representativeness should be discussed.
- » Data collection – How were data collected? What data collection tool was used? Had it been shown in previous studies to be valid and reliable? Did you conduct a pilot study to test its validity and reliability?
- » Data analysis – What was the method of data analysis? What was the rationale for using that method?
- » Ethical considerations – Any research requires ethical approval. How ethical approval was obtained and from whom should be stated at the end of the 'Method' section under a separate subheading. This subsection should also explain how participants' or respondents' consent was gained and how their confidentiality was protected.

Findings (or Results)

If the research was qualitative, this section should be entitled 'Findings'. If the findings originate from a thematic analysis of the data, the section can be structured according to the themes that emerged. If the findings originate from focus groups or interviews, the text can be supported by verbatim quotes.

The quotes should be attributed to participants designated by role and number – for example, Nurse 1, Nurse 2, Nurse 3 or Patient 1, Patient 2, Patient 3 and so on. Interpretation of the quotes is encouraged and any unexpected or unusual findings should be acknowledged.

If the research was quantitative, this section should be entitled 'Results'. Results should be reported in detail and the text should be supported by boxes, tables and/or figures to simplify and give meaning to the data. Quantitative data must be given in numbers and percentages in the text, boxes, tables and figures, and must be checked before submission to ensure they are complete, accurate and consistent.

If the research used a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, this section should be entitled 'Findings'.

Discussion

In this section, the findings or results are discussed in relation to the study aim, other research findings and relevant policies and clinical guidelines. You should attempt to explain any discrepancies between your findings or results and those of others. You should also explain the significance of your study findings or results. The 'Discussion' section gives you an opportunity to make recommendations – for example for policy, education and/or research. What do you feel should happen on the basis of the findings or results?

Research articles must have a separate 'Limitations' subsection, placed at the end of the 'Discussion' section, where you discuss any challenges encountered while conducting the study, issues affecting the reliability or generalisability of the findings or results, and whether and how the method could have been strengthened.

Conclusion

The main points of the article and overall findings or results of the study should be summarised in a 'Conclusion' section, which should also provide a clear answer to the study aim and/or research question.

Implications for practice

Research articles must have between three and six implications of the study and its findings or results for nursing practice, presented in bullet points after the conclusion under a separate subheading.

Style and tone

When writing your research article, you should keep readers in mind, in particular their professional level and experience, and where appropriate the specialty in which they work. The article should have a consistent and user-friendly tone. The style should be professional but straightforward and does not need to be overly academic.

You should aim to make the article factual, clear, concise and evidence based. The information you provide must be accessible, accurate and unambiguous. Think about the best way to present the information: it may be more clearly understood as a list of bullet points, box, table or figure.

The use of jargon and abbreviations should be avoided. Acronyms should be written in full at first mention and, if used again, abbreviated thereafter. For example: Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) at first mention, NMC thereafter. Articles that refer to policy or legislation must state the country to which it applies.

Boxes, tables and figures

Boxes, tables and figures must be numbered, captioned and cited in the article in their order of appearance. They should be easy to read and uncluttered. All symbols and abbreviations should be explained. Sources should be indicated and included in the references. Figures may include graphs, bar or column charts, pie charts, diagrams, illustrations and photographs.

Tables and figures are usually redrawn by RCNi. The editorial team at RCNi may decide not to keep all tables and figures supplied. Regarding permission to reproduce existing materials, refer to the 'Permissions and ethics' section of this document. Images retrieved from the internet cannot be used.

References

It is your responsibility to ensure that your article is accurately and appropriately referenced using the current literature and primary sources. Unless you are citing seminal references, you must use references published within the last ten years. References to Wikipedia articles are not accepted. The reference list must be placed at the end of the article under the subheading 'References'. Any formatting from reference management software, such as EndNote or Reference Manager, must be removed before submission.

Please adhere to the Harvard system of referencing, exemplified below.

Reference citations in the article

- » **One author:** Community-acquired pneumonia has high morbidity and mortality rates (Müller 2015).
- » **Two authors:** Blandin and Pepin (2017) argue that grief occurs in anticipation of multiple losses over time.
- » **More than two authors:** Stokes et al (2017) suggest that trauma-informed care is an area where nurses' knowledge is limited.
- » **If two or more references are cited simultaneously, they must be cited in chronological order from oldest to most recent:** Differing management approaches can be a barrier to pain management (Neville and Roan 2014, Morley et al 2015).
- » **If there are two or more references to the same author, the order must also be chronological:** For adults with substance use disorder, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2007, 2011) guidelines support the use of brief interventions.

References in the reference list

References must be listed in alphabetical order. If there are two or more references to the same author, they must be cited in chronological order from oldest to most recent. Please include digital object identifiers (DOIs) if available.

Journals

- » **One author:** Müller F (2015) Oral hygiene reduces the mortality from aspiration pneumonia in frail elders. *Journal of Dental Research*. 94, 3 Suppl, 14S-16S. doi: 10.1177/0022034514552494
- » **Two authors:** Blandin K, Pepin R (2017) Dementia grief: a theoretical model of a unique grief experience. *Dementia*. 16, 1, 67-78. doi: 10.1177/1471301215581081
- » **Three authors:** Hunt PA, Greaves I, Owens WA (2006) Emergency thoracotomy in thoracic trauma: a review. *Injury*. 37, 1, 1-19. doi: 10.1016/j.injury.2005.02.014
- » **More than three authors:** Stokes Y, Jacob JD, Gifford W et al (2017) Exploring nurses' knowledge and experiences related to trauma-informed care. *Global Qualitative Nursing Research*. 4. doi: 10.1177/2333393617734510

Books

Webster S, de Wreede R (2016) *Embryology at a Glance*. Second edition. Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford.

Chapters in books

McErlean L (2017) The digestive system. In Peate I, Nair M (Eds) *Fundamentals of Anatomy and Physiology for Nursing and Healthcare Students*. Second edition. John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, 257-298.

Websites

Children's Liver Disease Foundation (2020) About Us. childliverdisease.org/about-us (Last accessed: 11 January 2022.)

NICE guidelines

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2019) Delirium: Prevention, Diagnosis and Management. Clinical guideline No. 103. NICE, London.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the unreferenced use of other people's work or ideas – published or unpublished – or of your own published work. Plagiarism includes copying or paraphrasing a sentence, paragraph, box, table or figure from another person's (or your own) work without appropriate referencing. Your research article must be your own work and should be written in your own words. All mentions of other people's work must be attributed to the original author(s) and referenced in full. Direct quotes must be reproduced verbatim between single quotation marks.

All research articles submitted for publication in the 'evidence & practice' section of RCNi journals are checked for plagiarism using automated software. This generates a 'similarity report' which shows any matches between text in your article and text in published content. The article may be rejected based on the similarity report.

Permissions and ethics

If you plan to use substantial sections of text or illustrations from a source protected by copyright, you must obtain written permission from the copyright holder before submission. If permission has not been secured, we may not be able to use the material.

Figures previously published elsewhere may be used but will usually be protected by copyright, so you must seek permission from the publisher to reproduce them before submitting the article. Where permission has been granted this should be acknowledged in the text and evidence should be provided to RCNi. Please allow sufficient time to gain permission from the publisher, which can take up to 12 weeks.

All patient names should be changed to pseudonyms to protect patient confidentiality. If your article includes a case study based on a real patient, you must obtain their written consent to use their details in the article.

If you supply photographs with your article, you must obtain consent from the people in the photographs.

For further information on RCNi's ethical guidelines go to rcni.com/submit-an-article-ethics
RCNi is a member of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), which advises editors and publishers on all aspects of publication ethics. For more information go to publicationethics.org

Authorship

To be credited as an 'author', three minimum requirements must be met:

- » Making a substantial contribution to the work.
- » Being accountable for the work and its published form.
- » Having reviewed and approved the article before submission.

If people involved in an article do not meet these requirements, they should be listed in an 'Acknowledgement' and their specific contribution to the article stated. See below under 'Acknowledgements'.

In a co-authored article, it is the authors' responsibility to decide jointly both the order of authors and whether a person credited as an author should be listed in an 'Acknowledgement' instead. This must be decided before submitting the article. All authors must meet the minimum requirements stated above.

The corresponding author is responsible for notifying RCNi of changes to authorship.

Conflict of interest

Each author must declare any interest, financial or other, that could have inappropriately influenced their work. If there are no conflicts of interest to declare, a statement such as 'None declared' should be provided.

Acknowledgements

Short acknowledgements can be made to people, organisations or groups of people. The acknowledgement should specify how they have contributed to the article. If you wish to acknowledge a specific person or organisation, you must contact them and ask them to approve, in writing, the appropriateness of the acknowledgement, the spelling of names and the correctness of titles.

Submitting your article

Deadlines

Editorial deadlines are set to allow time for research articles to be peer reviewed and edited before their planned publication. Please keep to the deadlines agreed with the commissioning editor so that the production schedule and the quality of the content can both be maintained. If for any reason you are unable to meet the agreed deadline, please inform the commissioning editor as soon as possible.

Preparing your article

Articles must be submitted as Microsoft Word documents with double-spaced lines, single returns at the ends of paragraphs, margins of 1.5 inches and numbered pages. Please remember to keep a copy for your records.

Boxes and tables should be submitted as editable text, not as images embedded in Word documents. Boxes, tables and figures must be inserted in a separate section at the end of the article after the references. If a table or figure is very large, it can be supplied as a separate document. If a figure has been created in a Microsoft Office application (Word, PowerPoint, Excel), it should be supplied in its original format. Other figures need to be supplied in one of the following formats: EPS, PDF, TIFF or JPEG.

Please ensure that figures, including photographs, are submitted at the largest size available (the more megapixels the better). Please do not embed photographs in Word documents as this may reduce the size and quality of the file. Your smartphone or computer may give you the option to choose the file size to send. If so, always select 'large' or 'original'. If you are not given this option, the file will most likely be sent at the largest size available. Please do not make the file smaller than it is, since this often makes it unusable.

Online submission

Articles must be submitted through our online submission system, Editorial Manager. To access Editorial Manager, select your chosen journal at rcni.com/submitting-an-article. Your submission will be acknowledged by email and you will be able to track its progress online. Articles are assessed internally before being sent to external experts for peer review.

You can expect to wait 12 weeks after the first acknowledgement before receiving a response. This will be either provisional acceptance without revision, a request for revision or a letter explaining that your article has been declined.

Copyright

If your article is provisionally accepted, you will be asked to complete an author form and sign a publisher's agreement. The publisher's agreement assigns copyright of your article to RCNi. Articles will not be published without a signed publisher's agreement from each author.

Article proofs

Before publication, you will be asked to proofread an edited version of your article and answer any editorial queries raised. The in-depth editorial process at this stage may generate queries in addition to those generated by the peer-review process. You will then receive confidential Word proofs for final approval.

Publication

Articles are published online. The online article is the version of record and is fully citable. Once your article has been published online, you will receive a watermarked PDF for your personal use only. Your article may also be published in a print issue of the journal at the editor's discretion.

The publisher's agreement you have signed protects you from someone taking your work and using it unfairly. If someone wants to reprint or adapt your work or place it on a website, they will need to obtain permission from RCNi and credit you as the original author. RCNi does not usually allow articles published in its journals to appear on third-party websites. RCNi generally supports reprinting provided the proposed use is appropriate. We also encourage you to upload the final provisionally accepted version of your article on your institution's online repository, but only six months or more after online publication.

For further information about how your article can be promoted, including open access publication, go to rcni.com/author-policies

Contacts

For technical questions about submitting your research article, contact Julia Mariappa (+442088723171, julia.mariappa@rcni.com) for Nursing Standard or Helen Hyland (+442088723138, helen.hyland@rcni.com) for RCNi's specialist journals.

For any other question, contact the editor of your chosen journal. To find their details, go to your chosen journal in the 'Explore our journals' section at rcni.com/write-us/explore-our-journals