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How to convert your conference abstract into a paper for Nursing in Critical Care

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Title: How to convert your conference abstract into a paper for Nursing in Critical Care

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Many nurses present their work at conferences, but relatively few conference presentations or posters are ever converted into a publication. Publishing your work in academic journals allows you to share your experiences of innovation and contribute to learning within your field, ultimately leading to improvements in patient care. This short paper will provide a guide for professionals who wish to convert their conference presentation into a manuscript for submission to an academic journal.

Conference abstracts offer a strong basis for writing a manuscript, but careful consideration and revision is required to ensure your work presented at a conference is in a format suitable for academic review. The Medical Librarians association [1] outline four main considerations in this process: purpose, content and organisation, style, and converting your presentation. Each of these will be discussed in turn.

The first step in converting your abstract into a manuscript is to clarify the purpose of your paper and whether the audience (your intended readers) differ from that of the conference where the work was presented. For instance, several conferences are organised by and intended for members of professional societies, whereas several journals tend to have a wider and more diverse readership. Consequently, it is vitally important to consider the aim or purpose of your work, and whether that is the same for the manuscript as it was for the presentation. The purpose/s might be varied, from education to stimulating discussion, or sharing research or quality improvement project findings. As well as being vital for the clarity of your manuscript, having a clear idea of the aim will allow you to select the most appropriate journal to submit your work and ensure that those who are interested will read it.

Next consider the content of your work and how it should be arranged. Unlike oral presentations or posters which are highly time and word limited, a manuscript allows you to expand into significant detail about the project. Areas you should cover include the rationale for and significance of the project, the methods, the findings, how these fit within the context of previous work and, most importantly, the implications for practice. In terms of organisation of the manuscript each journal has its own guidance, and it is important to familiarise yourself with this before beginning. In *Nursing in Critical Care*, a research paper requires structured headings as follows: Abstract, Introduction and background, Methods, Results, Discussion and Conclusions [2]. These sections should be clear, flow logically and be cognizant of the maximal word allowance (usually <3500 words) for the paper type. There also should be a balance between the sections. In the methods section it is important to offer sufficient detail to allow others to reproduce and critically evaluate what you did and discern whether a change in practice is warranted. You must also include details of institutional and ethical approvals, trial, or review registrations etc (if required). Many journals expect you to follow reporting guidelines that are appropriate for your paper, and even where these are not a stated requirement, we would strongly recommend you use these to structure your manuscript. The [Enhancing the QUALity and Transparency Of health Research \(EQUATOR\) Network](#) is an international collaboration aimed at improve the reliability and transparency of published health research literature by providing clear and robust reporting guidelines for several types of quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods studies, service evaluations, case studies and literature reviews [3].

Most health science journals, including *Nursing in Critical Care*, request or strongly encourage authors to follow such guidelines.

The next consideration is about the style of presenting your work in a formal written way, as opposed to the less formal style used in an oral presentation. Jargon must be avoided, and correct terminology (reflecting an international audience) must be used. It is very rare to write in first person (I and we) for an academic paper, and consideration of this and the other grammatical and syntactic considerations are important. Statements made within the manuscript should be, where possible and relevant, supported by academic references and use a consistent referencing format. Tables and graphs are good to use, but you need to ensure they convert well for print format and often require a better resolution image than that used in a presentation. Our publishers, Wiley, have produced [this excellent guide](#) for writing for publication, specifically targeted at nurses with minimal publishing experience [4].

The final task is to convert your presentation into a written manuscript. This often seems a big task for many clinicians but breaking this writing phase down into manageable chunks is helpful, rather than trying to write the whole paper in one sitting. As discussed previously, first examine the author guidelines and set out a template structure for your paper under the requested headings. Use subheadings if necessary; for instance, the Methods section normally includes subsections for the Research Design, Participants/Sample and Setting, Data Collection, Research Instrument (if applicable), Data Analysis, Rigour and Ethical Considerations, whereas the Discussion section is typically expected to include subsections outlining the Strengths and Limitations and the Implications for Practice, Education and Further Research. Set yourself deadlines to write, and only write one of the sections a day. Once you have a draft, go back and check the author guidelines and other useful guides about how to report specific paper types [3] to ensure these are met. Then start to critically review and revise your paper. Look at your grammar and writing and ask yourself: can you say the same thing more succinctly? At this point it is helpful to ask a 'critical friend' to review your paper. The aim should be to have your paper as perfect as you can make it prior to submission. Spelling errors are not acceptable and just indicate sloppy and haphazard work, which reflects badly on you as an author, so ensure that the spell (UK English spelling) and grammar check is activated on your computer while writing. This is especially important for authors who are not sufficiently proficient in English who may struggle with syntax and choice of terms. Such authors should seek the help of language translation and editing services (such as those offered by [Wiley's Author Resources](#)) [5] or ask colleagues who are English native speakers for critical revisions of their manuscript. Unfortunately, in our journal, a substantial proportion of rejections are due to poor language quality that makes it impossible for the paper to undergo a thorough peer review.

We would like to conclude with a word of caution about the possible outcomes of your submission for publication. Due to journals' increasing number of submissions, it is generally much more difficult for a paper to get accepted for publication than it is for a conference, and extremely rare to be accepted without the need for any revisions [6, 7]. If you are requested to make revisions to your manuscript, make sure that you carefully address and respond to all the suggestions and comments by the reviewers and editors, and that you address any requested recommendations or provide a clear and justified argument for not doing so. If your paper is rejected, either before or after peer review, do not be discouraged. Rejection does not mean failure but may act as an excellent opportunity for improvement and learning. Indeed, all papers that are rejected by our journal receive either the reasons for immediate rejection or detailed feedback back by the reviewer, even in the case of a rejection. As the adage goes, a rejection should be the start of a new submission.

In conclusion, many conference presentations or posters show the incredible and important work that nurses are doing, yet few of these ever get written up for publication. We, at *Nursing in Critical Care*, encourage you to convert your conference presentations into papers!

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