

Be the Change You Wish to See



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In a recent letter to the editors, we were queried as to the ratio of NP authors to PA authors represented in this journal and whether *Clinician Reviews* was changing its focus to PAs. Let me assure you, my NP colleagues, the journal always has been and always will be written for both professions. However, the query did give me pause—and the opportunity to encourage (as I have in the past) all NPs to pick up their pen (or keyboard) and start writing.

I often hear my NP colleagues diminish the work they do, the care they provide, the advocacy they undertake on behalf of patients and their families. Yet the stories of clinical problems they solve, access barriers they mitigate, or professional advances they have fostered are fascinating—and we want to read about them!

When I marvel at the accomplishments, and ask if the NP in question would write about his/her experience, the response is

“My mantra has become ‘You can’t just complain if you don’t like something. Go in and change it.’”

frequently “Oh, I can’t write” or “I could never author an article,” or (as most of us could say) “I’m too busy.”

I fully understand the hesitance of many with regard to penning an article (or being a lead for one of our clinical departments); many of us have been out of school for

a bit and are so used to dictating clinical notes that we cringe at the thought of “trying” to write. I once had an NP tell me that she was not sure whether she could compose a full sentence anymore. Trust me, I could relate to her angst. I am reasonably confident that some of you are saying to yourself, “Yeah, sure.” Well, dear readers, it’s true.

When I was approached to undertake the position as NP Editor-in-Chief, I had much trepidation. I, too, lacked confidence in my writing ability and faith that anyone cared to read about what I thought or what I considered important. However, with the support of my colleagues and mentors, I was quickly disabused of those self-doubts.

We write every day—in one fashion or another. Think about it. Those of you with children: I am sure you have coached, restructured sentences, researched subject matter, and edited at least one book report. And what about e-mail? Surely, you compose at least one professional e-mail per day to a colleague or a patient. Is it ready for peer review, or does it meet the standard required for publication? Who knows? But it is writing. Moreover, the passion with which you communicate the information is why people read what you have to “say.”

It is said that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step (Lao Tsu, Chinese philosopher, 571-531 BC). So, too, does an article begin with one word or a single thought. If you are a regular reader of my editorials, you know

that many of them (including this one!) start with a comment from a colleague, or something I read or heard in the news, or an occurrence that raised my ire. And so the seed of a column (limited to 1,000 words, by the way) is planted. Each of you has the seed of an article in you; I know you do.

This year, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the NP profession, which was established because Loretta Ford and Henry Silva saw the need for better access to care for children. From the seed that they planted, the profession has grown and brought with it a monumental change in health care. (They likely weren't thinking that far ahead at the time, but rather striving to address what they saw as an immediate and vital need.)

In 1985, a group of NPs saw the need for an organization dedicated to mitigating barriers to practice. A handful of people initiated a change—better representation for NPs—and a little entity named AANP began. As we know, the organization has flourished—all because a small group of people saw an opportunity to improve the status quo and stepped in to make a change. (To read more about the

origins of AANP, turn to “From the CR-chive,” on page 28.)

My point is perhaps best summed up by a quote I read in an interview in the *NY Times Book Review* in the late 1960s. It stuck with me, to the extent that it became my mantra: “You can't sit on the outside and complain if you don't like something—go in and change it.”

Those of you willing to rise to this challenge will find that every publication posts its “guidelines for authors” on its website (and sometimes in the print edition). Take a few extra minutes when you are reading the journal or visiting the site to review those guidelines. Check out the types of articles or other submissions the editors accept and consider what you might contribute, based on your particular experiences, knowledge, and interest.

Do you have a particular specialty area or a “pet” disease state or condition that you want to share your expertise on? Have you learned something you wish you'd known sooner? Have you maneuvered through or around a particular barrier to practice or access? Others might benefit from

knowing the keys to your accomplishment. We are quick to bemoan our plights; instead, share your success!

Start by jotting down a few words—the rest will follow. The great thing about writing is that you can do it anywhere, anytime. (For example, this editorial was written in an airport!) And please note: If you have the idea and the passion—and the wherewithal to start the writing process—there are dedicated editorial staff who will work with you to polish your submission for publication. Writing begins as a solitary pursuit, but you are not alone through the process.

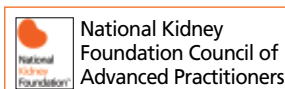
So here is my challenge to you: Be an agent of change to increase the number of NP-authored columns in this publication. Have faith in your ability to write. Take it one word at a time; a few words form a sentence, a few sentences a paragraph—and before you know it, you've written an entire column or article.

Write from your head, your heart, or your outrage—but write! You can start by sending your thoughts on this editorial to NPeditor@frontlinemedcom.com. **CR**

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