

How to write a “Stories from the bedside” article for the *WCET Journal*: Hints and tips for first-time authors

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Disclosure: Dr Ayello is the Clinical Editor for the journal, *Advances in Skin and Wound Care* and for the past 10 years the volunteer Executive Editor for the *WCET Journal*.

ABSTRACT

This article is intended for the first-time author who is considering writing a description of the care provided to a patient in their practice. It is a basic overview of the elements to include in the format for the “Stories from the bedside” manuscripts published in the WCET Journal. A review of the peer-review and publishing process is also discussed. It is hoped that this “how to” approach will assist and inspire others to share their clinical insights and patient care experiences with WCET colleagues.

Keywords: Writing for publication, first-time authors, peer review.

INTRODUCTION

The *WCET Journal* has been published for over 30 years. In the very first issue of the journal, the first editor, Norma N Gill ET, described the mission of this journal: “it is to try to prod and push all of you to help make it your ‘mouthpiece’ to exchange and gain information”¹. Since that time, several other executive editors have encouraged you, our valued WCET members, to submit manuscripts to the journal. The

WCET Journal aims to be user-friendly to its authors while maintaining a quality publication. As directed by the board of directors, during my tenure as executive editor, I have tried to mentor and assist authors (especially first-time authors) to prepare their manuscripts based on the comments gleaned from the peer-review process. The *WCET Journal* is one of a few journals that will work with authors for whom English is not their first language and will publish their manuscript in both English and their first language. If a manuscript has merit, as volunteers, we will assist authors in what in the publishing world we call “copy editing”. We do not want your important research, clinical experiences and other manuscripts to be rejected due to spelling errors, English grammar, and so on. We believe that what you have to write is important and we are committed to fixing the spelling and grammar if it is needed. What we cannot do is tell your stories from your clinical experiences; only you our members can do that and put them in writing. So, you need to write, but you must write right!

I always look with great interest at the feedback from you our members about the *WCET Journal* questions on the WCET membership survey^{2,3,4}. It is always a good feeling to know that you our membership see the journal as an important member benefit; thank you for telling us that. In your responses from the 2011 WCET membership survey^{3,4}, those who responded (n=335) indicated that most of you (81.%) have never contributed to the *WCET Journal* as reported at the congress in Adelaide by Susan Stelton⁴. It was very helpful to learn from you what would encourage you to contribute to the journal. Three hundred and thirty seven of you gave us direction for action. A little less than half of you (44%) wanted writers’ guidelines⁴. We used to publish author guidelines in each issue of the journal but in recent years that information has been moved onto the WCET website. Almost a third of you (30%) wanted to receive credits for ongoing education. That is an interesting idea and something that can be explored⁴. A little over a quarter of you (26%) requested a publishing workshop⁴. Fortunately, the conference committee for the 19th WCET Biennial Congress in Adelaide had already asked me to do a workshop on publishing. I must say that I was surprised and delighted that so many of you came to that session; the room was completely filled and I am sorry that many of you had to stand around the room during my presentation. Comments you gave me after that session as well as at other conferences that I have attended, made it clear to me that what you want is not just a list of author

guidelines, but a template to follow. You asked me to publish that in the *WCET Journal*. This manuscript is in response to your request. I am also happy to tell you that the Congress Committee for Sweden has also asked me to do a publishing workshop at the 20th congress, so please feel free to come and see me in person in Gothenburg.

WRITING YOUR MANUSCRIPT

One of the most popular types of manuscripts in the *WCET Journal* is the “Stories from the bedside”. This type of article is a good place to start contributing to the literature as it tells the story of your care of a patient or group of patients. The elements that go into writing such a manuscript will be described below. I have also provided a template example, filling in the specific information using the PowerPoint presentation that I presented at the Congress in Adelaide, Australia (Figure 1)⁵.

- **Title of the article.** This is where you write a short, catchy title that describes what your manuscript is about in just a few words. Remember that the editor may make suggestions to change your title to conform to the journal style.
- **Author(s) full name and credentials.**
- **Author(s) place of employment. Include the city, state/province, country.**
- **Author(s) email address.**
- **Jpeg colour photo of all authors.** Do not put the colour photo(s) in the word document. Photo(s) should be sent as a separate file. Always use the author(s) name on each photo to identify the photo file.
- **Author declaration.** There is a standard disclosure clause that authors must include. This is to declare any conflicts of interest or to state that there are no conflicts of interest.
- **Keywords.** This is a list of terms that would help others doing a literature search that would help them find your article.
- **Acknowledgements.** Did anyone provide financial support for your manuscript? Do you wish to thank anyone who helped you as you wrote this manuscript?
- **Now you are ready to start writing your manuscript!** Some writing tips for you to consider as you start putting your article into words. Remember to use simple words. Avoid contractions, for example, write do not rather than don't. This is important since for many readers of the *WCET Journal*, English is their second or third language. Use the active tense of verbs when possible. Short sentences are better than long sentences.
- **An outline of your manuscript can help you get started!** You might use the bullet points in this article as an outline as a general guide and then start to fill in the different

parts of the outline that are specific to your patient case study. Some writers suffer from “writer’s block”. That is they sit down at their computer or typewriter and no words come to mind. You do not have to write your manuscript in the order that it will appear in print. Some authors will write the patient history section of the manuscript first and then go back and do the introduction. Some write the summary and conclusion part first and then go back and write the other sections of the manuscript. It does not matter in what order you write the sections of your manuscript; it does matter that you include all sections of the manuscript in the order in which they are listed here.

- **Abstract.** This is a paragraph that summarises your manuscript. Typically, it is just a few sentences that provide the key messages from your manuscript.

THE BODY OF YOUR “STORIES FROM THE BEDSIDE” MANUSCRIPT.

- **Introduction.** What is the topic of your manuscript? Here is where you introduce the readers to your case study. You need to explain why this topic is important to ET nursing practice. You can use references from the literature to support what you write in this section. See the bullet point on references for information about the style to use.
- **Tell us about your patient. What was your patient’s problem?** For example, Mrs XX, is a ___ age/race/ married/single (whatever the case may be). She lives alone/with her husband/ children (whatever the case may be) in a house/apartment/retirement community/ nursing home (wherever she lives). One day/month/year (give the time period) ago, she noticed or became aware of _____ (this is where you describe the problem; for example, a small, red area on her peristomal skin/an open area on her left foot). What did she do about this? For example, she changed the type of skin barrier she was using or she saw a local MD who did ____. Dressings with ___ were done by ____. Explain any causes or symptoms. Include definitions of any important terms that you use. Use references from the literature when necessary. Make sure that you protect the patient’s identify. Do not use the patient’s real name. Remember that all word tables should be placed at the end of the word file.
- **Patient history.** Provide a brief description of your patient’s medical history, with any details that are pertinent to the present problem.
- **Patient assessment on your first patient visit.** Describe what you saw. For example, if the patient had an ostomy problem, what was it? What type of stoma did the patient have? How does the peristomal skin look? If the patient had a wound, what type of wound? Describe the wound characteristics. This is a good place to include photo(s) from your initial patient assessment.



- **Photos, figures, tables.** Our readers love photos of the clinical situations that you are writing about. So, if possible, try to include photos. Remember that each photo, figure or table needs to be numbered in sequential order from the beginning of your manuscript. That is, the first photo, figure or table you refer to is number one, the next is number two and so on. Word tables belong at the end of the word file. Photos, figures, diagrams do not belong in the word file. You should put them in a separate file. Each photo requires a number, title and caption that explains what the photo is about. Make sure that you include in the text of your manuscript where you want to refer the reader to the photo, figure or table.
- **References.** The *WCET Journal* uses the Vancouver style of references. This means that within your manuscript, references are given a superscript number in the order in which they appear in your text. Then at the end of your article, references are listed in numerical order. Follow the author directions for how to cite a journal article or a book, since they are different. Make sure that your reference citations are complete. Use primary sources whenever possible.
- **Literature review.** Give a brief description from the literature about how your particular patient case compares with the literature. Include references.
- **Your initial plan of care.** Tell the reader what you were thinking that led you to develop your patient's plan of care. Include patient-centred concerns and not just the ostomy or wound care. Explain what your initial intervention was for the patient. Describe your care.
- **Results of your plan of care.** Evaluate the patient's response to your plan of care. How long did you provide care for this patient? How long did you see the patient in the hospital, community or outpatient clinic to monitor and provide nursing care? Did you change the plan of care and, if so, why? This is a great section to include reference to serial photos of the treatment problem. Did you make any referrals to other health care professionals? What difficulties did you encounter during the course of the treatment?
- **Final outcome of the care.** After what amount of time did the problem resolve? If you did not resolve the problem, discuss why you think you were unsuccessful.
- **What lessons did you learn from this patient's care?** What actions did you take to prevent reoccurrence of the problem for this patient? What lessons did you learn from this? What recommendations do you have for other clinicians about prevention or treatment? Weave in the literature again here in your discussion.
- **Conclusion and summary.** Provide two to three sentences to give an overview of what happened.

THE PUBLICATION PROCESS

Submitting your manuscript

Now that you have completed writing your manuscript, you are ready to submit your manuscript to the *WCET Journal*. You will now need to go to our publisher's website, www.cambridgepublishing.com.au to submit your manuscript online. Click on manuscript management login. If this is your first time using the electronic system, then you will need to create an account. Please remember to retain that information for future enquiries and submissions. Enter your personal details in all the required fields and confirm your details. To submit your article, type the title, type of manuscript and abstract. Select *WCET* as your publication. Next, confirm that you are the author. Add any co-author details, if applicable. Next, upload your Word file. Also, upload any photos or figures in a separate file from the Word document. You may add comments for the editor. Review all your information and then click submit.

The peer-review process

Once you have submitted your manuscript, it is reviewed by the Executive Editor of the *WCET Journal*. Then peer reviewers and/or a section editor from the *WCET* Editorial board are invited to review your manuscript. Unlike some journals that pay the editor and reviewers, all of us are volunteers. Expect that this will take time, especially since for some of our reviewers reading English require more time. Once the reviewers have completed their review of your manuscript, they will send their comments and recommendations to the Executive Editor. The Executive Editor will then compile all the comments into one edited version of your reviewed manuscript. You will then receive an email from the Executive Editor notifying you about the status of your manuscript and how to make changes or why your manuscript was not accepted.

If your manuscript is accepted (and most are) you will need to do the requested edits and resubmit your manuscript to the Executive Editor. You will also need to return the signed consent to publish and copyright transfer form to the Executive Editor. If you have any questions during the peer-review process, you can always contact the Executive Editor via email.

The last thing you need to do is celebrate your accomplishment and wait to see your manuscript in print!


SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The *WCET Journal* is an association-owned journal that is eager to have your manuscripts. Suggestions for writing a manuscript for the journal have been described. A template with illustrated examples for the very popular "Stories from the bedside" has been provided. Finally, the process for submitting your manuscript electronically and the peer-review process has been reviewed.

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Figure 1. Template of how to write a "Stories from the Bedside" for the WCET Journal. Copyright Ayello 2012.

<p>Title: Stories from the bedside: Pouching in the snow</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fill in your specific title	<p>Email address</p> <p>Elizabeth @ayello.com</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your email address
<p>Author name</p> <p>Elizabeth A. Ayello, PhD, RN, CWON, FAAN</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fill in your name and credentials	<p>Jpeg color photo of all authors</p>  <p>Photo: Ayello</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Author jpeg photo<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Good quality photo 300 dpi– Photo needs to be separate file– Do not put the photo in the word file– Always label the photo with author name
<p>Where do your work?</p> <p>Faculty, Excelsior College New York, USA</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fill in your work title• Place of employment• City, State and Country	<p>Abstract</p> <p>This article reviews the course of treatment for a patient with a colostomy whose pouch leaked during a snow storm.</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A short summary of your article



Acknowledgments - Did anyone help you with your manuscript that is not an author

Thank you to my publisher, Greg Paull for his thoughtful review and comments

What is your article about?

Describe the purpose of your case study and its importance to ET nursing practice

Introduction

Problems from a pouch that is leaking can cause skin disruptions for patients. This can be more distressing to the patient when it occurs during severe weather and the patient can not reach the ET nurse.

• Tell us about the patient

Patient History

Mr. CS had a rectal cancer that resulted in a temporary sigmoid colostomy. He did not have a pre surgical stoma marking. Following surgery, he required radiation therapy. He lost a significant amount of weight during the course of his treatments. Due to a leaking pouch, he had irritated peristomal skin, which is a common complication for ostomy patients. This can be more distressing to the patient when it occurs during severe weather and the patient can not reach the ET nurse.

Why did the patient seek to see the ET nurse?

Present complaint

Mr. CS was very distressed because his pouch was leaking. He spent Christmas eve day and Christmas day not participating in the holiday with his family because of his discomfort and embarrassment from odor.

The day after Christmas which was Sunday, it began to snow. A major snow storm was predicted for the area, and Mr. CS just could not stand the thought of another day of leakage. He called the ET nurse and asked if he could be seen.

• Tell us about the patient

What problem is being described?
What are its causes and symptoms?
Include definitions of terms
Review relevant literature when necessary

Make sure what you write protects the patient's identify!

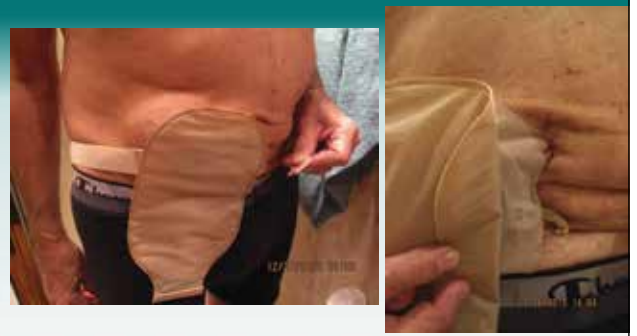
Describe the presenting complaint or problem

Mr. CS's had deep skin folds (see figure 1) His pouch would not stay on and he was upset that his holiday had been ruined. He was afraid with the snow storm that he would be stuck in the house and unable to get out for several days. As the snow piled up, I was not certain that I could get out to see the patient (see figure 2)

Where relevant, include photographs to support your work.

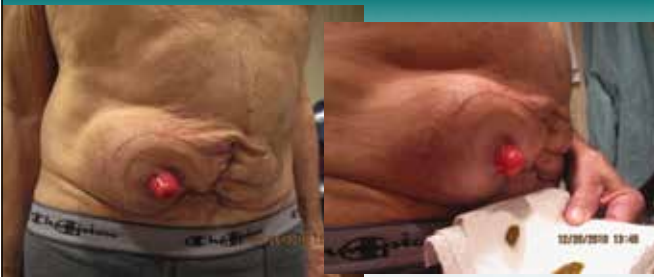
- Make sure each photo is referred to in the text of your manuscript.
- Photos should be in a separate file and not in the word file of your manuscript.
- Each photo needs to have a:
 - Number
 - Title
 - Caption

Figure 3- New pouch in place



Photos © Ayello 2010

Figure 1. Initial Assessment



- Note the skin folds for this patient

Photos © Ayello 2010

Consider the following:

- Analyse and evaluate the results of the treatment
- Discharge and community care
- Follow up treatment, if needed

Figure 2



Photos © Ayello 2010

The snow was very deep and getting out to drive to see the patient was not easy

Discussion

- Review the pertinent literature about the ET nursing interventions which you used. Focus on the treatments or interventions used to manage the patient's problem.

References

- Where appropriate, throughout the clinical paper, your comments should be supported by reference to guidelines or articles on the topic being discussed.

(See the “Instructions for Authors” on the WCET journal website.)

References- Citation in the text

A variety of tools have been developed to describe peristomal skin and select appropriate pouches¹⁻³.

References- Citation in the text- example for a book



Due to a leaking pouch, he had irritated peristomal skin, which is a common complication for ostomy patients.⁴

Conclusion

- In a single paragraph, summarise the most important aspects of your paper.
- Make 3 – 5 key points, which you would like your readers to take away with them when they have finished reading your article.

Reference List- Journal article

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Conclusion

Patients need to contact the ET nurse as soon as a skin problem arises. Holidays or severe weather may increase a patient’s distress. Patients trust the ET nurse and having the ability to contact the ET nurse is important.