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Mentoring New Authors: *Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing's* Writing Mentorship Program

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The *Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing (CJON)*, an official publication of the Oncology Nursing Society, is a bimonthly journal established in 1996 to provide practical information necessary to care for patients and their families across the continuum of cancer care and to develop publication skills in oncology nurses. To better support the latter goal, the CJON Writing Mentorship Program was established in 2000 to assist first-time authors or fellows. Fellows are paired with experienced authors who act as mentors to the fellow and guide him or her through the peer-review process.

To be accepted into the program, a potential fellow must be an ONS member, be a direct caregiver of any educational level who has never published an article in a peer-reviewed journal, and have basic computer skills and computer access. The potential fellow completes an online application, submits a curriculum vitae document, and identifies the topic he or she wishes to write about. The applicant is then accepted or rejected by the *CJON* editor based on the criteria mentioned here and the interest (or lack thereof) of the topic to *CJON* readers.

Mentors must have experience publishing in peer-reviewed journals. They identify five areas of expertise, complete an application, and submit a curriculum vitae document as well. Mentors in this program are given credit as the second author on the manuscript and receive an honorarium of \$500.

Manuscript Development

A *CJON* staff member in charge of facilitating the program, as well as the editor, reviews all applications. When a fellow is accepted, the editor identifies a potential mentor from the mentor pool—a list of applied and approved mentors—and he or she is contacted to ascertain interest. At this time, the mentor is given information about the fellow, his or her work-related background, and the topic the fellow wishes to write about.

Once both parties are matched and contacted, the mentor works with the fellow to develop an outline for the article, which is then shared with the editor. Feedback is provided to ensure that the topic is a good fit for *CJON's* readers. The mentor and fellow then start working on the manuscript in what usually is a 6–12 month process. During this time, the *CJON* staff member periodically checks in with the pairing, monitors their progress, and offers any help or guidance available to the pairing from ONS.

Program Evaluation

Through August 2012, 103 pairings (or dyads) have been matched, resulting in 58 published articles (56%). The amount of matched dyads varies from year to year, with some years resulting in as few as three and other years as many as 10. In addition, the program originally had a once per year submission deadline. That now has become a rolling process with applicants accepted at any time of the year.

Major reasons cited for not completing the program have been related to situational or life

circumstances of the fellow and a lack of appreciation for the iterative and time-consuming nature of the manuscript preparation process. On occasion, a dyad is mismatched or the timeline needs to be extended. And, unfortunately, some pairings are cancelled due to lack of progress and the topic no longer being timely in nature.

Satisfaction surveys are completed by the dyads, and feedback has been positive and constructive. Recently, when asked how much the program strengthened the fellow's writing skills, a mean response of 4.2 was scored on a scale of 0 (not at all) to 5 (very much). As a result of the survey process, more guidance has been given about the roles and expectations of both the fellow and mentor, and more regular communication has been enacted between the pairing and ONS staff to better ensure that both parties are working diligently and that the pairing is a good fit.

Future Goals

Overall, the program has been well received and is considered a success by those in leadership positions at ONS. However, we would like to see an increased rate of publication as a goal for our program, somewhere closer to 80% instead of the current 56%. Feedback will continue to be gathered to better evaluate how the program can best serve potential first-time authors.

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