

---

☰ Menu

---

1 MIN AGO EDIT

# Mythbusters: Self-Embargo

## **Mythbusters: Self-Embargo**

Leslie H. Nicoll

**NURSE AUTHOR & EDITOR, 2018, 28(2), 1**

*Editor's Note:* This is the first article in an occasional series where the author will take on a myth that exists in writing and publishing and either “bust it” or confirm its veracity. If you have a myth that you would like us to tackle, use the contact form to send it to *Nurse Author & Editor* and we will get to work. Thanks in advance—I look forward to hearing from you!

~~

Selecting the right journal for article submission, review, and potential publication is key for a successful writing endeavor. Editors routinely reject articles that are not the “right fit” or do not meet the purpose of the journal. When I work with an author on a manuscript, my very first question is, “What

journal have you selected?” Many times, the author will answer, “Well, I think Journal X is the best fit, but I can’t send it there because I had an article published/reviewed/rejected in that journal last year.”

That got me wondering—where does this notion of “self-embargo” come from? For the journal I edit, *CIN: Computers, Informatics, Nursing*, I have many repeat authors and I have never told anyone to wait some amount of time (months, a year) before submitting to the journal again. But my journal represents a particular specialty and there are not many other informatics journals in nursing, so maybe my point of view is skewed. Thus I turned to my editor colleagues to learn if they tell authors to wait before submitting to the journal again. The answer was a resounding **NO**.

I asked the question on the email update list of the International Academy of Nursing Editors (INANE). This was certainly not a scientific study, just an informal poll—but the answers were very clear. In their comments responding to my question, the editors made three distinctions: fit, frequency, and time frame. Regarding fit and time, DaiWai Olson, Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Neuroscience Nursing* very succinctly said, “If the article fits the journal—the article fits the journal. There should be no waiting period.” Gloria Donnelly Editor of *Holistic Nursing Practice* also noted that her journal does not have a restriction of frequency of same author submissions. She wrote, “Because we are a specialized journal, we occasionally get submissions from previously published authors. This has posed no issue for the journal.”

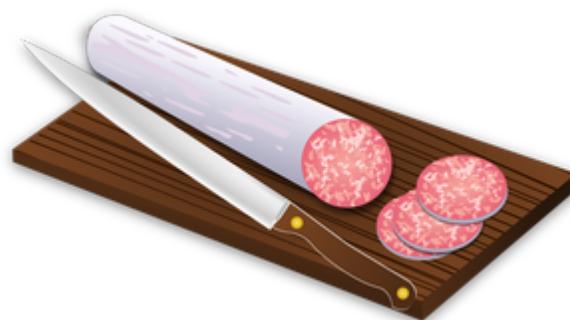
Shawn Kennedy, Editor-in-Chief of the *American Journal of Nursing* noted a benefit of repeat authors: “Since they have already been through our editing process, they know what to expect. Always easier for both authors and editors!”

Shawn also noted that even with repeat authors, the process takes time and it is likely that a good 9 to 12 month period that will elapse before a second article appears in print. Marion Broome, Editor-in-Chief of *Nursing Outlook* agreed, when she wrote, “We often have authors who publish their work in the journal multiple times—although not often in the same year.”

So, the consensus was that you do not need to “self-embargo” an article because you have previously submitted to or published in a specific journal. Editors are fine with hearing from you again. However they did have two caveats: salami slicing and variety of publication outlets.

## SALAMI SLICING

“Salami slicing” or “salami publication” refers to taking data from one study and turning it into several different publications. A very extreme example that recently came to my attention helps to illustrate this phenomenon: the *Archives of*



*Iranian Medicine* published 33 papers about one study, a survey of the mental health of the Iranian population. There are two summary papers that reported the overall findings, and then 31 additional papers, each reporting the findings of an individual province in Iran. Want to guess how many Iranian provinces there are? Blogger Neuroskeptic (2018), who wrote about this situation, also noted that the articles have a great deal of overlapping text, which further complicates the issue by delving into the area of self-plagiarism.

The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) provides guidance on salami slicing with this advice: “Salami publication is where papers cover the same population, methods, and question. Splitting up papers by outcomes is not legitimate” (COPE,

2005). Interestingly, they note that it is an editorial decision as to whether to publish or not—it is not an ethical issue. So even though the Iranian example seems extreme, it was within the purview of the editor to publish the 33 papers.

That said, the INANE editors do not seem to hold that view; several commented that if they received multiple articles from the same author(s) in a short period of time, they would be alert to salami slicing and would reject “sliced” articles.

To close the loop, COPE makes the distinction between salami and redundant publication: “Where there is a two-thirds overlap, it is a redundant publication” (COPE, 2005). Again, returning to the Iranian example—I have not read all 33 papers but if the overlap is great, as Neuroskeptic (2018) suggests, then perhaps the papers should not have been published. But, the rationale for rejection would be for duplicate or redundant publication, not salami slicing.

## VARIETY OF PUBLICATION OUTLETS

While the INANE editors, overall, seemed to be comfortable with publishing multiple papers from the same author(s), they did note that faculty authors might need to have a variety of publication outlets to meet requirements for promotion and tenure. This decision is not driven by the journal but by the academy and as Teddie Potter, Executive Editor of the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies* noted, “The Academy is full of quirky rules when it comes to tenure.” Marion Broome, who in addition to her editorship with *Nursing Outlook* is also the Dean of the School of Nursing at Duke University wrote, “The type of journal and its impact, as well as the individual papers the person publishes is what is most heavily weighted. My advice to junior faculty is that if they want their work to have widespread impact, they [should] give considerable thought to varying their publication venues.”

## CONCLUSION

Let's start with the myth:

- If you are an author, do you need to “self-embargo” an article and not submit to a journal that you have previously/recently submitted to or published in?
- **BUSTED!** INANE Editors welcome articles from prior authors for a variety of reasons:
  - They are interested in publishing articles that represent a program of research.
  - If the purpose of the article and the journal are congruent, then it makes good sense to select that journal as a publication outlet.
  - Authors who are familiar with the review and revision process of a journal have an advantage, which makes the work easier for all involved.
  - Even if articles are submitted in quick succession, the reality is that many months will pass before the review and publication process is complete, making it unlikely that they will overlap.

That said, authors need to keep in mind the issues of salami slicing and redundant/duplicate publication. While COPE does not consider salami slicing to be an ethical transgression, INANE editors frown on this practice and are likely to reject a “sliced” article.

Last, for authors in academic settings, particularly junior faculty, it is wise to consult with senior faculty and the Dean or Associate Dean, as appropriate, to create a realistic publication plan. This includes the number of articles to be published with clear expectations of yearly output as well as strategically selecting journals. If a variety of publication outlets is presented as an important

criterion for evaluation of a tenure dossier, then this must be kept in mind when planning a dissemination strategy.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



Thanks to the INANE Editors who answered my initial question on the INANE mailing list. Hat tip to Richard Gray, who alerted me to the blog post by Neuroskeptic and the Iranian salami situation.

## REFERENCES

1. Committee on Publication Ethics (2005). Salami publication. Retrieved March 28, 2018 from <https://publicationethics.org/case/salami-publication>
2. Neuroskeptic. (2018, March 3). Scientific salami slicing: 33 papers from 1 study. *Discover: Science for the Curious*. Retrieved March 28, 2018 from <https://goo.gl/cGKD6F>.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leslie H. Nicoll, PhD, MBA, RN, FAAN lives in Maine with her husband, three rescue pets, and two adult children close by. She keeps herself busy as Editor-in-Chief of *Nurse Author & Editor*, and *CIN: Computers, Informatics, Nursing*. She provides advice and consultation to both novice and experienced author who want to publish in the scholarly literature. Two days per week she works at the Portland Community Free Clinic. [Click here to send a message](#) directly to Leslie.

NAE 2018 28 2 1 Nicoll

Copyright 2018: The Author. May not be reproduced without permission.

Journal Complication Copyright 2018: John Wiley and Son Ltd.