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How To Publish a Preprint

A How-To on How to Publish a Preprint

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Since the early 1990s the practice of preprinting and distributing manuscripts on the Internet prior to peer review and publication has been common in the laboratory sciences. According to Abbasi[1] the practice of distributing pre-printed manuscripts has taken place in the biological sciences since the 1960s. More recently, principally in the past decade, pre-printing of manuscripts has spread to other fields and a practice, once frowned on by publishers and many in the academic community, has become accepted, encouraged, and even considered good practice in academic circles. Moreover, it is being enabled by some leading publishers such as Wiley.

Preprinting means that you make a version—usually the final submitted draft—of a manuscript available online either prior to submission to a journal or

simultaneously. The "preprint" is then available for anyone to read and comment on and is usually accompanied by a *caveat* that the version has not been subject to peer review. Oermann and Nicoll[3] give a good overview of the advantages and disadvantages of preprinting. Advantages include the opportunity to obtain unsolicited comments on your manuscript which may be helpful in improving it for eventual publication. Publishing a preprint also allows you to get your results out early—albeit with the above *caveat*—and to share them with your scholarly community. In so doing you can also publicly claim the work as yours which is important in highly competitive and fast-moving fields. Preprinting is also encouraged under Open Science both as a means of sharing data quickly and freely and as a means of encouraging transparency in the processes of research and academic publication. There are disadvantages, too: loss of novelty, which may impact future publication and questions about sustainability and discovery.[3] Even so, many believe that preprinting is no longer the wave of the future but rather, a method of dissemination that is here to stay. They contend that the pros definitely outweigh the cons.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Preprinting can be done in several ways. Initially it was done through personal websites and institutional repositories; this is still an option. However, there are better ways to preprint a manuscript and this is facilitated by a range of platforms, most of which are discipline specific. I do not intend to review, comprehensively, the whole range of platforms for all disciplines or even for nursing. Instead I will focus on three platforms that I believe are particularly suitable for nursing and these are: medRxiv; Authorea®; and the *WikiJournal of Medicine*.

medRxiv

medRxiv describes itself as the preprint server for health sciences and specifically includes nursing as one of the categories of manuscript it accepts. It is free to use and supported by Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, *BMJ,* and Yale University. You must register with the platform and provide details—including a valid email address—of all co-authors. The best way to register with medRxiv is using an [ORCiD](#) number. I would strongly recommend all academic authors to register with ORCiD which is easy to do and is free. More details can be found at the ORCiD website. I have also written about the process.[4]

The medRxiv platform will guide you through the process of submitting your manuscript. The process is very similar to submitting a manuscript with, for example, [ScholarOne](#)® which is used by Wiley and many other publishers. Once you have competed all the steps the system will generate a PDF document for you to check and finalize the submission. The preprint will not appear automatically as it will be checked prior to publication; you should login to check to check the status of your manuscript. The review process can take four to five days.[2] Once the manuscript is approved it will be published with a DOI. I offer you [this link](#) to one of my own preprints. Once the preprint is published you may send out the link on social media and add the preprint to your CV. In due course, the preprint will appear on your ORCiD page. Once the manuscript has been accepted by a peer reviewed journal, a link to the published version will appear on the medRxiv site, although there may be a delay in this happening.

Authorea

At the "About Us" section of the Authorea website, they describe platform as, "Authora was founded in late 2012 with the mission of accelerating scientific discovery. We were frustrated that other writing tools didn't fully understand the needs of researchers—especially researchers in a web-first world—and we wondered why the internet age hadn't yet delivered a modern toolset for scientific

collaboration. Authorea is the document editor we always wanted." The site is described by [Wikipedia](#) as: "an online collaborative writing tool that allows researchers to write, cite, collaborate, host data, and publish." The platform is owned by Wiley and, while students may use it for free, other authors are only permitted a limited number of manuscripts before they must pay.

Like medRxiv it is advisable to register using an ORCiD number. An additional feature of Authorea over, for example, medRxiv is that it allows collaborative writing of manuscripts by several authors. It also has a facility for other registered users to comment on preprints and it has useful features such as being able to add citations directly from PubMed. The formatting style of a range of publishers is supported and it has drag and drop facilities for tables and figures. Once an article is published on Authorea it will be assigned a DOI. Supplementary material such as data and statistical coding may also be stored on Authorea.

At the time of this writing, there was one article on Authorea with the tag "nursing."[2] Not surprisingly, the topic is related to COVID-19. There are zero comments posted.

WikiJournal of Medicine

The *WikiJournal of Medicine* describes itself as: "an open access, free-to-publish Wikipedia-integrated journal devoted to medicine and biomedicine." The *WikiJournal of Medicine* offers diamond open access publishing whereby no payment is required ether to publish or to read an article. The journal is supported by Wikimedia as part of the Wikiversity projects. The whole enterprise is crowd-funded; as regular users of Wikpedia will be aware, there are annual requests for donations to support the platform. The unique feature of the *WikiJournal of Medicine* is that it works by publishing preprints, essentially in the format of a Wikipedia page which, if accepted by the journal are subsequently published. The

published version of the article is made available as a PDF document with a DOI. However, the preprint remains and, as with any Wikpedia page, may be edited in perpetuity. Articles may be written for the *WikiJournal of Medicine* using a standard formatting and editing facility and a facility that easily allows references to be added. In other words, it is not necessary to use the rather cumbersome HTML (hypertext markup language) that is also used for writing Wikipedia pages. Nevertheless, the "finishing touches" to articles are often only accomplished using HTML. Once the article is submitted and made publicly available then the editors will assign reviewers and, in fact, anyone may submit comments. This process is entirely transparent, and reviewers are given the option of identifying themselves. You may be interested in looking at one of my own *WikiJournal of Medicine* articles at [this link](#).[4]

CONCLUSION

The above is an insight, with examples, of some ways you may consider preprinting your manuscripts. Your choice will depend on what your objectives are for your article. Clearly, preprints submitted to the *WikiJournal of Medicine* are intended for publication in the journal; Authorea only allows limited free use; medRxiv is free to use. Preprinting has been with us for many decades and it now a widely accepted and even an integrated practice in mainstream academic publishing. It is encouraged under Open Science. My advice is that nursing authors should consider preprinting their manuscripts.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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