

Launching of IJTMB Writing Mentorship Program

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Having a formalized mechanism for linking novice authors and experienced authors can assist budding writers. Scientific writing is a skill that many practitioners are not taught in school as this type of writing is not generally used in clinical practice. Many of the submissions to the Journal come from authors with a wealth of clinical experience but who lack scientific writing experience; moreover, while the information contained therein is interesting, the articles frequently require extensive re-writes/editing to attain a quality that is publishable. To this end, the editorial staff is creating a database of experienced scientific writing mentors to connect with authors in need of assistance. Instructions for how to become a mentor, as well as to find a mentor, are included.

In my first editorial,⁽¹⁾ I discussed a plan to create a writing mentorship program for aspiring scientific publication authors. Having a formalized mechanism for linking novice authors and experienced authors can assist budding writers. Many submissions to the Journal come from massage therapy practitioners who have a wealth of clinical experience but who lack scientific writing experience; moreover, while the information contained therein is interesting, the papers require extensive re-writes/editing to attain a level expected in a peer-reviewed, scientific journal. Scientific writing is a specialized skill that many massage therapy practitioners are not taught in school as this type of writing is not generally used in clinical practice. While there is value in these submissions, the role of journal editors is not to provide extra in-depth mentoring and guidance that is at times needed. Therefore, the idea of a writing mentoring group with the goal of assisting emerging authors and increasing massage therapy research publication has come to fruition.

In January and February of 2017, a survey was sent to all listed reviewers for the Journal through the social media accounts. The survey's purpose was to generate a database of potential writing mentors. The survey asks for levels and areas of expertise. Since the contribution from a mentor can vary greatly

depending on the manuscript status, the survey also asks about expected levels of involvement with the mentoring relationship, as well as compensation or recognition. Some manuscripts may require simply proof-reading, while others need major editing. Subsequent to their contribution, mentor acknowledgment, joint authorship, or even financial compensation for their time may be expected. As stated in the earlier editorial: "All financial and authorship negotiations will be between the mentors and the authors, and those negotiations will not be guided or managed by either the *IJTMB* or the Massage Therapy Foundation (MTF)."⁽¹⁾ The database will be maintained by the *IJTMB* Executive Editor and/or the Editor-in-Chief who will also connect mentors with mentees.

There are additional hopes that this program may help to address the noted gap in medical/public health literature with the translation and dissemination of research to practice. Rivera and Birnbaum⁽²⁾ discuss the many challenges of integrating research into practice for health promotion interventions including barriers to implementation, competing agendas between researchers and practitioners, and the need to adapt interventions to specific contexts/populations, all of which may lead to intervention failure and blame placed on the practitioners for the failure, although the intervention may not have been planned for "real world" implementation.⁽²⁾ Osterling and Austin⁽³⁾ suggest that, in order to improve dissemination of research, both practitioners and researchers will have to begin to collaborate and make changes to the ways they work. Experts have declared a need for more practice-based evidence to balance and improve the research that informs evidence-based practice.^(3,4) This suggests that, when practitioners and researchers begin to work together to plan and conduct research, implementation, dissemination, and translation in both directions, research-to-practice and practice-to-research is improved. To this end, while not all novice writers are massage practitioners nor are all experienced writers researchers, we foresee at least a portion of the mentee/mentor connections will be between massage practitioners and researchers.

For clarity, this database is intended to connect experienced writers with novice writers; it is not to connect practitioners to researchers with a desire to participate in research projects. For practitioners who do wish to connect with researchers, the Massage Therapy Foundation provides a free e-book with helpful information on the topic (<http://mtf.amtamassage.org/wp-content/uploads/mtf-researcher-ebook.pdf>). If you are interested in being a writing mentor, please fill out the survey at <https://goo.gl/forms/vN2DBxpYMCQuMeDK2>. If you have prepared a manuscript and would like to engage with a writing mentor, please contact me at eeijtm@gmail.com.

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