Editorial mentorship facilitates early authorship through a scholarly journal’s online companion: JAACAP Connect

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OBJECTIVES

To describe a new publication that promotes mentored authorship in child and adolescent psychiatry (CAP) - a model applicable to other medical disciplines.

To evaluate the hypothesis that active mentorship and a dedicated publication outlet encourage novice authors to engage in the process of peer-reviewed authorship.

BACKGROUND

Improving access to opportunities for scientific authorship can increase competency in research literacy, enhance lifelong learning skills, and improve evidence-based clinical care.

Publishing in peer-reviewed scholarly journals can be daunting for novice, first-time, or would-be authors.

Authoring and publishing scientific manuscripts under a mentor’s supervision can increase competency in research literacy.1

JAACAP Connect is an online companion to the Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (JAACAP), a peer reviewed scholarly publication.

All JAACAP content is freely available online.

JAACAP Connect encourages authors to never worry alone, as academic writing is rarely a solo act, but rather a fruitful collaboration.2

The mission of JAACAP Connect is to promote the development of transitional skills and publication as education.

JAACAP is the flagship journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP).

With an Impact Factor of 6.354 in 2013, JAACAP was ranked 1st of 117 pediatrics journals and 11th of 135 psychiatry journals.3

In 2013, JAACAP had a print circulation of 9,227 and an online usage statistic (see jaacap.com/content/connect) of 38,353, including those fewer than 7 years out of training.

AACAP is the world’s largest professional organization of child and adolescent psychiatry, representing over 8,800 members around the world.

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METHODS

We created a new online companion journal, JAACAP Connect.

We promoted JAACAP Connect at the AAP Annual Meeting, via email solicitation, and via targeted outreach to AACAP committees and at other events.

Anyone with an interest in child and adolescent psychiatry was invited to participate. We particularly targeted novice and would-be authors, including trainees and early career psychiatrists (ECPs), defined as those fewer than 7 years out of training.

We have published two articles on practical tips toward scholarly publication,4,5 with more planned for future issues.

Authorship process

Interested authors contact us through a dedicated email address.

The editorial mentor replies with a welcoming message to set up an informal phone or Skype meeting.

The editor/mentor uses open-ended questions and positive feedback to help the author identify a publishable concept from his/her broader interests.

An iterative process of skill-building continues, resulting in an outline and presentable draft, which is then passed on to an expert content mentor for internal peer review.

The JAACAP Connect editorial office reviews the final submission and accepted manuscripts are moved into production.

Beginning with Volume 2, responsibility for typesetting and production using Microsoft Publisher was transitioned from the JAACAP Connect editor to the JAACAP Editorial Office, with an anticipated production cost of approximately $1,500 per quarterly issue, consisting primarily of staff time.

RESULTS

The first three issues of JAACAP Connect have been published (Fall and Winter 2014; Spring 2015), comprising 16 articles.

Since May 2014, 43 unique first authors from 25 different institutions have initiated the publication process.

Participants ranged in training from college graduates to advanced practitioners, but most were trainees (students, residents, fellows) or ECPs.

Nearly every article had at least one trainee or ECP as a co-author; approximately 50% were authored in collaboration with more experienced colleagues.

Approximately 90% of authorship experiences began with a phone call or personal meeting with a JAACAP Connect editor to help determine a topic.

All participants who had a first call completed preliminary content outlines; 16 produced strong drafts that were eventually published after a median of 3 revisions (range 2-6). The remaining are in process or in press.

Online usage statistics (Figure)

Emails about JAACAP Connect have higher open and click-through rates than JAACAP or AACAP.

CONCLUSIONS

By creating an online companion journal that incorporates an explicit mentorship component, scholarly journals and their parent societies can:

– Better engage their readership;
– Offer new experiences and learning opportunities to their trainee and early career members;
– Expand the diversity of their author base and content offerings; and
– Strengthen their pipeline of future authors and editors.

Staggered editorial appointments (as summarized in the Table) can help smooth transitions, promote mentorship, and ensure the publication’s longevity.

Involvement in a publication specifically designed to promote novice, trainee, or early-career authorship can offer an accessible and welcoming point of entry into scientific writing and editing.5

Future directions include:

– Creating modules to locate novice authors on basic manuscript construction and publication skills;
– Obtaining better information on online use (e.g. Urchin);
– Conducting a survey of authors and readers to refine content and improve participation and engagement over time; and
– Outsourcing production.

Table 1: Timeline of JAACAP Connect

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Launch</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First issue published</td>
<td>Fall 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second issue published</td>
<td>Winter 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third issue published</td>
<td>Spring 2015</td>
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REFERENCES


2 Martin A. Just Do It: Poster to Get Your Work Published in the Academic Literature (and why you should, no pressure). JAACAP Connect 2014; 1(2): 20-21

3 2013 Journal Citation Reports® Science Edition (Thomson Reuters, 2014)


DISCLOSURES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

BH is the 2014-2015 JAACAP John F. McDermott Assistant Editor-in-Residence and Founding Editor of JAACAP Connect. She receives a travel stipend from AACAP.

MB is Managing Editor of JAACAP and employed by AACAP.

AM is Editor-in-Chief of JAACAP and receives an editorial and travel stipend from AACAP.

The authors report no competing interests to disclose.

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For further information, email connect@jaacap.org.

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