

Why infection prevention and control professionals should strive to publish

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For the infection prevention and control professional (ICP), the importance of sharing our work, whether it be original research findings, quality improvement initiatives, or experiences with outbreaks, cannot be overstated. While we may engage in research to inform practice within our own organizations, ICPs should strive for broader dissemination achievable through presentations at conferences and publications in peer-reviewed scientific journals. In the absence of such shared experience, ICPs risk working in isolation and struggling with similar challenges when a common solution may exist. Broad dissemination of research can break down silos and spark important conversations among ICPs as well as with our colleagues working in complimentary disciplines such as public health, epidemiology, nursing, microbiology and infectious diseases. It gives ICPs the opportunity to make a contribution to the field and influence practice. The development of evidence-based guidance for decision-making and to inform policies and programs is critically important to the field of infection prevention and control (IPAC), and is dependent on the dissemination of research findings.

In the IPAC Canada 2018 Mega Survey, only 29% of respondents reported having submitted their work for publication in a scientific journal [1]. Barriers to publishing our work may include a lack of time, resources and support from our organizations, inexperience in research and writing, and perhaps limited confidence in our abilities and the suitability of our work for publication. Despite these challenges, ICPs should strive to develop the skills to propose, conduct, analyze and describe their own research to

help answer IPAC questions and to advance the knowledge base of the field. For those with less experience in preparing their work for presentation and publication, IPAC Canada has resources available to support the process. The 2019 IPAC Canada and International Federation of Infection Control Conjoint Conference featured a presentation by Kathryn Suh entitled Manuscript Preparation: How to Get Your Paper Published [2]. With the slide deck available on the IPAC Canada website, anyone considering publishing their work can refer to the slides for consideration about the importance of publishing, how to structure a manuscript and practices to avoid. An IPAC Canada webinar entitled Tricks and Tips for Abstract Writing presented by Gwyneth Meyers is also available on the IPAC Canada website [3]. This webinar can support ICPs by providing guidance for writing a compelling abstract for multiple purposes including conference presentations, grant proposals and as part of a manuscript for publication.

Other strategies to address the barriers that ICPs face could include collaborating with or seeking mentorship from a more experienced colleague who may have previously navigated the publication process. Alternatively, experienced researchers could seek out mentorship opportunities to support novice researchers in designing, conducting and writing up their research projects. Starting small, with a simple research project, provides the opportunity to develop the skills needed for more complicated projects. Also, it is important to remember that not all work worthy of publication adheres to the format of formal, original research. There is great value in sharing the lessons learned from

an outbreak investigation or a description of a quality improvement initiative. Refer to the Guidelines for Authors for a description of all publication categories accepted by CJIC.

Those in leadership positions should encourage and support ICPs in their publication endeavours to promote staff engagement, and as a means of professional development through the extension of professional knowledge and skills development. Involvement in research activities is recognized by various professional organizations as an important component of the role of an ICP. The IPAC Canada Core Competencies for Infection Control Professionals (2016) describes the required knowledge, skills and attitudes of a competent ICP [4]. The ability to develop research proposals, collect and analyze data and disseminate research findings are classified as foundational core competencies. The Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) also lists conducting and participating in routine investigational and epidemiological research as a professional and practice standard [5]. Starting in 2020, the Certification Board of Infection Control and Epidemiology, Inc. (CBIC) is offering a new option for recertification. In addition to the current examination option, ICPs will be able to recertify by continuing education. Referred to by CBIC as infection prevention units (IPUs), continuing education includes 'Publications' as a category and authors of IPAC-related, peer-reviewed journal articles will receive five IPUs per publication (towards the 40 IPUs minimum required to recertify) [6]. The recognition of the importance of publications in professional development

by these organizations further highlights the dual benefit to both the ICP and to the broader field of IPAC.

ICPs should evaluate the work we do and the changes we would like to implement to identify what could benefit other ICPs if disseminated broadly. Considering the heavy workload and resource limitation ICPs often face, prioritization of research activities can be a significant obstacle. Engaging leadership with a clear message about the benefits of researching and publishing within our organizations could potentially garner the support and resources necessary for the fundamental work of sharing evidence. If ICPs do not prioritize contributions to our own field and the ongoing maintenance of high-quality IPAC practice, who will?

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