Editorial Board members of MEDSURG Nursing have approved a new, shorter format for continuous quality improvement (CQI) articles. Any manuscripts submitted in the future should use this format. The new format will allow authors to focus on key features of the CQI project. In addition, the editor and staff can publish more articles in each issue of the journal. Guidelines and a sample article are provided on the journal’s website under author guidelines (http://www.medsurgnursing.net/msnjfiles/guidelines_CQI.pdf). In this column, I will provide some additional information to help potential authors prepare their CQI manuscripts for submission in this new format.

Components

As most quality improvement projects focus on the improvement of care in a particular unit or units in a particular hospital, my experience is they usually are not meant to be generalized outside the setting. Despite this lack of generalizability, sharing information about CQI projects can be helpful to other institutions faced with similar situations. The lessons learned and possible implications can enlighten readers and encourage innovation.

In our new format, each CQI manuscript will have a side bar and other sections described below. Manuscripts should be no more than 2,000-2,500 words, or approximately six typewritten, double-spaced pages (three pages in the journal). Two or three value-added tables also can be included and are not part of the total word count; please consider carefully how these add to the manuscript due to page limitations.

The first section of the side bar will include a brief summary of important literature that influenced the project’s development. Although pertinent literature should be noted, an extensive review of the literature is not needed. Literature should support the importance of the problem and potential solutions that have been published. Key resources should generally be from the last 3-5 years.

Also in the side bar will be the CQI model used in the study with a citation. If this is a familiar model, no need exists to describe it in detail. The clinical setting and the patient population involved should be indicated. The average daily census on the clinical unit can be included if pertinent to the project. The last part of the side bar is a brief description of the project’s objectives.

Main Body of the Manuscript

The manuscript should include a brief introduction to the project. The introduction sets the stage for the project description. The project site then will be described with the reasons for the change in the prior situation or practices. Previous pertinent data can be shared to demonstrate the need for the CQI project.

The next section should outline the implemented program or project. This discussion should contain enough detail to allow a reader to determine clearly how to implement a similar project. It could be a brief description, an outline of project phases as in our example, or organized in any way the authors believe will be clear to readers. Evaluation and Action Plan should describe how the project was evaluated for effectiveness. This should include how and when data were collected and how they were analyzed. Then authors should explain how the action plan was modified based on evaluation results.

The sidebar will be used for each article. The above outline should work well for most CQI project manuscripts, but another outline can be considered if it would work better for a particular project. The key point is the manuscript must address the project fully and also fit within the word limitation. Should a project be much larger or be considered original research as well as a CQI project, authors should discuss the abstract with the journal Editor for guidance.

The final two sections in the manuscript will be the Lessons Learned/Nursing Implications and the Conclusion. The Lessons Learned/Nursing Implications should address key lessons staff learned from the CQI project, as well as any appropriate nursing and interprofessional implications based on the project and findings of the evaluation. The Conclusion should be a brief paragraph that summarizes the most important take-away message about this project.

Value-Added Tables

Editorial Board members specifically want to allow two or three tables to be included in these articles, as they often add information that can be helpful to others trying to implement similar projects. Tables should add crucial information for the reader and should not repeat information already included in the article. Tables should be numbered and referenced clearly in the manuscript.

The Editor and Editorial Board members are excited about the possibilities of this new format and trust it will provide a helpful way for authors to organize their CQI reports. We also believe it will allow the journal to share more projects with our readers.