



BY JARROD SHAPIRO, DPM

Why You Should Try Writing... At Least a Little

Here are some benefits.

Practice Perfect is a continuing every-issue column in which Dr. Shapiro offers his unique personal perspective on the ins and outs of running a podiatric practice

Having written weekly editorials about various aspects of being a podiatrist, from social issues to scientific ones for the last 19 years, the one topic almost never discussed is writing itself. Let's rectify that glaring absence with a discussion about writing. Even more so, perhaps this will convince you to do some of your own writing.

Why Should You Write?

As someone who has chosen to read this, it might be preaching to the choir since you must—to some extent—value the written word. Reading is obviously important as a communication method, but good communication requires practice. As such, practicing writing makes one a better communicator. For physicians, being able to communicate clearly is mandatory, but we often lack feedback with this skill. Writing can improve this by giving one this feedback. This can occur in two ways. First, when someone else reads what you wrote, they'll either understand it or not. Perhaps wording a concept slightly differently would have made things clearer. Maybe modifying an argument would have made your communication understandable or more convincing. Second, if you write something, put it aside and then return



to it sometime later. You will read it afresh from the point of view of a reader and see where your communication failed or was successful.

More Effective Learning

Writing is also a highly active learning method which serves to solidify a topic in your mind. In educational psychology, this is termed encoding, or the brain's way of building deep and long-lasting neurological connections. This is also the process of transferring knowledge from short-term to long-term memory, a critical event which leads to remembering anything for a long time. While in medical school and residency, writing and drawing pictures was second only to retrieval practice (AKA quizzing) to remembering what was being studied.

Deeper Understanding

Writing about a subject you are trying to better understand will help to improve your grasp of that subject. Not being an expert in every case, many of these topics were still dis-

cussed in the *Practice Perfect* editorials. Investigating these topics and then creating an organized discussion about them helps to think through them and improve understanding. For some topics, especially those without a clear answer or something controversial, modifications to views and opinions get made as the article comes together, and in some cases, causes adaptation of a modified—often more sophisticated—opinion about that subject.

What to Do Now?

If this column has managed to convince you to consider putting some of your thoughts down on paper (electronic or physical), you might be wondering what's the best way to do it? Well, this is the beauty of writing—you can pick any method you want. Perhaps you might write short daily or weekly diary entries. Maybe you'll be doubly ambitious and write an essay. Perhaps you lean toward the visual arts and would want to combine images with the written word. Any of these methods are good.

To steal a slogan from Nike, Just Do It! Don't feel pressured to publish; no one else has to read what you write. It's up to you. Start with a topic you feel interest in or passion about. Sit down, think a little, research a bit, and just let the words flow. Don't worry if what you write is not polished or doesn't sound good. Just get it down on the paper. Once you've written it down, read through it to start the editing

Continued on page 38

PRACTICE PERFECT

Try Writing (from page 37)

process. When you've read through it once, stop and put it aside for a

day or two and then read and edit it one more time. Aim for creativity and clarity, and before you know it, you'll be a writer. **PM**

Dr. Shapiro is editor of PRESENT Practice Perfect. He joined the faculty of Western University of Health Sciences, College of Podiatric Medicine, Pomona, CA in 2010.

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Javier La Fontaine, MS, DPM
Dean and Professor
University of Texas - Rio Grande Valley School
of Podiatric Medicine
Harlingen, Texas



Surgical Offloading- Time Tested
Javier La Fontaine, DPM, MS, MEd
Dean and Professor
UT Rio Grande Valley, School of Podiatric Medicine
Harlingen, Texas

In this Lecture...
Javier La Fontaine, MS, DPM will explore the various surgical procedures used to prevent and heal ulcers. The procedures to be discussed are those with positive outcomes and are well supported by medical evidence. The surgical procedures in the presentation include forefoot, rearfoot, and soft tissue and osseous procedures.

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