
Sink Your Teeth into This: The Effects of Dental School Writing Experiences on the Specialization Goals of Dental Students

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Introduction

Writing and publishing in the scientific and medical communities are essential parts of communication of new developments and ideas. Included in the medical community is the dental community in which dental students, research dentists, practicing dentists, and dental faculty in dental schools write and publish their research. All groups of the dental community face challenges and receive benefits when they write and publish their own research; however, each group is influenced by their writing experiences in different ways.

For dental students and other members of the dental community, mastering the writing and publishing process is one of the main goals to contribute to the knowledge of dentistry. This process, however, can be challenging for dental students as well as dental researchers and dental faculty; nevertheless, succeeding in the writing and publishing processes is very rewarding, and it allows one's ideas and findings to be contributed to the past findings of other successful researchers. Members of the dental community, especially dental students, are influenced by their writing experiences. Many times dental students are the new members of the dental community who must learn how to communicate with other members and acquire authority in the community. Often this is done through writing and submitting their research findings to well-known medical journals.

After reading about writing and publishing in the dental community, I decided to look at how the writing experiences of dental students affect them and the choices they must make such as choosing their specialization. To do this, I carried out interviews with dental students, which helped me to gain knowledge on their specialization goals and their writing experiences in dental school. I was able to learn about how they use journal articles and about the amount of experience they have had with writing and submitting their own research to medical journals for publication. The responses I received suggest that dental students' specialty goals may be influenced by their writing experience. Students with more writing experience tend to specialize in dental research, and students with less writing experience tend to practice dentistry in other specializations such as orthodontics and general dentistry.

Not many researchers have looked at the writing and publishing processes in the dental community, and very few have looked at dental students specifically. It is important to explore all parts of the dental community including dental students, so that there are no gaps in the knowledge

of the overall medical community. Dental students are the future of dental treatment and research; therefore, more must be learned about their experiences with writing, how they develop and improve their writing skills, and how their writing experiences influence them in their specializations.

Writing and Publication

The mastery of writing and publication of research is a fundamental part of the communication of ideas and developments within a professional community; however, the publishing process is very competitive (Curzon and Cleaton-Jones; Fried and Battani; Quinn and Rush). M.E.J. Curzon and P.E. Cleaton-Jones assert that because research publication submissions have recently been growing in numbers, it is crucial that scientific researchers make their works of writing more adequate, clearly identifying their purpose and clearly explaining and communicating their research findings, so that they are more competitive and more likely to be published (4). To place emphasis on how to make submissions to journals more competitive, they point out several ways of organizing the research and ways to make the article understandable to specific audiences. Agreeing with Curzon and Cleaton-Jones, Jacquelyn L. Fried and Katy E. Battani suggest that clearly identifying the purpose and sufficiently communicating research materials requires the correct organization of the research process and findings, which can facilitate the acceptance of a research article for publication in a dental research journal (195). Fried and Battani also touch on the importance of organizing information in a general to specific manner for a more understandable research article, and this is often done by using the IMRAD format (195). To aid in their explanation of an organized format, they included guidelines for the use of the IMRAD format in their article. Charles T. Quinn and A. John Rush add that writing a clear research article promotes communication within the community since the published article will more likely be used and cited in other scientific works in other scientific research articles (636). If an article is clear and understandable, not only will an author's colleagues be able to understand the article, but also scientists who are not experts in the field may be able to use and cite the article if relevant to their research, expanding the spread of the research findings to many more disciplinary communities.

Dental students are the future of dental treatment and research; therefore, more must be learned about their experiences with writing, how they develop and improve their writing skills, and how their writing experiences influence them in their specializations.

Genre Mastery and Disciplinary Identity

Genre mastery is one of the key components for developing a professional identity, enabling people to assimilate themselves into a disciplinary community, and, in a similar way, developing a professional identity can aid in the process of mastering different types of genres in a professional community (Dressen-Hammouda; Schryer, et al.; Schryer and Spoel). According to Dacia Dressen-Hammouda, when people, especially students, learn about the different forms of discourse and knowledge frames in their disciplinary communities, they can better improve their genre mastery (234). To help explain the movement from disciplinary novice to disciplinary expert through genre mastery, Dressen-Hammouda uses a case study example in which a geology student masters the writing of genres in his community because he was able to develop his professional identity first. Catherine F. Schryer and her co-authors agree with Dressen-Hammouda, saying that there is a

relationship between genre mastery and professional identity, but they argue that mastering genres leads to the development of a professional identity. They state that “novices are learning the communication strategies that are shaping their sense of professional identities as physicians or social workers” (Schryer, et al. 147). In that statement, they refer to genres as communication strategies used among the members of the professional community. Showing how each group formed and developed their professional identities through their use of language in genres of their communities, Schryer and her co-authors used examples of physicians and social workers and their use of case presentations. In another article, Catherine F. Schryer and Philippa Spoel agree saying that the creation of a person’s professional identity can come about when one learns how to write the genres of their disciplinary community and when one learns how to use the genres of their community to communicate with other members, building connections and allowing one to assimilate themselves into a community (250). They further explain by adding examples of how healthcare students assimilate themselves by mastering case presentations and how students assimilate into the midwifery community through the mastering of regulatory policy documents.

International Authors

Often international authors who are non-English speaking face a disadvantage when attempting to publish their research and have a more difficult time writing and publishing their research than English-speaking researchers (Dean, Nordgren, and Söderlund; Townsend and Winning). In their article Elizabeth Dean, Lena Nordgren, and Anne Söderlund explain the drawbacks that non-English speaking international authors face when trying to advance their careers in scientific research. Since international authors are not easily able to submit and publish their findings in well-known English journals, they are not able to fully become assimilated into their mainstream disciplinary communities, and their works are less likely to be cited and used by members of their disciplinary community (Dean, Nordgren, and Söderlund 2). Grant Townsend and Tracey Winning expand on this idea saying that in order for international authors to be recognized, they must publish in widely known languages such as English and in countries and regions that speak English, allowing them to contribute their research findings to conversations that involve a larger group of researchers (677). They point out and explain that because of this need to become mainstream, the interest in publishing in English journals has recently grown, and international authors must attempt to publish in English.

Novice Student Authors

It is necessary for students in professional schools and graduate schools to learn how to write and use the genres of their professional communities (Lemkau and Ahmed; Rose and McClafferty). J.P. Lemkau and S.M. Ahmed say that students need to become more familiarized with scholarly works and how to write and use them, so that they may have a greater chance of becoming a published author (1264). In their article they discuss possible strategies and procedures that would be helpful when teaching students how to master the genres of writing in their disciplines, explaining how to approach the writing and publishing processes. Though publishing is difficult, students can become familiarized with writing scholarly work through the aid of senior faculty mentors in their professional and graduate schools (Lemkau and Ahmed 1264). Mike Rose and Karen A. McClafferty agree saying that professional and graduate schools need to help students learn how to write the genres in their disciplinary communities, suggesting that if writing courses are added, students would be able to master the genre of their disciplinary communities better and faster (30). They describe how learning to write the genres in their communities can lead to better communication with other members of their disciplinary communities since the students are able to participate and contribute their own works into the different conversations of their disciplinary community.

After reading the articles, I realized that the articles focus around genre mastery and its relationship to professional identity formation, and they also focused around topics such as the challenges of international authors and the difficulties of writing and publishing in journals; however, none of the articles focus specifically on dental students and how these writing experiences in writing and publishing affects their specialization goals. It is important that this area is researched because writing plays a large role in forming and shaping dental students and their identity. While we know that there are both benefits and challenges for research dentists and dental students when discussing the topic of writing and publishing medical journal articles, we still do not know how the writing experiences in dental schools influence the specialization goals of dental students. In this paper, I will argue that the specialization goals of dental students are highly influenced by their writing skills and whether or not they have had experience with the writing and publishing of research.

Methods

In order to collect qualitative data on the effects of dental school writing experiences on dental students' specialization goals, I carried out interviews with three dental students. All the dental students received the same interview questions through email, and the interviews consisted of eleven questions that were aimed to help gather information that would answer my research question. For example, one of the questions asked, "If you have not done and published your own research, in what ways have you used journal articles in dental school? How do you usually use journal articles as a dental student in dental school?" (see Appendix A for complete list of interview questions). Over the course of a week, the dental students took their time and answered the interview questions whenever it was convenient for them, and they emailed back their responses.

Receiving the dental students' responses through email took away the transcription process, though I had to reorganize their responses so that all three would have the same format. This made the analyzing process easier. To analyze, I coded the responses of the dental students, highlighting important words and phrases and using different colors to divide the important words and phrases into categories for easier organization of results.

The interview method was the best method for my primary research. It allowed me to gather information such as facts as well as personal experience stories from the dental students. Using other methods would not have produced the same results. Carrying out the interview through email also allowed for the interviewees to answer the interview questions comfortably whenever it was convenient for them. Because of this, the responses I received from the dental students were more thoughtful than they would be if I did a face to face interview. Also, since the interview was done through text, there was no need to transcribe the interview from audio to text.

Using the email interview method had some limitations on my research process. First, it was difficult to find dental students who had enough time to answer my questions. Even though I have a friend in dental school, she was very busy the week of the interview, so she helped me by asking her friends in dental school to participate in the interview process so that I would have answers if she could not answer the questions within the given time. The time constraint was also a limitation. Because I only had a little over a week to carry out the interviews, it was hard to obtain responses in the allotted amount of time from all the dental students that I contacted because their schedules were busy and constantly changing; however, I was able to get answers from three students. The time constraint also limited the amount of time I had to read and interpret the responses of the dental students. Due to this, I could not send the dental students follow up questions. Even though the answers the dental students gave me were already sufficient, I think my argument would be stronger if I had more time to ask follow up questions. Another limitation was that because the interviews were done through email, I was not able to see the social cues of the interviewees, and they were not able to see my social cues. To work around this, I had to ensure

that I responded back to their response email to show my interest and understanding of their answers to my interview questions.

Results

The responses to the interview questions that came back from the dental students were very interesting. Out of the six dental students contacted, four dental students replied; however, one was not familiar with journal article writing and use in dental school and felt that they were unable to answer any questions due to their unfamiliarity. Two students were able to answer some of the questions, but not able to answer others because they, like the previous dental student, had limited knowledge of the writing and use of journal articles in dental school. One student, however, was able to answer all of the questions because the student is currently doing research and has just started the process of writing up the findings of her research, hoping to get published in a medical journal. However, that student is still not very familiar with the writing of journal articles since she is just beginning the writing process.

The interviews with the dental students helped me to find out that in the dental school that the students are attending, some students use journal articles for evidence in their assignments while others do not. For example, one student said, "I use dental journals as evidence when doing problem-based learning." Another student said, "I have not used journal articles at all, personally." Students who want to specialize in the future are encouraged to do their own research and write up their findings to submit for publishing in a medical journal; however, the writing of the genre of medical journal articles is not taught to the students. Out of the three dental students that were interviewed, two have chosen their specialization goals: one as an orthodontist and the other chose to not specialize and become a general dentist. Two of the interviewed students have not done research and have no experience in writing medical journal articles; however, they wish to pursue their own research in the future before they graduate. Out of all the questions asked, the interviewed students all agreed that the purpose of journal articles is to communicate ideas and findings, and they have all seen students use journal articles in dental school.

Discussion

The use and writing of research findings for medical journal articles varies from student to student. However, all three of the students interviewed agreed that medical journal articles ultimately serve to communicate information for better understanding of new ideas and findings, meaning that they have all been exposed to medical journal articles. In one of the interviews, one of the students stated, "We are emailed dental research journals or some medical journals," mentioning how the dental students are constantly exposed to medical journal articles, which are sent to them by their instructors. This shows that the faculty recognizes the importance of the exposure of journal articles to dental students before they go into their specialties. When the dental students are exposed to the medical journal articles repeatedly, they begin to recognize the similarities within the genre of medical journal articles. These similarities, such as the format, help them to understand the information in journal articles faster and find information in the articles faster, an idea brought up in research done by Fried and Battani. With constant exposure, they learn and recognize how they can integrate journal article writing and use into their own specialties' work especially if they wish to specialize in dental research.

Many of the students answered that they mostly saw researching students and faculty use journal articles. Specifically, one of the dental students said, "Journal articles would be used mostly by students/faculty during research in order to either back up or provide evidence against current studies." This is because there is not much need for students who do not want to specialize in research to use journal articles except for when they want to find out more information about a

certain disease or treatment method. However, dental students who want to practice dentistry are encouraged to use journal articles and do their own research in order to write their own articles to submit to medical journals for publishing. Doing so helps the students to gain experience for future possible research endeavors they may have when they are practicing dentistry. Some may make the decision to change their specialty goal to dental research because they enjoy their experiences with writing journal articles in dental school.

Based on the results of the interviews, students who want to specialize in dental research generally have more experience in the use, writing, and publishing of journal articles. Often, because they are very interested in doing research, students will choose the specialty of dental research and develop and improve their writing skills by doing as much research as they can while they are in dental school. For students who do not wish to specialize in research but choose to

Students who want to specialize in dental research generally have more experience in the use, writing, and publishing of journal articles. Often, because they are very interested in doing research, students will choose the specialty of dental research and develop and improve their writing skills by doing as much research as they can while they are in dental school.

practice dentistry within another specialty instead, the use of journal articles is more important than the writing of journal articles, so they tend to do less research and writing in dental school and have less writing experiences than those who want to specialize in research. However, this does not mean that they will never write and submit their own research to medical journals. Many will carry out their own research at least once in their dental school career to gain the experience. In the future while they are practicing in their specialty, they may want to do their own research to contribute their new techniques and ideas to the dental community.

The results showed that some students in dental school may not have any knowledge on how to write for medical journals, and they are not taught how to write for this genre even though they are encouraged to participate in research and submit their findings to medical journals afterwards. Their limited knowledge on the writing of medical journals may be because they are still in their first or second year in dental school. As they progress in dental school, they may want carry out their own research, and they may begin to practice writing journal articles and choose to specialize in

dental research. Over time, they develop their writing skills, and the need for instructors to teach them how to write medical journal articles becomes unnecessary because they have already self-taught and learned how to write the genre on their own. They may master the writing of the genre through practicing and learning on their own, but this may not always be easy. For example, one of the students said, "When I started working on the abstract of my research paper, it was a little struggling to sort out what exactly I wanted to put on my paper." This example shows that learning how to write the genre of medical journal articles on their own is difficult, and the process may be easier if they had someone to teach them or mentor them through the process. Lemkau and Ahmed agree in their research saying that having mentors could help students familiarize themselves with writing scholarly works (1264). This struggle of learning to write articles for medical journals may be one of the reasons why this dental student chose not to specialize in research and chose to specialize in general dentistry instead. Based on the responses of the students, there seems to be an avoidance of specializing in dental research and writing for medical journals because the dental

students find the writing and publishing processes very challenging and tedious; however, all three students agree that learning how to write and mastering the writing of journal articles is crucial for advancements in the community. Quinn and Rush agree, mentioning in their research article that when writing of journal articles is mastered, the writing will be published and cited by members of the community, promoting communication (636). The dental students recognize that communication through writing is important for the betterment of all specialties, and all dental students should acquire the skill of writing through their own research.

The results from my research suggest that the writing experience students get in school helps them to acquire authority in the dental community. Through research, students get the opportunity to learn more about the topic with which they are doing research and become experts on that topic when they write about it. They can establish their credibility if their research is published and gain more authority and credibility when their written research is cited in others' research. Because of this, they may feel like qualified members of the community since more experienced researchers are using the findings of their research. The dental students do not only become experts on their research when they write, but also over time they can master the writing of journal articles, helping them to form a professional identity and gain authority. Schryer and her colleagues mention this relationship between genre mastery and professional identity formation in their article. Through their case studies, they showed that learning how to communicate through genres has an effect on the shaping of professional identities (144).

Though this study looked at dental students' writing experiences and how their experiences affected their specialization goals, there is still more that can be studied about this topic. For example, one can look at the changes of the dental students' familiarity with medical journal article use and writing throughout their four years of dental school. One can also look at the amount of times each specialty in dentistry uses and writes medical journal articles and for what purposes. Overall, this study showed that some dental students with less writing experiences with journal articles choose specializations other than dental research because they involve little writing and publishing of their own research. Students who have more experience in writing and publishing journals tend to choose dental research as their specialty. These results are important because we need to know how large a role writing plays as a method of communication in all dentistry specialties. Without the students gaining the experience of writing in dental school, the future communication of ideas and developments in dentistry may be hindered if students no longer have writing skills to communicate to other members of the dental community.

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Teresa-Anh Nguyen

Teresa-Anh Nguyen is a second year student at the University of Central Florida majoring in Biology. She is a very active member of the community, and loves being a volunteer Vietnamese language instructor and youth leader at her church. When she is not out in the community or in school, Teresa loves to play music on her guitar, piano, and drums. Throughout her life, she has found passions in fine arts and biological sciences. Due to these passions, she has decided to combine them together in a career and attend dental school after graduating. In the future, she hopes to become a dentist that specializes in endodontics. Teresa-Anh's research article "'Sink Your Teeth into This: The Effects of Dental School Writing Experiences on the Specialization Goals of Dental Students'" was written in Marcy Galbreath English Composition II course.

Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What is the purpose of medical journal articles and what do they do for students in dental school?
2. Who do you see mainly use journal articles and for what are they usually used?
3. How do you think the format of journal articles facilitates the communication of ideas and findings in the dental community? Has the format been useful to you as a dental student? How are you able to use this information?
4. Have you learned how to write articles for medical journals in dental school? If so, how did learning about the writing make you feel more assimilated into the dental community?
5. Have you done or would you like to do your own research and publish it? If so, how has the process had any influenced you as a dental student? If you don't plan on doing/writing research, why?
6. What part of the writing and publishing process do you think is the most difficult and why?
7. Why is it important for dental students to learn how to write and use journal articles?
8. If you have not done and published your own research, in what ways have you used journal articles in dental school? How do you usually use journal articles as a dental student in dental school?
9. What is your specialty goal, and how is writing used in that specialty?
10. Do you believe that journal articles are more beneficial to certain students in dental school? If so, how? If not, why?
11. How are journal articles necessary for dental students' education? Do they play a larger role for the dental students or the faculty?

Appendix B: Interview 1 Coding

Codes:

Personal Experiences

Who Writing Benefits

Writing/ Journal Article Use in Dental School

Research Experience

Writing Experience

Writing in Specialty

Q: What is the purpose of medical journal articles and what do they do for students in dental school?

A: Medical journal articles provide peer-reviewed scientific studies which provide a reliable source of information for dental students. They are documents that can be relatively well-trusted when trying to understand or find answers to problems.

Q: Who do you see mainly use journal articles and for what are they usually used?

A: Journal articles would be used mostly by students/faculty during research in order to either back up or provide evidence against current studies.

Q: How do you think the format of journal articles facilitates the communication of ideas and findings in the dental community? Has the format been useful to you as a dental student? How are you able to use this information?

A: Dental journals clearly list out reasonings, methods, results, of their studies and allows members of the dental community to understand what is happening. As a dental student learning through problem based learning and case studies, dental journals give sound evidence to help diagnose or rule out possible diseases in the patient case at hand.

Q: Have you learned how to write articles for medical journals in dental school? If so, how did learning about the writing make you feel more assimilated into the dental community?

A: I am not involved in research, so I have not had experience writing articles.

Q: Have you done or would you like to do your own research and publish it? If so, how has the process had any influenced you as a dental student? If you don't plan on doing/writing research, why?

A: I am planning to do research in the future, mostly for resume purposes (GPD/AEGD/specialization).

Q: What part of the writing and publishing process do you think is the most difficult and why?

A: I would imagine that the writing process is the most difficult because it requires the organization of ideas and all processes that occurred during the research process, as well as the amount of drafting and editing required.

Q: Why is it important for dental students to learn how to write and use journal articles?

A: Dental students should learn how to write and use journal articles because it provides strong evidence when doing research, as well as helping to improve communication skills through clear writing.

Q: If you have not done and published your own research, in what ways have you used journal articles in dental school? How do you usually use journal articles as a dental student in dental school?

A: I use dental journals as evidence when doing problem-based learning. Cases simulate real patient problems and when I can find something relatable in a dental journal to apply, I am much more confident in the validity of the information I'm getting.

Q: What is your specialty goal, and how is writing used in that specialty?

A: My specialty goal is orthodontics. Writing is used to communicate with both colleagues and patients alike, and if there is research involved, to do that as well.

Q: Do you believe that journal articles are more beneficial to certain students in dental school? If so, how? If not, why?

A: Journal articles are definitely more valuable to **students doing research**.

Appendix C: Interview 2 Coding

Codes:

Personal Experiences

Who Writing Benefits

Writing/ Journal Article Use in Dental School

Research Experience

Writing Experience

Writing in Specialty

Q: What is the purpose of medical journal articles and what do they do for students in dental school?

A: I'm not sure many of my classmates read much of medical journals. I know I don't, and we are emailed dental research journals or some medical journals, but they are just seen as a nuisance by most I think. What would medical journals be used if they were actually utilized? They would be used to just expand our medical knowledge or just strengthen it.

Q: Who do you see mainly use journal articles and for what are they usually used?

A: People who are interested in specializing are encouraged to do research. Journal articles are a great source of information for the researching students.

Q: How do you think the format of journal articles facilitates the communication of ideas and findings in the dental community? Has the format been useful to you as a dental student? How are you able to use this information?

A: I can't answer this because I do not read those so the format is not known to me.

Q: Have you learned how to write articles for medical journals in dental school? If so, how did learning about the writing make you feel more assimilated into the dental community?

A: Once again students who have tried to pursue research might have more experience in writing an article. Personally, I have no experience in this.

Q: Have you done or would you like to do your own research and publish it? If so, how has the process had any influenced you as a dental student? If you don't plan on doing/writing research, why?

A: We have the opportunity to technically do our own research. Have I done one? No. I would like to venture into one in the future though. From other students' experience, it sounds like a lot of paperwork if anything.

Q: What part of the writing and publishing process do you think is the most difficult and why?

A: The research idea I would assume would be the hardest and for the publishing process I just heard the paperwork that you have to fill out is monumental.

Q: Why is it important for dental students to learn how to write and use journal articles?

A: It is important because we can share newly learned knowledge as health professionals that can make our field much more advanced. If our field is more advanced, then we have more of an opportunity to help patients.

Q: If you have not done and published your own research, in what ways have you used journal articles in dental school? How do you usually use journal articles as a dental student in dental school?

A: I have not used journal articles at all personally.

Q: What is your specialty goal, and how is writing used in that specialty?

A: As of this moment, I don't see myself specializing. There is I think one research specialty and the others I do not know how writing is rather used.

Q: Do you believe that journal articles are more beneficial to certain students in dental school? If so, how? If not, why?

A: They would be useful to researching students and to others I do not know other than random knowledge.

Q: How are journal articles necessary for dental students' education? Do they play a larger role for the dental students or the faculty?

A: **Journal articles are not used in our education at least.** Everything is standardized for us so we are mostly self-taught and if we aren't we are mostly just taught by professors.

Appendix D: Interview 3 Coding

Codes:

Personal Experiences

Who Writing Benefits

Writing/ Journal Article Use in Dental School

Research Experience

Writing Experience

Writing in Specialty

Q: What is the purpose of medical journal articles and what do they do for students in dental school?

A: Dental students are future healthcare providers. Besides being able to perform dental procedures, we should also familiarize ourselves with medical terminology in order to fully comprehend patient medical history and other medical professions. Medical journal articles are great sources to help dental students improve our interprofessional knowledge, comprehension, and writing skill.

Q: Who do you see mainly use journal articles and for what are they usually used?

A: I see a lot of my instructors use journal articles and usually for research or educational purposes.

Q: How do you think the format of journal articles facilitates the communication of ideas and findings in the dental community? Has the format been useful to you as a dental student? How are you able to use this information?

A: When we have a standardized format of journal articles, everyone in the dental community can understand thoroughly one concept without any confusion. The format made it easier for me to read the through the article and find the needed information quicker.

Q: Have you learned how to write articles for medical journals in dental school? If so, how did learning about the writing make you feel more assimilated into the dental community?

A: No, I haven't learned how to write articles for medical journals in dental school.

Q: Have you done or would you like to do your own research and publish it? If so, how has the process had any influenced you as a dental student? If you don't plan on doing/writing research, why?

A: I'm partnering up with one more dental student and we are doing a survey-based research regarding factors influencing consumer purchase of oral surgery products among dental professionals. We will eventually have to write a research paper. Hopefully, it will be published. I have learned to find reliable and relevant journal articles in order to support my research topic. Through this process, I have gained more knowledge about some topics that we never got the opportunity to learn in our program like business and customer service views of dentistry. I also learned to put my thoughts on the paper thoroughly while developing my writing skill.

Q: What part of the writing and publishing process do you think is the most difficult and why?

A: I think the part where we have to find information to back up our own writing is the most difficult one because I always want my paper to be supported by relevant and reliable sources. When I started working on the abstract of my research paper, it was a little struggling to sort out what exactly I wanted to put on my paper. There were so many articles that I could use.

Q: Why is it important for dental students to learn how to write and use journal articles?

A: Knowing how to write and use journal articles effectively will enable dental students to easily access the writing of others, especially in professional programs and in our future career. It will facilitate our communication with other health care professions.

Q: If you have not done and published your own research, in what ways have you used journal articles in dental school? How do you usually use journal articles as a dental student in dental school?

A: I used some journal articles to make my presentation about respiratory diseases. In addition, our school curriculum consists of basic science and pre-clinical instruction delivered through problem based-learning sessions. Therefore, we learn how to look up information online to approve our diagnoses. I sometimes have to find good journal articles to read about diseases that I don't really know about to make the right diagnosis.

Q: What is your specialty goal, and how is writing used in that specialty?

A: I want to be a general dentist. A general dentist will need to write treatment plans, prescriptions, and post-operative instructions to the patients.

Q: Do you believe that journal articles are more beneficial to certain students in dental school? If so, how? If not, why?

A: I think journal articles give the same kind of benefits to all dental students. In our school, all dental students have the same access to journal articles. It is really just the matter of how much that student wants to know about a certain topic.

Q: How are journal articles necessary for dental students' education? Do they play a larger role for the dental students or the faculty?

A: Journal articles are very helpful to our education since dentistry is a lifelong learning profession. Over the past fifty years, dentistry has been changing tremendously with a lot more new products, equipment, and new ways of performing dental procedures. We will definitely need to keep updating our dental and medical information over years. In my opinion, journal articles are important to both dental students and faculty.