

FROM THE EDITOR

On Writing

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As editor in chief, I am always on the lookout for the next great article for *Forum*. I have developed an unbridled enthusiasm for the task, and will unapologetically request articles from anyone and everyone I meet. You can see it coming. I often ask who you are and what you are working on. Then I get to the point. “That’s very interesting—would you write it for *Forum*?” If you are a SGIM member, it’s become impossible to know me professionally without having been solicited by me at some time for an article about your work. (If you don’t believe me, ask the Council members—I may have taken the word *chutzpah* to new heights!)

New writers often ask where to begin: What should the topic be? How long should the article be? What am I, as editor, looking for? The following are some reflections on getting started as a writer for *Forum* or for any other project you choose:

- 1. Write what you know (...not what you think I need).** Who are you? What is your experience? Ask yourself what unique perspective you bring to the topic. Then show us. You may also consider collaborating with another author who shares your interests and adds a different perspective to the work.
- 2. Get the 411 on what is expected.** The Web site for

most publications including *Forum* (<http://www.sgim.org/publications/sgim-forum>) contains a section entitled “Information for Authors.” Here, you will find answers to frequently asked questions. It also contains an annotated list of *Forum* departments (section headings) and links to writing and editing tutorials.

- 3. Decide what type of article you are writing.** Most *Forum* articles are informational, although we occasionally present creative writing and reflection pieces. If you are providing information, start with a list of topics you want to include and informational points you wish to convey to the reader.
- 4. Focus on the take home message.** If you are writing a meeting preview or an “after meeting” summary article, ask yourself what makes/made the meeting unique? What are you proud to have included in the program? What are the themes and learning points that you want readers to understand? What would make the reader want to attend this meeting? *Be specific.* Avoid superlatives and generalizations. Highlighting special programs or guest speakers is also encouraged. If you wish to acknowledge an array of speakers or

collaborators, consider listing them in a table instead of as plain text within the narrative.

- 5. Pay close attention to form and grammar.** If you haven’t written in a long time, go back to basics. Review the structure of a traditional essay and start with an outline. Begin with an introduction, thesis statement, several paragraphs of content, and then strong conclusion. Be consistent with your choice of grammar and style. (Innumerable writing resources are available online by searching the key word *essay*.)
- 6. Maintain a professional tone.** Stay on topic; keep chatter to a minimum. *Forum* is the voice of SGIM. While a collegial tone is encouraged, inside jokes or personal comments may be omitted at the discretion of the editor(s).
- 7. Get an editing buddy.** (Spouses, graduate students, or high school juniors are great resources here!) Read, review, revise. Have you provided the clarity necessary for a reader new to your topic?
- 8. Share your passion for the work you do.** Don’t be afraid of a little healthy self-promotion. Take pride in your work and your SGIM family will share your pride as well.