Royal College of Nursing’s Annual International Nursing Research Conference

The Royal College of Nursing’s annual international nursing research conference has gone from strength to strength in recent years, attracting around 400 delegates. The event is organised under the auspices of the RCN Research Society, in partnership with their appointed RCN events manager and the RCN R&D Co-ordinating Centre. Now an annual international event, there is a slow but steady increase in the number of international delegates. The principal aim of the conference is to share the best in nursing and health care research. It is always an excellent networking opportunity. A secondary aim is to nurture and support the next generation of researchers.

The conference programme includes a rich mix presentations from a range of disciplines dealing with research and research related issues on a wide range of topics. Top of the bill are invited plenary speakers. There are also a wide range of peer reviewed poster presentations, oral presentations as individual papers or as a collective within a symposium and workshops. In addition, the conference incorporates a vibrant range of fringe activities.

Every year a scientific committee is formed under the current Chair, who is appointed by the Research Society steering committee and usually has a three-year term of office. The scientific committee consists of members of the steering committee, the local organising committee, as well as other co-opted members who represent clinical and academic research. This committee is charged with the responsibility of putting the scientific programme together, and of ensuring the quality and integrity of that programme. In support of the scientific committee, a wider group of researchers are invited to join them in an International Scientific Advisory Panel (ISAP). Details of the membership of all the conference committees can be found on the conference websites (see for example www.man.ac.uk/rcn/research2003).

So what happens to an abstract once it has been submitted? All abstracts are peer reviewed. Just as potential presenters are asked to identify key words from a predetermined list when submitting their abstract, so too are reviewers requested to identify their areas of expertise from this same list. This ensures abstracts are allocated for review on the basis of the reviewers’ expertise. For
concurrent and poster presentations three members of the ISAP separately review each abstract ‘blind’. Each abstract is assessed against the ‘criteria for abstract selection’ which are clearly identified in the call for abstracts and on the online submission form. Where the three reviewers are in accord then the scientific committee accepts that decision. However, where there is disagreement amongst the ISAP, then the abstract will be further reviewed by members of the scientific committee, before a final judgement is made.

In addition to matching the criteria required for a concurrent paper or a poster presentation, individuals wishing to lead either a symposium or a workshop are required to supply a curriculum vitae in support of their abstract in order to demonstrate their competence. For this reason these abstracts are not reviewed blind.

The impression of the scientific committee is that each year the quality of abstracts submitted to the conference has improved. There are two main reasons why an abstract is rejected. The first is when the abstract does not meet the ‘criteria for abstract selection’ discussed above. The second is where the abstract has been aimed at the wrong conference. This year a small number of abstracts fell into the latter category. The abstract was well constructed however it failed the acid test – it was not research. So for example improvements in service delivery may be better placed with in a conference on quality assurance, or an innovation in education delivery may be better placed within a nurse education conference.

We hope that this review of the selection process is reassuring. The process is rigorous, and each and every abstract is treated equally and with the utmost respect. Our aim is to ensure quality and yet to be as inclusive as possible. However, wherever humans are involved the process will occasionally get it wrong… If you are unsuccessful this year please, please try again.

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Issues in research


Electronic references

- For CD ROM references, retrieval information should include the source of the information, the name of the database, the title of the CD-ROM (with release date), and the item no, if applicable.
- For on-line database references retrieval information should include the date of retrieval (month, day, year); the source of the information; the name of the database; and the item no, if applicable.
- World Wide Web sources should include the date of retrieval (month, day, year); the source of the information i.e. name of database, the item no if applicable, the URL of the website used, together with page number(s) if applicable. For example: Nursing & Midwifery Council (2002). Supporting nurses and midwives through lifelong learning. NME. Retrieved July 6, 2002, from the World Wide Web: http://www.nmc-uk.org/cms/content/Publications/lifelong.pdf

Keywords

Authors should provide between one and six key words that describe the article’s subject matter.

All submitted manuscripts must include the following

Name of author(s), qualifications, post title and name of organisation, address for correspondence, email address, daytime telephone and fax numbers.

The review process

All submitted papers are assessed in the first instance by the editor for their suitability. If a paper is deemed suitable, a process of double-blind review is undertaken with external reviewer(s). Based on the recommendation of reviewer(s), the editor makes the final decision in relation to acceptance, revision or rejection of the article. Authors may be asked to revise the content of their article in line with reviewer(s) comments. If accepted manuscripts will be prepared for publication, which may involve editing or shortening the article. Shortly before publication, the lead author will normally receive a copy of the article as it is intended to appear in the journal. Only minor amendments can be accepted at this stage. The editor reserves the right to edit accepted manuscripts.

Sending material for consideration:

Manuscripts or book reviews should be sent as an email attachment to:
Dr Paula Roberts, editor, Nurse Researcher at helen.hyland@rcn.org.uk
Or by post (please submit two copies) to:
Dr Paula Roberts, editor, Nurse Researcher, 17-19 Peterborough Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 2AX