

## MRS Narratives Frequently Asked Questions

### What is narrative writing in healthcare?

Healthcare narrative writing is the reflective writing of healthcare professionals, patients, carers and others with experiences of healthcare. In the last few years narrative writing, particularly in medicine, is being used in education to elicit an emotional or affective response, to develop critical thinking and to gain perspective on the individuals' experiences with life and illness. These pieces can be fiction or nonfiction in nature.

A number of healthcare journals also publish patient and/or healthcare professional narrative writing, either dedicated ones like [Intima](#) or more mainstream journals (e.g. [JAMA](#)). However, the dominant voice in most journals is still healthcare professionals and not the patient.

### What about other forms of expression?

As well as writing, other journals accept poetry, art pieces, graphic novels and multimedia.

### Where do JMIRS submissions come from?

Currently we solicit many of our MRS narratives from patients and healthcare professionals. We often work with authors to revise written submissions as needed for clarity, structure, and focus. Many of our authors already have a background in writing.

### What criteria does JMIRS have for submission

For the author guidelines please see the JMIRS author guidelines [here](#). Although we have called these "narratives" we are also open to non print-based formats such as poems, photographic essays or artwork. Artwork for the print version of the journal should be black and white only.

### What criteria does JMIRS have for reviewers?

Reviewing a narrative submission involves both your heart and your mind! You are looking for the usual expectations for JMIRS written submissions such as research papers. These might be the use of clear grammar, a lack of spelling mistakes and a logical flow. Additional considerations for narrative submissions include:

- Is it something related to an aspect of medical radiation sciences, including patients, families, health care leaders, policy makers, and medical radiation science professionals.
- Where relevant, is it organized with a logical flow?
- Does the submission have literary or artistic merit? (See below!)
- Is it written or produced in a way that will engage the reader?
- Is there evidence that the ethical implications of the submission have been considered?
- Where relevant, does it use appropriate and current medical imaging terminology?
- Is the main idea apparent?

- Does the title accurately and concisely reflect the theme or purpose of the piece?
- Does the piece provide context (if applicable)?
- Are there any “lessons learned” that should be highlighted? If so, do they mention implications of results for practice or future research?
- Is there risk of misinterpretation?
- Would this piece benefit from further explanation?

Submissions that meet our needs undergo review by the JMIRS Narratives Sub-Committee (composed of expert editorial board members). Final decisions to accept, revise or reject are made by consensus of a minimum of three committee members (including our patient partner). External expert reviewers will be consulted if needed (e.g. for art submissions)

### **What is meant by “literary or artistic merit”?**

We are looking for submissions that will resonate with readers and that are engaging and interesting to read. The writing can be reflective, observational, humorous and the stories may “tell engaging stories, remind us of virtues, or help define the standards and norms of our professional culture.” (Steensam, 2011)

For written submissions we concur with the American Journal of Nursing’s [author guidelines](#) for their “Reflections” submissions which state:

“Good writing is the main requirement ... Avoid generalizations and clichés in favor of specific details and real immersion in a place, an event, a moment, a character. Anecdotes meant to illustrate cozy lessons usually aren't what we're looking for; we prefer the messiness and ambivalence of real life, the nuance and uncertainty of many of our hardest decisions, the ways we change our minds about things.”

Artist merit is the perceived value or quality of a piece of art. This is obviously subjective, but we can also ask ourselves if the art is visually, intellectually and/or emotionally engaging.

### **What has JMIRS published in the past?**

Here are the past works that have been published since the MRS Narratives format was originated:

[MRS narratives collection](#) (includes poetry, a photo essay, a blog and more)

### **Reference:**

David P. Steensma. [Art of Oncology: New Voices Wanted](#). Journal of Clinical Oncology 2011 29:25, 3343-3344