

The Ethics of Writing about Practice

Reading & Resources –

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Journal Submission Guidelines - Patient Confidentiality (some examples)

Note: This is a partial list to provide examples of publishing guidelines. Please check individual websites for up-to-date information.

[Pulse: Voices from the Heart of Medicine](#), Montefiore Medical Center and Albert Einstein College of Medicine:

“Does your piece describe a patient? *Pulse—voices from the heart of medicine* is committed to protecting a patient’s right to privacy. Ideally, you will obtain written permission from any patient you write about; as an alternative, you must change his or her name and omit or alter other identifying characteristics. A reader should not be able to pinpoint a neighbor, friend or family member as the subject of your writing.”

[The Intima: A Journal of Narrative Medicine](#), Columbia University Program of Narrative Medicine:

“Patient Privacy Notice - *Intima* adheres to legal and ethical guidelines in accordance with academic and health community publication standards. As clinicians, patients, and family members, we feel strongly that patient privacy and confidentiality should be maintained at all times. We simultaneously recognize that narrative power depends on intimate, singular encounters and the sharing of personal accounts in a respectful and safe environment. To maintain these standards, contributors should review the confidentiality guidelines in the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), with particular attention to the 18 commonly accepted “unique identifiers.” We also encourage contributors to seek permission before submitting patient stories, and to fictionalize or change identifiable information whenever possible and appropriate to maintain patient confidentiality and privacy. Please contact editor@theintima.org with any further questions or concerns.”

[Canadian Medical Association Journal](#) (CMAJ) *Humanities – Encounters*

Narratives written by patients and health care practitioners commenting on their experience of illness or medicine; personal, professional encounters with a sense of immediacy and realism. Encounters are nonfiction narrative descriptions of health care experiences written by patients, clinicians, and other caregivers. We encourage authors to reflect on their experience of health care and especially value contributions that

convey personal and professional encounters with a sense of immediacy and realism. The writing should be candid but must respect patient and colleague confidentiality in the clinical context. Signed releases must be obtained from all people who may potentially self-identify.

[Canadian Family Physician](#) (Blog)

If a patient is described in a blog we will need their consent unless the patient is deceased or anonymized. Please go to the link for our patient consent form.

[Journal of American Medical Association \(JAMA\) - A Piece of My Mind](#)

Most essays published in A Piece of My Mind are personal vignettes (e.g., exploring the dynamics of the patient-physician relationship) taken from wide-ranging experiences in medicine; occasional pieces express views and opinions on the myriad issues that affect the profession. If the patient(s) described in these manuscripts is identifiable, a [Patient Permission form](#), which provides consent for publication, must be completed and signed by the patient(s) or family member(s) and submitted with the manuscript. Manuscripts that describe identifiable patients that do not have a signed form will not be reviewed. Omitting data or making data less specific to deidentify patients is acceptable, but changing any such data is not acceptable. Fictional or composite accounts are not permitted.

[American Journal of Nursing](#), Reflections (personal narratives):

“Please use fictional names for all persons and institutions in your story. Locations may also have to be disguised.”

[The Healing Muse](#)

The privacy of patients and clients of health care practitioners should be protected. Physicians and health care practitioners who write about their patients must alter identifying details and characteristics.

[Reflections – Narratives of Professional Helping](#) (Cleveland School of Social Work)

That the author(s) have taken care to ensure that the article does not contain any identifiable information about clients or patients except as pursuant to appropriate permissions and forms of informed consent as provided for in all relevant laws and codes of ethics.



Hektoen International: A Journal of Medical Humanities

Our confidentiality policy is based on the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). Please refer to this document if you have any questions: <https://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/>. Authors/artists should protect the confidentiality of all persons and not reveal personal details without their consent.

The Pegasus Review

The Pegasus Review honors legal and ethical standards in line with medical and academic journals. All contributions must adhere to the confidentiality guidelines in the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the requirements of the Privacy Rule.