



Champions Writing For Change Workshop 2.0

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Amy Markowitz, JD

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Why You?

The byline as credibility; with a
twist

Amy Markowitz, JD

Purpose/Format

- Short, spoken statement (30 second mini-abstract)
- Establishes
 - **Who** you are
 - **Why** you are an authority
 - **What** you are looking for
- Useful for pitching

Who are you?***

- My name is _____ . I am a(n) _____

(Tip - This can be your actual job title or a descriptive term for your occupation. Examples include community clinician, biologist, research scientist, microbiologist, biochemist, etc.)

- Specializing in _____ .

(Tip - A short phrase that makes your title or occupation more specific)

***This is **NOT** an existential question...

What Do You Do Well?

- *What you do:*

(Tip - Write a single sentence that describes what you do and establishes your expertise; gives weight to your words: "I work with... and use innovative techniques to ..." Be specific so that people can really picture what you mean.)

- *Why you're the best, unique, talented; or what you do especially well (skills):*

(Tip - Write a sentence that expresses your particular strength(s): "My practice style and collaboration with other clinicians allows me to ..." Provide a concrete example of something that sets you apart from others in your field.)

What Are You Looking For?*

- *Contributions (value added) you are seeking to make; what is your call to action:*

(Tip - How does the paradigm shift you are writing about or the policy position you are promoting result in better public health?:
"Congress, the Assembly, Berkeley DPH should continue research to discover new ..., make breakthroughs in ..., provide results that can lead to cures for ...; "You should vote in favor of Prop. XYZ..."
)

* Existentialists need not apply...

Vanessa's Byline

○ For Opinion piece

My name is Dr. Vanessa Grubbs. I am an Assistant Professor of Nephrology at UCSF. When I was a primary care doctor I donated a kidney, which inspired me to go on to complete a nephrology fellowship. Pharmaceutical and insurance companies should stop policies that undermine kidney transplant patients' ability to take care of their transplants.

○ For Book

My name is Dr. Vanessa Grubbs. I am an Assistant Professor of Nephrology at UCSF. For the last 6 years, I have cared for patients with advanced chronic kidney disease and those on dialysis. I have a special clinical and research interest in renal palliative care and have written and spoken in national forums on this topic. Doctors, patients, and families should engage in rational and shared decision making around end-stage kidney disease rather than only starting or continuing dialysis because we can.

Now Let's Change It Up

1. Grab attention within the first 15 seconds. Don't start with a description of your role and site; instead, start with your sense of purpose, stated in a way that draws the other person in.

NOT: "I am a general internist, and I have worked at SFGH for 20 years."

INSTEAD: "Have you ever been misdiagnosed by a doctor? Well, my team has a plan to stamp out diagnostic errors."

2. Appeal to the head and the heart; to the purse strings as well as the purpose.

3. Tell a memorable story about how you decided to make this your life's work or a story that illustrates why you are so excited about this work.

4. Engage the other person in the conversation to get them excited—find a way to make your work/passion relevant to their interests.

From the UCSF SOM Leadership Retreat 2016

Vanessa's Byline with a twist

- For Book (true passion)

Ever notice that everyone thinks dialysis will only extend the lives of patients with end-stage kidney disease? My work focuses on teaching doctors, patients, and families that for some people with end-stage kidney disease, dialysis might not necessarily prolong life but could actually decrease the quality of life.

How to Get the Writing Done

Amy Markowitz, JD

Create the “Write” Environment

- Review your schedule for blocks of available pre-writing and writing time
- Once identified – protect your writing time
- Divide the work of writing into aliquots or tasks
 - Ensures efficiency
 - Prevents needless wheel-spinning
- No need for an uninterrupted 6-hour stretch in an isolation tank to get started.
- Turn off your phone and Internet connectivity
- Enlist a writing partner to share the fun/pain, much like having a running partner?



Begin Before the Beginning

*These are 30-60 minute tasks

- Scribble or type a list of topics, themes, ideas, conclusions, in any order
- Harvest your ideas, and then winnow them: some will go to the discard pile, but some will be saved in your “Good Ideas for Another Day” file
- Note relevant references for background and context
- Work for about 15 minutes and then **reward yourself** with a latte, a run, or a quick peek at the Daily Show



Put on the Sorting Hat

*These are 30-60 minute tasks

- Insert fragments from the scribbled list into the scaffolding sections, eg, Intro/Background? Result? Discussion?
- Pen a meaningful topic sentence for the fragments. *Note:* meaningful means an original idea that sets up the issue to be discussed in that section or paragraph
- Fill in the space under the topic sentences by moving entries around, and by adding entries from the scribbled list
- Pull out your Reference Library and troll around

Nuts & Bolts of Getting a Piece Published: How to Pitch

Vanessa Grubbs, MD, MPH

The OpEd Project

<http://www.theopedproject.org>

The Effective Email Pitch

- Why now? What's the news hook? Why is this worth reading at the moment?
- So what? Why should people care?
- Why me? Why am I the best one to write this piece?



What Else to Include

- Your idea in a few lines
- Your relevant credentials
- The finished piece pasted below your pitch
- Your contact information

Aspects of a Successful Pitch

- Timely
- Well-written
- Brief and clear
- Conveys expertise
- Unexpected point of view

If the Editor Responds

- Thank the editor, even if they said “no.” (“No” can be the beginning of a conversation that eventually leads to “yes.”)
- If the answer is “no,” try to find out
 - what would have made your piece more valuable
 - whether there are other ideas they would be interested in hearing from you on in the future
- If they published you, thank them not for showcasing you but for giving space to the ideas and issues

If There is No Response

- Breathe—Even the best/most experienced receive rejections constantly
- Have a time limit
 - Short shelf life (e.g., tied to breaking news or a news hook good for a few days)—give editor $\leq 24 - 48$ hours to respond
 - Evergreen (e.g., tied to a holiday a month away)?—give editor 1-2 weeks to respond
- Send a follow-up email to editor

I would still like to run my piece in your publication, but since the piece is timely, if I don't hear from you by the end of the (day, week) I will assume that you have passed and I'll submit my op-ed elsewhere.

Note: Most national newspapers will not consider your piece if you submit to more than one paper at the same time.

Where to Submit

- Aim high, but...
- Major outlets (*The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*) are very selective
- Consider where your ideas will be of greatest contribution and greatest odds of being published
 - Smaller/local publication
 - Industry publication specializing in topic
 - Creating a track record of success here can eventually increase odds at larger outlets
- Have a Plan B, C, and D ready
- Go to http://www.theopedproject.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=47&Itemid=65
 - More than 100 outlets
 - Detailed instructions and circulation