A report by the Institute of Medicine, “The Future of Nursing,” called for a doubling of the 28,369 doctorally prepared nurses in 2008 to 2020.1 Although this goal was achieved, it was done primarily through the expansion of Doctor of Nursing Practice programs in the United States. In 2019, the number of nurses graduating with a practice-focused doctorate (Doctor of Nursing Practice) was more than 9 times higher than the number of nurses graduating with a research-focused doctorate (Doctor of Philosophy): 12,250 graduates vs 1,306 graduates, respectively.2 Given the number of nurses seeking a doctoral degree, it is important for emergency nurses to consider the meaningful aspects of the research doctorate. In this guest editorial, I relay my own career trajectory in terms of obtaining a writing mentor and writing about what you know.

My career trajectory as a nurse scientist began in 2001 when I was selected by the American Journal of Nursing (AJN) to become a writing fellow. This program, which was cosponsored by industry, the AJN, and the Emergency Nurses Association (ENA), partnered me with a clinical nurse specialist and trauma coordinator to serve as my writing mentor. The most extensive writing I had done at this point was writing class papers. She helped me reflect on my clinical experience as an emergency nurse to identify a topic in which I had some level of expertise; I chose diabetic ketoacidosis. From there, she provided extensive mentorship on the writing process, editing, and using primary references. My manuscript was accepted for a special issue of the AJN.3 The ENA, in collaboration with the industry sponsor, paid for my travel to ENA’s annual conference in New Orleans in 2002. During this conference, the ENA hosted a reception where I met Mary Jagim, ENA’s immediate past president. Jagim instructed me to keep writing about topics I knew to influence the specialty of emergency nursing; this conversation left a lasting impression on me. Since then, I have engaged with countless ENA members, Academy of Emergency Nursing Fellows, and ENA state and chapter leaders who have supported the career development and leadership aspirations of their fellow ENA members. Key takeaway points that I garnered from these experiences were the importance of obtaining a writing mentor and writing about what you know.

It would be 4 more years until I served as an author on another peer-reviewed manuscript. While matriculating in the Doctor of Philosophy program, several faculty members provided mentorship in both writing and the conduct of research. Although I recognized the importance of writing what I know about, I didn’t yet recognize the importance of having passion for what you write about. During my initial semester in the doctoral program, I switched my research focus multiple times, initially addressing the problem of frequent use of the emergency department by homeless adults and then onto substance abuse, then police interventions, and so on. It wasn’t until the week before spring break in 2006 that I met my next mentor and future dissertation chair. We had a short conversation about the problem of assaults against emergency department workers. Although I had been physically assaulted dozens and dozens of times, I never thought of this violence as a “problem.” During spring break, I drafted a manuscript focused on workplace violence against emergency nurses. This manuscript written over 1 week received minimal edits from my course instructors, and the article became the second publication that I had as a first author.4 Because I had...
passion for my topic, my writing was more effective, told a good “story,” and required much less effort than writing about something I knew but on a topic about which I was less passionate.

In fall 2007, a program officer from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health attended a local conference where I presented my dissertation findings. She informed my dissertation chair and me that we should write a grant application using the findings from our respective projects as pilot data for an upcoming funding opportunity announcement. My grant application was approved in 2008 as I started my new role as an assistant professor at a college of nursing. From there, I had a defined research focus to serve as the foundation for my trajectory. In addition, I now had a formal writing and research mentor as well as a research topic engulfed with my passion.

As my reputation as a workplace violence nurse scientist and academic faculty member grew, Dr Paula Grubb from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health contacted me about the problem of bullying against novice nurses. As a research psychologist, Grubb had become aware of this problem and was seeking a collaborator to begin developing educational interventions to prevent and mitigate the psychological consequences for novice nurses who experienced workplace bullying. Beginning in 2011, Grubb and I began our partnership to address workplace bullying against nurses. From 2011 through 2018, we developed a series of active learning interventions, including role-play simulations, case studies, and debriefing tools that were ultimately deployed at 8 universities and several hospital systems across the US.5-7

In 2012, I applied to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Nurse Faculty Scholars program. I was selected as 1 of 12 scholars that year and received research mentorship, leadership development training, and career coaching from several nurse leaders such as Dr Beverly Malone, chief executive officer of the National League for Nursing. Several peers in this program emphasized the importance of selecting the “right” journal to disseminate research findings in. Typically, the choice of the right journal is based on the journal’s Clarivate impact factor score (Clarivate Analytics), a measure of how frequently a published article would be cited after publication.8 Other factors for selecting a journal are the scientific rigor, editorial quality, peer-review process, reputation, and indexing status of the journal.9 For me, I target my paper submissions on the basis of the journal’s readership. For example, I purposefully submitted my papers to journals whose readers could use my research findings and implications to transform the emergency care environment to promote a violence-free work environment (eg, Journal of Emergency Nursing, Journal of Hospital Administration). Because I focused on the target audience of journals, I am now routinely contacted to provide consultations and lectures on building a safer work environment.

Although my research trajectory has been rewarding, my success was based on leveraging the support from, and talents of, multiple others, including past and present mentors across multiple professions (eg, psychology, victimology, public health, nursing). Through the coaching of this mentoring network, I learned to increase the breadth of my research skills. For example, in 2012, I served as the chair for the National Conference on Workplace Violence in Healthcare Settings. One of my mentors, Dr Bonnie Fisher, encouraged me to coordinate a special issue of a journal to report the best papers presented at the conference. In 2014, various conference proceedings were published in a special issue of Work: A Journal of Prevention, Assessment & Rehabilitation.10 From this experience, I learned to manage a large team and coordinate a large project. Dr Corinne Peek-Asa coached me on conducting environmental assessments to determine risk for violence. Dr Rosa Maria Gonzalez-Guarda stressed the value of using community advisory boards,11 which I now use and encourage my students to use as well.12 Dr Treasa “Susie” Leming-Lee taught me quality improvement science and how to use it legitimately within my research focus area.13,14 I received this mentoring over the course of years, with each experience expanding my skill set to allow me to conduct more rigorous research.

These mentoring relationships led to my roles as an ENA Board Director and Associate Dean for Research. During the RWJF Nurse Faculty Scholars program, Dr Malone served as 1 of my formal mentors. She encouraged me to use the leadership development training that the RWJF program was providing as a leader within the ENA. With her encouragement, I ran for the ENA Board of Directors 3 consecutive years and was elected as a director with a term starting in 2018, the same year that I was formally appointed as the Associate Dean for Research at the University of Cincinnati College of Nursing. As a director, I used my skills as an emergency nurse scientist while governing. For example, 1 of the duties of a board member is the “duty of care,” which requires decisions to be evidence-based and made after thoughtful debate.15 While serving on the ENA Board of Directors, I participated with fellow board members in professional development on board governance, conflict-of-interest management, effective communications, strategic planning, member accountability, media training, and how to lead during a crisis. I leveraged this professional development to be a more effective Associate Dean for
Research where my responsibilities include fostering an inclusive work environment, setting the research strategic direction and benchmarks in collaboration with the faculty, communicating expectations for job performance, and participating in budget management.

During my career, I learned that a hallmark of a great research trajectory is not merely one’s personal accomplishments, but also the accomplishments of those being mentored. I strive to model the best of the mentoring I received to my colleagues and students. Partly why I was able to be successful was because my mentors had me use an individual development plan⁷; therefore, I now leverage this tool to help my students and faculty members develop short- and long-term goals that will promote a rewarding research trajectory. A component of this tool includes specific goals for manuscript dissemination. Many of my mentees do ultimately publish their research, which has resulted in their collectively having more than 40 articles published in peer-reviewed journals. As I sought for additional ways to “pay it forward” in terms of the mentoring I received over the years, I partnered with Drs Maja Djukic and Cheryl Woods Giscombé to develop a writing mentorship award program with the AJN¹⁷ which has been awarded annually since 2016. This program provides acknowledgment and conference travel support to a new author selected for having published the best paper of the year in which the first author was mentored by another author on the publication.

**Key Takeaways**

The purpose of this guest editorial was not to be self-flattering but to describe my research trajectory with examples that could be replicated by others. I have highlighted several successes that I have achieved during my career, but I have also experienced many failures and sidesteps. From both my successes and failures, I learned 5 key lessons that I believe can be used by others embarking on their research trajectory:

1. Seek writing and research mentors.
2. Write about what you know and have passion for.
3. Be purposeful regarding where you submit your research-based papers.
4. Develop a mentoring network to address multiple career aspects.
5. Pay it forward by mentoring others.

**REFERENCES**