

# WWMD?

**What Would Mac Do?****Vol. 2**

*Dear Mac, I'm a surgeon in your Department who struggles with the written aspects of research. I'm passionate about surgical evidence and enthusiastic about pushing practice forward, but properly structuring a research paper is a recurring challenge for me. What can I do to improve my skills? And how do I go about it?*

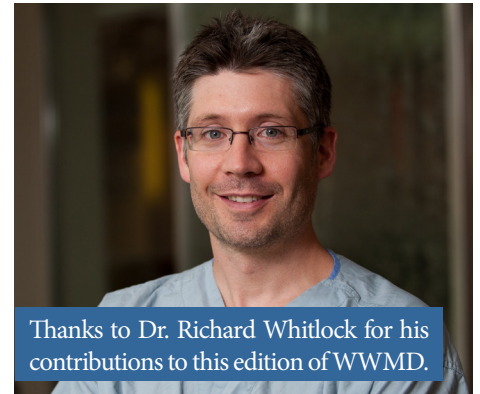
**T**his edition of WWMD might be better titled "WWWD," as in "What Would Whitlock Do?" That's because Dr. Richard Whitlock, from the Division of Cardiac Surgery, recently came to me with a solution to your writing problem.

Alongside Dr. Emilie Belley-Cote, Dr. Whitlock has spent the past few years growing a peer mentorship research group that humourously called itself "MiNION," which expands to "McMaster Interdisciplinary Investigative Outcomes Node." The group, which is comprised of healthcare professionals specializing in cardiac sci-

ences, intensive care, and anesthesia, leans heavily on the participation of students and trainees looking to build a research portfolio. As such, the MiNION group has a lot of hands on deck, which allows them to churn out a remarkably high volume of papers — they have about 26 trainees right now, ranging from recent high school grads to trained physicians pursuing graduate degrees. Because of this, extensive revising or re-writing was not a realistic option for Drs. Whitlock and Belley-Cote, so they needed to ensure that the papers they were receiving were as well-written as possible.

That's when Dr. Belley-Cote found a scientific writing course online and investigated. She recommended it to Dr. Whitlock as a solution to their team's writing woes, citing the strides it helped her take as a writer as a reason for optimism. Dr. Whitlock agreed to take the course himself, and he, too, acknowledged how useful the information being taught might be to the MINION group. He had his group take the course as Dr. Belley-Cote suggested, and, since then, they've been achieving both a higher quality and a higher quantity of papers.

The course is called "Writing in the Sciences," and is offered through Stanford University. It's an online course, and will cost you the low, low price of zero dollars to enroll. According to Stanford Online, Writing in the Sciences, as the course is formally ti-



Thanks to Dr. Richard Whitlock for his contributions to this edition of WWMD.

tled, "teaches scientists to become more effective writers, using practical examples and exercises." Course topics include principles of good writing, tricks for writing faster and with less anxiety, the format of a scientific manuscript, and issues in publication and peer review. In other words, it's an all-encompassing course that will help you refine every area of your writing.

"It's a very easy course, and yet there's still something to learn, regardless what level of a writer you are," Dr. Whitlock says.

To enroll in the course, simply visit [Surgery.McMaster.ca/StanfordWritingCourse](http://Surgery.McMaster.ca/StanfordWritingCourse). Follow the simple enrollment steps, and you'll be well on your way to improving your academic writing skills!

*Want your questions answered? Email your queries to [cturner@mcmaster.ca](mailto:cturner@mcmaster.ca).*

## Meet Mac.

For those who don't know, Mac is a new Department recruit who's here to help you with the many hard-to-answer questions that come with being a surgeon. From operating room specifics to admin duties and management, there's no topic too tricky for our in-house surgical expert. The next time you're feeling stressed, anxious, overwhelmed, or generally confused, ask yourself, "What Would Mac Do?"

