

## Results of the AMWA-DVC Member Benefit Survey September, 2005

### Question #1: What is your primary job function?

	Survey responders (N=84)		DVC members (N=906)	
	n	%	n	%
Administration/Management	4	5	24	3
Freelance Writing/Editing	34	40	124	14
Pharmaceutical	12	14	328	36
Public relations, advertising, marketing	4	5	24	3
Teaching/Education	2	2	22	2
Translating	0		4	<1
Research	2	2	21	2
Writing/Editing	26	31	317	35
Web/Multimedia	—		11	1
Skipped question/ Not recorded	0		31	3

Note: National does not discriminate between freelance editing and freelance writing. Some categories of survey responses were combined to corresponded with newer function categories used by national.

A higher percentage of the freelance category responded (40% vs. 14%), and a lower percentage of pharmaceutical (14% vs. 36%) relative to DVC membership.

### Question #2: How long have you worked in the field of medical writing?

Time, (y)	Survey responders (N=81)		DVC members (N=906)	
	n	%	n	%
less than 1, (n, %)	4	5	210	23
1 to less than 3, (n, %)	11	14	273	30
3 to less than 5, (n, %)	5	6	106	12
5 to less than 7, (n, %)	12	15	83	9
7 or more, (n, %)	49	60	234	26
Skipped question/Not recorded, (n, %)	3	4	0	
Descriptive statistic, (y)				
Mean (SD)	—		4.8 (6.4)	
Range	—		0 to 51	
Median	—		2	
Mode	—		less than 1	

The survey respondents are considerably more experienced than the overall DVC membership. Sixty percent of survey responders have at least 7 years experience in the field of medical writing whereas approximately 53% of the DVC membership has less than 3 years of experience.

**Question #3: If you are currently working, does your income from:**

	Survey responders (N=74)	
	n	%
Employment only	39	47
Mostly employment	4	5
Mostly freelance	6	7
Freelance only	31	37
Other	3	4
Skipped question	1	

Note: 124 (14%) DVC members identify their primary job function as freelance; 142 (16%) identify their secondary job function as freelance.

Approximately 37% of survey respondents are self-employed (freelance only) versus 14% of the overall DVC membership. Approximately 34% of DVC members selected freelance as their primary or secondary job function.

**Question #4: Have you used our listserv AMWA-DVC Announce to:**

	n	%
I have looked for work	23	28
I have applied for or found work through AMWA-DVC Announce	12	16
Skipped question	0	

Note: 123 (14%) DVC members subscribe to AMWA-DVC Announce.

**Question #5: Among the most useful resources I use in medical writing are:**

	N	1, most useful		2		3		4		5		avg score
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Free internet sites	68	30	41	21	29	9	12	11	15	2	3	2.10
Electronic databases	71	29	41	19	27	12	17	8	11	3	4	2.11
Electronic textbooks/ references	73	14	20	20	29	19	28	11	16	5	7	2.61
Electronic dictionaries	69	3	4	8	11	27	39	21	30	11	16	3.41
Newsletter subscriptions	70	2	3	4	6	5	7	14	21	43	63	4.35

**Question #6: I have used the following resources:**

	N	Yes		No		No familiarity	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
OVID	79	48	61	12	15	19	24
Science Direct	82	36	44	25	30	21	26
MD Consult	80	34	42	26	32	20	25
Lexis/Nexis	79	22	28	35	44	22	28
Dialog	80	12	15	36	45	32	40

**Question #7: What other electronic resources have you used or seriously considered? Briefly comment on each, if you wish.**

	n	%	Comments
Search engines	23	61	PubMed (10), Medline (8), NLM (2), IngentaConnect (2), ISI Web of Knowledge
Databases	13	34	EBSCO Host (2), Embase (2), PsychInfo (2), HealthStar, CINAHL, BioMed Central, NDA Pipeline
Publishers	8	21	Blackwell Publishing (2), Blackwell Synergy, SpringerLink (2), Ashley Publications, MetaPress, Merck Manual
Government sites	7	18	NIH, Federal agency databases (not specified), clintrials.gov, cms.hhs.gov, fda.gov, Federal Register
PDR	6	16	
e-journals	5	13	NEJM only specific journal cited
Sources for full text articles	4	11	OVID (1 not fond of OVID), PsycARTICLES/Proquest, Google Scholar
Physician associations	3	8	AMA physician finder; Am Acad Family Phy
Dictionaries	3	8	Stedmans (2) and Am Heritage Book of English Usage
News services	3	8	Eureka Alert, newswise.com, News Edge
Other web sites	13	34	WebMD.com (2), medscape.com (2), drug.com, pharmlive.com, statehealthfacts.org, kff.org, umm.edu/altmed, STN for patent searches, micromedix.com, google.com, emedicine.com
Other association or organization web sites	4	11	diabetes.org, Hep B foundation
Other	4	11	NGC, industry sites (not specified), none, unaware of others

Note: Of 38 respondents, many identified more than one resource.

**Questions #8 and #10: If the chapter were to expand member benefits, the benefits I would like to have would be in the following areas:**

	First choice (N=83)		Other choices (N=64)	
	n	%	n	%
More resources for medical writers	41	49	25	39
Insurance	16	19	14	22
Discount programs	11	13	25	39
More web content	9	11	19	30
Other	6	7	4	6

Note: Of 83 respondents, 51 provided specific comment concerning their first choice, 29 concerning their second choice.

Answers for other were: for first choice, meetings that can be reached without an automobile, reduced registration fees for chapter events, more events in Pa, more resources for medical editors, sources for freelance work, tax consulting for freelancers, better programming/conferences/workshops; for other choices, localized small networking events, more accessible continuing ed, easy access to full text, online training.

**Questions #9 and #11: If you selected an area in which you would most like to have an additional benefit, please be more specific here.**

	First choice (N=51)		Other choices (N=29)	
	n	%	n	%
Online access	37	73	12	41
Journal article access	12	24	9 <sup>a</sup>	31
Subscriptions to databases <sup>b</sup>	10	20	3 <sup>a,c</sup>	10
Reference/text book access	5	10	0	
Online resources (unspecified)	3	6	0	
Insurance	19	37	4	14
Medical	11	22	2	7
Life	3	6	0	
Dental	2	4	0	
Long term care	1	2	0	
Disability	1	2	0	
Errors and omissions	1	2	0	
Unspecified	1	2	2	7
Chapter events	3	6	1	3
Reduced fees	2	4	0	
More events in Pa (Sat preferred)	1	2	0	
More frequent events (local, smaller)	0		1	3
Travel discounts (hotels and airlines)	3	6	0	
Accessible continuing education	0		2	7
Editing course (local and inexpensive)			1	3
Remote offerings, e.g., by WebEx			1	3
Freelance clearing house/help finding work	2	4	1	3
Office supplies	1	2	0	
Other aids for writers	4	8		
Chat room	1	2	0	
Trends in publishing	1	2	0	
Links to writing sites or resources	1	2	1	3
Sources for searching	1	2	0	
Investment club	1	2	0	
Anything or don't know	1	2	1	3
Speaker comments at meetings	0		1	3
Templates for regulatory documents	0		1	3
Unspecified discounts	0		2	7

<sup>a</sup> One specifically wants this for free

<sup>b</sup> MD Consult (2), Dialog, unspecified; one person wants access to an individual who will perform literature searches

<sup>c</sup> OVID, MD Consult, PDR, spell checker

**Question #12: The people who, if they could be made available to me, would be the most benefit in helping me with a medical writing issue are:**

Individual names were sought.

**Question #13: With respect to our listserv AMWA-DVC Freelance (our give-and-take listserv on freelancing)**

	N	n	%
I have subscribed in the past	74	15	20
I am a current subscriber	78	24	31
Skipped question	2		

Note: 103 (11%) DVC members subscribe to AMWA-DVC Freelance; almost all also subscribe to AMWA-DVC Announce.

**Question #14: Do you consider yourself an attender of DVC chapter meetings?**

	n	%
Yes	27	33
No	55	67
Skipped question	2	

Approximately 30 to 50 people attend each chapter meeting in Pennsylvania and 30 to 50 in New Jersey. Some people are able to attend meetings in both states.

**Question #15: If you do not consider yourself an attender of chapter meetings, why not?**

Reasons relating to:	n	%
Work or personal schedules	13	30
Work/life balance	11	25
No or insufficient interest in topic (preferences stated for regulatory writing, e.g., NDAs, and health technology/service research)	6	14
Location	5	11
Cost	4	9
Antisocial recluse or don't like to attend meetings	2	5
Held on weekdays	1	2
Food selections (prefers vegetarian)	1	2
Medical condition	1	2

Note: 44 (79%) respondents who answered this question provided at least 1 reason, other than distance, why they don't attend.

**Question #16: I would be interested in attending a chapter meeting in a geographic region other than the existing venues of southeastern Pa or NJ.**

	N	n	%
Yes	79	33	42

**Question #17: What is the geographic region or ZIP code where you would like to attend a chapter meeting?**

Region or ZIP code	n	%
07034	1	3
08052	1	3
08512	1	3
08690	1	3
08691	1	3
08807	1	3
08844	1	3
08869	1	3
17363 (South central Pa.)	1	3
18940 (Bucks County, Pa.)	1	3
19380 (West Chester, Pa.)	1	3
19850 (Wilmington, Del.)	4	13
Allentown would be closer, Scranton would be closest	1	3
Any	1	3
Anywhere between NY to DC areas	1	3
Boston down to DC	1	3
Central N.J.	2	6
Central Pa.	1	3
Delaware	3	9
Doylestown, Pa.	1	3
Montgomery County, Pa.	1	3
New Castle County, Del.	1	3
New York City	1	3
Somerville, N.J.	1	3
Southern Chester County, Pa.	1	3
Western suburb of Pa	1	3

Note: 32 respondents provided a response to this question.

**Question #18: If you would be willing to help plan a local meeting or meet with a representative of the DVC board at the annual conference in Pittsburgh after Thursday afternoon's open session, please indicate your willingness below.**

	n	N	%
Expressed willingness	5	12	42
Number who met with board reps	0		

**Question #19:** 22 (29%) respondents elected to answer questions about volunteering.

**Question #20: If you would consider becoming a DVC volunteer, please rank your preferences for volunteering below:**

In order of greater to lesser preference from 18 respondents: Programs, Web site, Newsletter, Education, Publicity, Membership, Organize volunteers, Finance.

Most first place votes: Programs and Education

Most last place votes: Finance

**Question #21: If you have performed volunteer work for the chapter, how would you characterize your volunteer experiences?**

8 volunteers responded.

1. On the whole very positive; have made good contacts. The only thing that's annoying is when non-volunteers have suggestions that would result in more work for existing volunteers.
2. Medical writers saying "performed volunteer work." My gosh, I teach concise writing. I am giving a workshop in Pittsburgh, and will be running the short program sessions in New Mexico. I tell all my students to join and become involved. Volunteer work: working with Robert, Kate, Brian and Lori is always delightful, and Edie is our brightest jewel. The other volunteers seem to come and go.
3. I have been a guest speaker at an AMWA-DVC meeting. I have also worked with Brian Bass reviewing abstracts for the poster presentations for the 2004 AMWA annual conference. Both activities were very rewarding and I would be happy to do something similar in the future.
4. Frequent participant/workshop leader
5. Good
6. Past president of chapter. Was very helpful and fun.
7. Excellent.
8. A significant amount of effort that is sometimes met by ungrateful members whose expectations of chapter volunteers are unreasonable. I am not paid for my time, yet sometimes I am asked by a member for something outrageous.

**Question #22: Please indicate your level of support of the DVC board in piloting new benefits for members of our local chapter.**

	n	%
Support whole-heartedly (Good idea, wish we had done this before)	58	75
Support with some reservation (describe below)	7	9
Support with considerable reservation (describe below)	3	4
Ambivalent (I don't use member benefits anyway. Why bother? Or, I can't decide)	7	9
Oppose with some reservation (describe below)	0	
Oppose with considerable reservation (describe below)	0	
Oppose whole-heartedly (explain below)	2	3
Skipped this question	7	

**Question #23: Other comments on member benefits or chapter activities? Any opposition to DVC's pilot benefit program?**

25 respondents commented. Comments directly related to benefit program are cataloged below.

**SUPPORT WHOLE-HEARTEDLY:**

Although I am not active in the local AMWA chapter, I fully support the concept of networking with other medical writers and feel we have so much to share with one another.

... Good luck with more volunteering and with the additional benefits program. It is a great idea. Pooling resources is what an association is all about and vendors should be all over us to provide all kinds of services. Nice Job!

Thanks for the survey. It is a great idea.

Thanks to whomever is doing this. ...

No opposition; great idea!

Thanks for asking! Great survey!

Great news regarding potential benefit to many members -- not only freelancers. Cannot understand why national AMWA has continually failed to provide this to its members.

**SUPPORT WITH SOME RESERVATION:**

Because my employer provides many resources, I don't need additional benefits. However for people who freelance or have an employer with limited resources (of which I used to be one), it would be a tremendous boon. It would be very worthwhile if the additional cost weren't too much for freelancers to pay.

Need more information.

Ensure benefit to widest possible cross-section of members; evaluate annually to decide whether to continue.

Insurance benefits through AMWA are not important to me; I would rather see money, time, and energy devoted to improving medical writing resources, meetings, educational programs, and directories for employment opportunities.

I'm not sure the chapter has the volunteer resources to manage additional services successfully.

Reservations about "uptake" and costs, particularly if benefit not widely used by members.

**SUPPORT WITH CONSIDERABLE RESERVATION:**

Since all concepts we've proposed in the past have been met with reservation, or ignored. I believe that the board needs to start thinking outside the box (at least now and then).

Not sure discounts on items such as electronic database subscriptions or office supplies will add significant value to AMWA membership. Also not sure if the chapter has

sufficient negotiating power to obtain better pricing for insurance, etc. Would like to see chapter able to make more AMWA certificate course offerings.

Enhancing current programs was not an option in this survey.

OPPOSE WHOLE-HEARTEDLY

Oppose whole-heartedly unless there is a clear demand for such benefits.

I think the local chapter should be a resource for networking and education. Leave membership benefits to AMWA National and do not place an increased burden on an already stretched network of chapter volunteers to manage a program that is likely to fail.