

DELAWRITER

News of the Delaware Valley Chapter



Greetings from the President

What a great time to take over as AMWA-DVC President. My predecessors, Brian Bass and Bob Bonk, have left affairs in very good order. Many others have contributed greatly and I am thankful to all.

Brian is active in our chapter and is head of development for the AMWA Executive Committee. In that capacity, he contacts corporations to develop and support AMWA activities through programs and funding. His hard work with local arrangements for last year's Annual Conference caught AMWA National's attention. He continues to handle logistics and publicity for the Princeton Conference, and he is pressing AMWA to increase the current limit of 4 core curriculum courses at local conferences.



Bob championed the education component of our Princeton Conference for several years. He will continue to provide guidance to make the Conference a success, and he continues to teach AMWA courses. In the April newsletter, Bob's annual chapter report cited the need for more attention on the initiatives and democratic representation of all chapters.

I hope you are inspired by Bob's and Brian's work. Past columns asked for volunteers and for increased attendance at the chapter meetings, of which we still see only about 30 of the same faces out of a chapter membership of over 700.

As Brian has said, "What you get out of AMWA is directly proportional to what

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August 2000

What's Inside

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- *Treasurer's Report*
- *March 7 Virtual Meeting*
- *June 6 DTCA Meeting*

What's New on the AMWA-DVC Web Site?

Last year the Web site Committee of AMWA-DVC was charged with reactivating and invigorating the chapter's Web site. Through the combined efforts of committee members and two vendors, the wholly redesigned site was launched in January 2000 under a new URL—<http://www.amwa-dvc.org>.

If you have visited the site, you're aware that it has much to offer. For those who have yet to explore the site, consider the following activities while you navigate through the site:

- **Get information on AMWA-DVC.** "About AMWA-DVC" is where users can learn about the local chapter, find contact information for chapter

officers and review the benefits of membership.

- **Review the events calendar.** "Events" provides information on bimonthly meetings as well as the annual Princeton Conference. A meeting registration form is provided for printing and mailing.
- **Download the AMWA-DVC newsletter.** Current and past issues are available for downloading in the "Delawriter Newsletter" section.
- **Check out an education course.** This section contains information on education courses—available through AMWA, at local universities or

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Job Opportunity

Medical Writers: Aerotek is currently seeking experienced medical writers for contract opportunities in the Philadelphia area. Interested candidates with IND/NDA submission experience should contact Rich Goldbeck at 610-254-5423.

4th Annual Princeton Conference a Success

The 4th Annual Princeton Conference, AMWA-DVC's flourishing regional workshop conference, broke new ground in 2000. This year, the conference was expanded to one-and-a-half days to accommodate a more robust schedule of 4 Core Curriculum courses, 4 noncredit workshops, a plenary session and a business roundtable.

Nearly 60 AMWA members and guests attended the conference, which was held for the third year in a row at the Merrill Lynch Conference and Training Center. A modest profit was made for our chapter while registration and course fees

remained below that charged by most other regional conferences. The profit will benefit AMWA-DVC members in the form of enhanced programs and reduced fees at chapter meetings this coming year.

The plenary session, *Quality in Medical Communications*, was a first for the Princeton Conference and received positive reviews from those who attended. The proceedings were taped and transcribed, and are being developed into an article to be submitted to the AMWA Journal later this year, thanks to a grant from Janssen Research Foundation.

As with any volunteer undertaking of this magnitude, the conference was not without a few rough edges. We apologize to anyone who may have been even a bit disappointed, and encourage you to contribute your insight by volunteering to make next year's conference even better. Plans are underway to expand the 2001 Princeton Conference to a full 2-day program, and member support and participation is crucial to its success. To get involved, please contact Brian Bass at BAM509@aol.com.

-Brian Bass

Report from the Treasurer

DVC's finances are in good shape as we begin planning the 2000-2001 season. During the period July 1, 1999 to June 30, 2000, we took in \$29,767 in total revenues and paid out \$41,975 in expenses, leaving the treasury with a healthy bank balance of approximately \$11,000.

The chapter's principal sources of revenue for 1999 to 2000 were the Princeton Conference, dues rebates from AMWA headquarters, and chapter meeting fees. The Princeton Conference brought in a net of \$3,335 after expenses.

Our principal expenses were for the Princeton Conference, the chapter Web site, chapter meetings, and the Delawriter newsletter. Outlays for the season were somewhat larger than usual for several reasons. First, we tried something new with the Princeton Conference, running it over 2 days instead of the previous 1 day. The success of the conference bodes well for future weekend conferences. Second, the Executive Committee decided last year to make a serious commitment to producing a first-rate Web site. Having completed the development and implementation of the site, the chapter has now contracted with a consultant who will maintain the site at lower cost. Third, editor Nathalie Bacon has upgraded *Delawriter*, with a revised format through the use of new publishing software.

Expenditures for 1999 to 2000 were directed toward improving DVC's principal services to the membership in the areas of education and communication. Results to date suggest that these expenditures will add to the value of DVC for our members.

-Robert P. Hand

Delawriter is the newsletter of the Delaware Valley Chapter of the American Medical Writers Association

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Newsletter: Nathalie Bacon.

AMWA Headquarters: <http://www.amwa.org>

AMWA Members Go Back to School—Virtually

-Lori De Milto

What is online learning really all about? AMWA members who attended the March 7 virtual meeting with the University of the Rockies in British Columbia had the opportunity to find out. Attendees gathered at two local sites: the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine in Philadelphia and the School of Osteopathic Medicine at UMDNJ in Stratford.

After a few computer glitches at both sites, everyone was online

and checking out special versions of two courses prepared for the



meeting: *Introduction to Technical Writing and Administrative Studies*. Members read the course lectures, viewed supplementary materials

and even took a special AMWA quiz, which was graded online in seconds!

Everyone was able to participate in an online discussion forum with the two AMWA sites and the professors at the University of the Rockies. Thanks go to the two AMWA site coordinators: Jane Dumsha at Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine and Susanna Dodgson at the School of Osteopathic Medicine.



Slowdown Expected in Direct-to-Consumer Advertising

-Lori De Milto

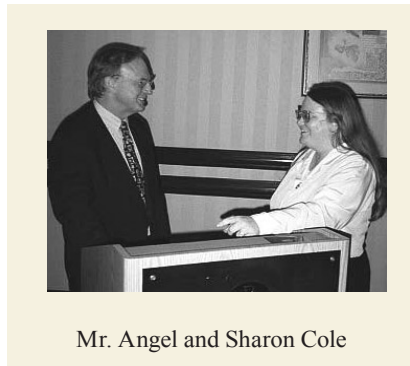
In 1999, pharmaceutical companies spent \$1.8 billion on direct-to-consumer advertising (DTCA), according to Jack Angel, president of Greenwich Communications of Connecticut and speaker at AMWA-DVC's June 6 meeting titled, "Direct to Consumer Advertising. What are the Issues? What are the Answers?" In the year 2000, DTCA spending is expected to rise to more than \$2 billion.

Mr. Angel used research conducted by the Coalition for Health Care Communications, of which he is a member, to highlight the pros and cons of DTCA and demonstrate why it won't continue to increase so dramatically in the future.

DTCA has the following benefits:

- Informs the public
- Encourages early detection of disease
- Enhances physician-patient dialog
- Increases comprehension
- Improves compliance

- Controls (to some extent) the spread of disease.



Mr. Angel and Sharon Cole

However, DTCA also has some drawbacks:

- Inflates the cost of drugs
- Conveys sometimes unfulfilled hopes
- Encourages doctors to prescribe unnecessarily
- Drives patients to doctors unnecessarily
- Confuses patients
- Lengthens patient visits.

DTCA is effective when used with breakthrough drugs, lifestyle drugs,

and chronic disease drugs. It is ineffective for asymptomatic diseases, "me-too" drugs, and drugs for which complex messages are necessary.

Future growth of DTCA will be limited by a variety of factors, according to Mr. Angel. Some of these factors are:

- Advertisers must follow FDA broadcast guidelines, including providing negative information, e.g., adverse effects
- Messages must not be too complex
- OTC drugs are in direct competition
- Lead times for media placement are long
- FDA and Congress have an anti-advertising bias
- Physicians and MCOs negatively perceive DTCA
- Companies may be liable for their claims.

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online—that may be of interest to medical writers and editors.

- **Access the “Members Only” section.** A chapter membership list as well as speaker slides from our bimonthly meetings can be accessed here. This section is password protected and available only to chapter members. To enter, click on the “Members Only” button, then type in your username and password. Your last name (with an initial capital letter) is your username; your membership number (deleting any preceding zeros) is your password.
- **Review a job posting or post a freelance ad.** “Jobs” provides access to local employer advertisements. In

addition, there is a section where AMWA-DVC members can post, at no charge, an advertisement of their freelance services.

- **View links of interest.** “Links” points members to other sites that may be of interest, for example, Allied Associations and Organizations, AMWA Chapter Links and Resources for Writers and Editors.

A Web site is always a work in progress. We welcome your comments or suggestions—please send them to webchair@amwa-dvc.org.

-Gary Dorrell

- President *continued from page 1*

you put into it.” I encourage you to become involved. Join a committee. Help write a newsletter or Web article. Suggest some helpful Web links. Attend at least one bimonthly meeting.

In my next column, I’ll tell you about the other Board members, hoping it will inspire you to get involved in the chapter. I’ll also talk about AMWA-DVC’s theme for the next year, “Quality in Medical Communications.”

-Gary Cummings

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| Ad Rates | |
| 5 lines | \$50 |
| 10 lines | \$100 |
| 15+ lines | \$150 & up |

News of the
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