

The quarterly newsletter of the American Medical Writers Association—Delaware Valley Chapter

UPCOMING MEETING

Tantalizing Medical Trivia September 22

A Fun-Filled Evening of Gastronomic and Historic Delight at Pennsylvania Hospital

Join your AMWA colleagues for “Tantalizing Medical Trivia” with AMWA, an interactive networking event at Pennsylvania Hospital. Located in Center City Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Hospital is the nation’s first hospital.

Pennsylvania Hospital is a living history museum of medical science. After networking to find their team members, attendees will work with their team, to answer trivia questions about medical writing, AMWA, and Pennsylvania Hospital. Each member of the winning team will receive a \$25 gift certificate. The event will include dinner and a tour of Pennsylvania Hospital’s library and surgical suite.

Details

- Wednesday, September 22—5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
- Pennsylvania Hospital, 800 Spruce Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107-6192
215-829-6888
- Directions and parking information: <http://www.pennhealth.com/pahosp/>
- Cost:
Members: \$40 with advance reservations; \$45 at the door (space permitting)
Nonmembers: \$45 with advance reservations; \$50 at the door (space permitting)
Students: \$10 with advance reservations; \$15 at the door (space permitting)

Reservations

- Contact: Andrea Laborde, Programs@amwa-dvc.org, 215-635-2947
Please make checks payable to AMWA-DVC and mail to:
Andrea Laborde
234 Glenwood Road
Elkins Park, PA 19027.

Second Annual Freelance Workshop

This issue of *Delawriter* includes the final article based on the Freelance Workshop presentations on January 17, 2004: “Computer Issues for Small Business Owners.” See the article on page 3.

CALENDAR

- **Wednesday, September 22**—“Tantalizing Medical Trivia” Philadelphia, Pa.
- **October**—N.J. Meeting (date, topic and location to be determined)
- **October 21-23**—Annual Conference in St. Louis, Mo.
- **November**—Pa. Meeting (date, topic and location to be determined)
- **January 15**—Freelance Workshop
- **February**—N.J. Meeting (date, topic and location to be determined)

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Ethical Dimensions of Medical Writing and Annual Business Meeting

By Lori De Milto

Emotions often come to the forefront when issues regarding the right to life and medical decision making are discussed. Mimi Mahon, PhD, FAAN, Advanced Practice Nurse, and a Palliative Care and Ethics Senior Fellow at the University of Pennsylvania Center for Bioethics, presented the perspective of patients and their families on ethics during AMWA-DVC's June 16th meeting in Philadelphia, Pa.

Mahon noted that health care and ethics should not be separate, as they often are. "Clinicians and writers have a responsibility to be aware of ethics," she said. "Ethics is about asking the right questions of the right person at the right time."

Mahon discussed models for asking questions about ethics. Most physicians are educated on the principlism model, which is based on respect for autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice. However, autonomy only exists in the context of physiological parameters. "Physicians should establish the limits within which clinical decisions will be made. Autonomy does not trump everything," she said.

As an alternative, Mahon presented the clinical decision making model proposed by Jonsen, Siegler, and Winslade. This model focuses on four areas: medical indication (physiologic parameters), quality of life, patient preferences, and contextual features (available facilities and equipment). Mahon noted that health care professionals must define and describe the parameters within which decisions can be made, and that decisions

AMWA-DVC Jobs/Freelance Opportunities and Freelance Listserves

AMWA-DVC has two optional listserves for members. The listserves are separate from e-mails about chapter meetings and other chapter business. Members can sign up to receive announcements about jobs and other news of interest to medical writers and to participate in an open discussion among freelancers.

Both lists are confidential (no one can tell who the subscribers are) and will not be shared with outside parties. The lists are low-volume and will not clog your mailbox. We use spam blocking and do not accept attachments, to prevent the transmission of viruses. Any information sent to the lists, including job postings, should be provided as plain text in the body of the e-mail. HTML messages and those with attachments will be discarded.

- **AMWA-DVC-Announce:** Provides access to medical writing staff positions and freelance opportunities, as well as the occasional non-AMWA conference and new products of interest to medical writers. This is a post-only listserv. *To subscribe: E-mail amwa-dvc-announce-request@casano.com with only the word "subscribe" in the body of the e-mail. To share positions or freelance opportunities: Send the information to kate@casano.com or another board member; if it's suitable, we'll post it.*
- **AMWA-DVC-Freelance:** A give-and-take listserv on freelancing (e.g., to find out how to handle a particular problem or to share useful tips). Open to posting by any member of the Delaware Valley Chapter who subscribes. *To subscribe: E-mail amwa-dvc-freelance-request@casano.com with only the word "subscribe" in the body of the e-mail.*

When you subscribe, you will receive an e-mail explaining the rules of the list and how to un-subscribe.

must reflect patient preferences. "We must give people the resources and information to make decisions."

Making ethical decisions about death involves many issues. Living wills do not allow health care professionals to distinguish between therapies as a bridge to improvement and therapies that will be used until death. Death in medicine is a failure. Physicians and nurses aren't trained to talk about end-of-life issues. Because life-prolonging technology exists, patients and families expect it to be used or feel obliged to accept its use. Health care professionals must ask the questions that allow the patient's surrogate to represent the patient's preferences in decision making.

"We must create an environment where death is not a failure and where we do death well," said Mahon.

Annual Business Meeting

During the annual business meeting, the 2004-2005 AMWA-DVC board took office. Lori De Milto moved up to president and Kate Casano moved up to past president. Scott Metsger, PhD, was elected president-elect and Deborah Early, PhD, was elected secretary. Maitland Young continues on in the second year of his two-year term as treasurer.

Casano presented the President's Award to Young, who has been actively involved in the Delaware Valley Chapter since joining AMWA. He took over as chair of the chapter's first freelance workshop on short notice and did a great job, and has been treasurer for more than a year.

Lori De Milto is a freelance medical writer specializing in marketing communications.

Computer Issues for Small Business Owners

By Dorit Shapiro, MS

Reliable Internet access and electronic mail are crucial for any small business, including freelance medical writers. Michael Shapiro, President of BCG Consulting, an information technology consulting firm that serves small and large businesses, addressed common computer concerns and offered numerous solutions to fit small business owner's various needs.

Internet Access and E-mail

With the need to exchange information in a reliable and efficient manner, many businesses turn to broadband, which offers Internet connections up to fifteen times faster than conventional dial-up. Depending on your location, you may be able to choose between digital subscriber line (DSL) and cable. DSL provides high-speed connection through your existing phone lines with dedicated speed to your location. Cable, which is usually faster than DSL, connects through your cable television outlets. Shapiro warned of pitfalls with both types of services: DSL speed varies based on phone line quality and distance to the central office. Cable speed can vary based on what others in your area are doing.

With high-speed access, you may choose to create a computer network within your home so that multiple computers can access the Internet at the same time. The network can be set up as either wired (traditional) or wireless. Wired networks require physical cable connections from the computer to the Internet source. Wired networks provide faster connections, are more secure, and cost approximately \$100 for the necessary equipment, excluding monthly cable service fees.

Wireless networks allow the computers to be anywhere in the

house and still connect to the Internet, though your connection speed deteriorates the further you move from the Internet source. Since the signal is broadcast in open air, wireless networks are less secure, and steps need to be taken to protect your computer from hackers. Costs to create a wireless network are approximately \$250.

Web Presence

For a more professional appearance, Shapiro recommended registering a unique domain name and creating a permanent e-mail through any Internet service provider (ISP). Instead of using an e-mail address tied to your ISP (e.g., MyName@AOL.com), you can choose a domain name that fits your business and create custom e-mail addresses, such as info@BusinessName.com or feedback@BusinessName.com that forward to whatever e-mail account you choose.

You can search Web sites for available domain names (www.123cheapdomains.com, www.godaddy.com, www.netsol.com) and even register them instantly. If your preferred name is already taken, try these extensions (.net, .us, .info, .md). The cost to register an available domain name is very reasonable (less than \$15 per year).

After purchasing a domain name, you will need someone to host your Web site. Shapiro recommended that you check with local ISPs or find a business specializing in Internet development that also offers hosting for their clients. As with any professional you hire, check references. This goes beyond asking for the addresses (or uniform resource locators [URLs]) of Web sites they have designed, since there

is no way to verify what portions of the Web site they created. Speak to other small businesses and ask for recommendations.

"Do your homework," said Shapiro. "Check similar sites in the industry and note what you like and do not like about their Web sites." Ask yourself what you want your Web site to do.

Security and Protection

Shapiro stated that the first rule of protecting your computer is to "keep your work computer for work use only, when possible." This includes avoiding file sharing programs like Napster and Kazaa. Also, if an unknown popup window appears offering a "free security scan" **do not** click "yes" or "accept" since it will load ads and popup windows.

Shapiro recommended that everyone invest in virus scanning software from Symantec (Norton) or McAfee. After installation, schedule a full system scan to run at least once a week. If your system is already infected with a virus, clean your system before installing the virus prevention software. Always scan incoming and outgoing e-mail to further protect your files from viruses. Finally, Shapiro recommended that people using DSL or cable investigate Internet firewall software to stop unwanted incoming connections. Spyware protection from Ad-Aware (www.lavasoftusa.com) and Spy Sweeper (www.webroot.com) can prevent annoying but innocuous spyware from installing on your computer.

Shapiro urged us to help eliminate e-mail clutter by not forwarding viruses and e-mail hoaxes. You can find current information on e-mail hoaxes

AMWA-DVC Celebrates Long-Term Members

Twelve AMWA-DVC members have achieved 25 or more years of AMWA membership, including seven members with more than 40 years of membership. During our June dinner meeting, we honored our long-term members, and personally presented a certificate of achievement to Edith Schwager, who is celebrating her 40th anniversary with AMWA.

Congratulations to:

50 years

- James R. Gay, MD, of Lakewood, AMWA Member since 1954 (50 years)

40 to 49 years

- Oliver W. Brown, Jr., of Berwyn, AMWA Member since 1963 (41 years)
- Gloria R. Hamilton of Swarthmore, AMWA Member since 1960 (44 years)
- Edward J. Huth of Bryn Mawr, AMWA Member since 1961 (43 years)
- Irwin Rothman, VDM, DO, of Wynnewood, AMWA Member since 1963 (41 years)
- Edith Schwager of Philadelphia, AMWA Member since 1964 (40 years)
- Harry A. Sweeney, Jr., of Philadelphia, AMWA Member since 1959 (45 years)

30 to 39 years

- Gerald E. Bernfeld of Wynnewood, AMWA Member since 1972 (32 years)

25 to 29 years

- Christine L. Bailey of Wilmington, AMWA Member since 1976 (28 years)
- Regina Brown of Lancaster, AMWA Member since 1978 (26 years)

- Mark Dana of Exton, AMWA Member since 1977 (27 years)
- John E. Hoover of Swarthmore, AMWA Member since 1975 (29 years)

“Dear Edie” Celebrates 40 Years in AMWA

Edie Schwager, better known as “Dear Edie” for her column in the *AMWA Journal*, thanked the chapter for her certificate: “I’ve seen a lot of AMWA and DVC history, but the best part has been the friendships I’ve made with cordial, intelligent, and forward-looking people. They have

sustained me through adversities with good will and the utmost concern. AMWA has become my second family.”

“Meeting new friends and greeting old ones is always a delight and a great pleasure for me. Thank you for recognizing me as an active, long-time member of the American Medical Writers Association, the best organization in the country for medical writers and editors—and unarguably the most friendly and proficient at networking.”

Edie Schwager writes “Dear Edie” for the *AMWA Journal*. Her new e-mail address is dearedie@verizon.net.

AMWA-DVC Announcements

By Dorit Shapiro, MS—Web Chair (Webchair@amwa-dvc.org)

AMWA-DVC Web site—Your Source for Current Chapter News and Information

We are pleased to report that we have added new information to the chapter Web site. Check out www.amwa-dvc.org frequently for up-to-date details regarding chapter events and opportunities.

Things to look for:

- Our 2004-2005 Calendar of Events
- Our Listserves
- Volunteer Opportunities
- E-mail the Executive Committee
- Chapter repository of articles and educational materials (coming soon)
- Members Survey (coming soon)

Chapter Communications

If your contact information changes, especially your e-mail address, remember to

update it with AMWA National (ronnie@amwa.org). The chapter is moving towards electronic communications, so check the Web site often to keep up with what’s happening and check your e-mail inbox for chapter communications. If you have spam filters set up, be sure to check your junk mail for important announcements that may have been misclassified.

Save the Date—AMWA-DVC Third Annual Freelance Workshop

AMWA-DVC will host our “Third Annual Freelance Workshop” on Saturday, January 15, 2005 at the Sheraton Park Ridge in King of Prussia, Pa. This year, Dorit Shapiro and Christina Valente will serve as co-chairs of the workshop. The workshop will be held in the morning, followed by an optional networking lunch. In addition, we

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Product Launch: Goldmine or Minefield for Writers?

By Gayle Ferreira

What challenges face medical writers who are assigned to work on the product launch of a new drug? Attendees, of the May 20th AMWA-DVC N.J. meeting, participated in an interactive presentation and a discussion on the process of launching a new drug by a small pharmaceutical company and a medical communication company. Sherry Holland, RPh, PhD, a freelance consultant and Lawrence D. Tobias, MS, MBA, a freelance healthcare communications specialist who heads his own company, PharmaNexus, Inc., developed and led the presentation.

The presentation included a mock kick-off meeting for a new drug. Tobias, Holland, and volunteers from the audience role-played employees of a fictitious small pharmaceutical company and medical communication company. The mock-meeting introduced the following real-life participants and the role they play in the drug launch process:

- Product Manager (Larry Tobias) – gave a brief synopsis of the disease, drug, and competition.
- Director of Marketing (Brian Bass) – provided an overview of the ongoing clinical studies and planned phase 4 studies, as well as insisting on the need to accelerate the timelines.
- Clinical Monitor (Joanne Rosenberg) – assessed the quality of the information generated to date and commented on its future availability for the medical communication company.
- Drug Regulatory Affairs Representative (Jerry Eberhart) – assessed the current regulatory environment and expressed a willingness to work with the medical communication company.

- Biostatistician (Kazimiera Nawarynska) – expressed concern about the clinical trial end-date and questioned whether statistics and analysis could be delivered within two weeks.
- Account Executive (Darlene Grzegorski) – established the reputation of the medical communication company’s ability to write clinical study reports, regulatory summaries, and related publications.
- Advertising Executive (Kira Belkin) – attempted to procure as much advertising business as possible.
- Freelance Medical Writer (Sherry Holland) – addressed ranking, content, timing, and politics associated with delivering the publications.

The scenario tested the freelance medical writer’s ability to build relationships and alliances with the participants while conveying expertise in writing documents that would support the product launch. If successful, the writer might glean a

significant number of projects from this venture.

The presentation emphasized the stressful scenario biomedical communicators face when dealing with key employees of a pharmaceutical company and a medical communication company, as well as providing an engaging way of eliciting audience participation.

Gayle Ferreira is a freelance technical writer, currently on assignment at Pfizer.

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hope to offer a “Getting Started in Medical Writing” half-day workshop in the afternoon, following the networking lunch. Amram Hakohen will be chairing this workshop.

Attendees are encouraged to participate in the morning workshop, lunch, and/or the afternoon workshop on getting started in the field. If you are interested in volunteering for either the “Freelance” workshop or the “Getting Started” workshop, e-mail Freelance@amwa-dvc.org.

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ISSUES from 3

at (<http://www.symantec.com/avcenter/hoax.html> or <http://hoaxbusters.ciac.org>).

Finally, Shapiro suggested that you backup files routinely using one of several methods:

1. Use your CD or DVD burner or an external hard drive to **regularly** make backup copies of important documents and e-mails.
2. Investigate programs that perform full system backups so that you do not need to reinstall all the software you use onto your computer should a catastrophic event occur, (Norton Ghost, Acronis True Image, and Powerquest DriveImage).
3. You may need to take the data off-site to provide an extra level of protection.

Dorit Opher Shapiro, MS, is a freelance medical writer.

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