UPCOMING MEETING

“Bioterrorism”: November 13

Bioterrorism, the use of biological agents such as bacteria or viruses to cause infectious diseases within populations to intimidate and cause terror, has been widespread throughout history. In the 6th century B.C., Assyrians poisoned enemy wells with rye ergot. In 1710, the Russians used plague against Sweden, and smallpox was used against natives in the 17th and 18th centuries. More recently, in the United States, we have been made aware of the very real threat of bioterrorism with anthrax-tainted mail and concerns over the possible use of biochemical weapons.

Join us on Thursday, November 13 as John P. Maher, MD, MPH, speaks to AMWA-DVC about types of bioterrorism and regional, state, and federal preparations to deal with bioterrorism. Dr. Maher, a regional expert on preparing for bioterrorism, has served as the County Health Director for the Chester County Department of Health for 25 years.

Dr. Maher has held many academic posts in medical schools and is trained in internal medicine and public health medicine. Dr. Maher serves on many committees, including the Medical Society Committee on Public Health and Toxic Substances, the Statewide Bioterrorism Advisory Committee, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Region 9 Counter-Terrorism Task Force, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Public Health Professionals’ Bioterrorism Working Group, and the Chester County Bioterrorism Awareness and Response Capability Group.

Details

• Thursday, November 13
  5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

• Sheraton Great Valley
  707 E. Lancaster Avenue
  Frazer, Pa., (610) 524-5500
  www.sheraton.com/greatvalley

• Cost:
  Members: $30 with advance reservation; $35 at the door (space permitting)
  Non-members: $35 with advance reservation; $40 at the door (space permitting)
  Students: $10 with advance reservation; $15 at the door (space permitting)

Reservations

To reserve your place, contact Andrea Laborde by November 6:
• atlaborde@aol.com.

When reserving your place, please pre-select your dinner entree:
• sesame-seared salmon,
• chicken sonoma, or
• pasta primavera.

No refunds will be given for cancellations less than 3 business days before the meeting. No-shows will be billed.

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The Inaugural New Jersey Satellite Meeting to be held October 29: “Multimedia Communications and the Medical Writer”

The first AMWA-DVC New Jersey satellite meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 29 in Princeton, N.J. Debra L. Newton, president of Newton Gravity Shift, will speak about “Multimedia Communications and the Medical Writer.” Newton Gravity Shift is a technology-based communications company. Newton will cover:

- How current technologies have changed the nature of medical writing
- How writing for video, interactive, and online media is different than preparing printed text
- The benefits of a multimedia approach and when it is most appropriate.

Ms. Newton will share her insights into the growing importance of multimedia in medical communications. Attendees will learn:

- The different types of interactive media that are used in health sciences marketing and training
- The approach required for writing for video and animation
- The approach required for writing for interactive media
- What an e-solutions company expects from medical writers.

Details

- Wednesday, October 29
  5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
- The Westin Princeton at Forrestal Village
  Princeton, N.J.
  (609) 520-6338

Directions from Route 1 (North or South):
- Take the College Road West exit toward Forrestal Village.
- Continue past one traffic light. The Westin will be on left.

Cost:
- Members: $30 with advance reservation; $35 at the door (space permitting)
- Non-members: $35 with advance reservation; $40 at the door (space permitting)
- Students: $10 with advance reservation; $15 at the door (space permitting)

Reservations
To reserve your place, contact Kira Belkin, PhD:
- (732) 247- 5893, or
- kbelkin@att.net.

No refunds will be given for cancellations less than 3 business days before the meeting. No-shows will be billed.
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NEWS FROM NATIONAL

By Lori De Milto and Debbie Early

• 2003 Annual Conference: 770 people attended AMWA’s annual conference in Miami from September 18-20. This year’s conference featured:
  o 84 workshops
  o 8 open sessions
  o 5 special interest sessions
  o 11 how-to sessions
  o 64 breakfast roundtables
  o 7 poster sessions.

• AMWA-DVC remains the largest and most active chapter, with 766 members. We are 1 of 3 chapters with more than 400 members, and the only chapter with more than 700 members.

• New AMWA National Web site: AMWA is revising its Web site to add content and make it more user friendly. The new Web site will be launched in early 2004.

• First distance learning course now available: A distance learning version of the core curriculum course “Basic Grammar and Usage for Biomedical Communicators” is now available. The course includes a workbook and an interactive CD and can be taken for core credit. It is available at AMWA’s Web site (www.amwa.org) for $155.

• Upcoming Annual Meetings:
  o 2004: St. Louis, Mo.: October 21-23
  o 2005: Pittsburgh, Pa.: September 28-30
  o 2006: Albuquerque, N.M.: Dates to be determined.

VIRUSES from 3

can’t verify: what it is, where it came from, and why it was sent to you.

Virus Protection

• Install anti-virus software from a reputable company. Update and use it regularly.

• Install an on access virus scanner (usually included in good anti-virus software packages). Configure it to start automatically when you boot your system.

• Virus scan any new program or file that may contain executable code before you run or open them: NO MATTER WHERE THEY CAME FROM.

• Exercise caution when opening binary files and Word/Excel documents from unknown sources – anti-virus programs don’t recognize Trojan horse programs as easily as virus programs.

• Be extremely careful about accepting programs or other files during on-line chat sessions.

• Do regular backups. Some viruses and Trojan horse programs erase or corrupt files on your hard drive.

Recognizing Hoaxes

Don’t panic if you receive an e-mail saying you may have inadvertently received a virus. Remember, you cannot get a virus from reading a plain-text e-mail message. Hoaxes and chain letters usually have a three-part form:

• Hook: a message line that gets your attention

• Threat: a warning that something terrible will happen unless you react to the message

• Request: you are asked to do something (delete a file, send money, e-mail the message to everyone in your address book).

Successful hoaxes usually contain technical sounding language and attempt to provide a credible source of information. Don’t react to a warning without verifying the information. No legitimate warning from a credible source will ask

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DEAR EDIE from 2

(See the correct sentences on page 6.)

Schwager then amused the audience with inadvertent errors in newspapers (including The New York Times and The Philadelphia Inquirer), advertisements, Web sites, and other sources:

• I found a Jefferson doctor walking my dog. (“How nice of him,” quipped Schwager.)
• The company was in the lead to market a new antivirile drug being tested for cancer.
• Her mother is a victim of Lugerics disease.
• Wanted: Chemical lab technician with a background in tight trading.

Here are some questions from the audience and Edie’s answers:

Q.: Should we vote for a politician who promises to “grow the economy”?  
E.: No, we should vote for a president who is literate.

Q.: Is it better to “speak with” somebody than “speak to” somebody?  
E.: There’s a nuance of difference. “Speak with” is more intimate and interactive than “speak to.”

Q.: What’s the difference between “more than” and “over”?  
E.: Very little, but “over” can be ambiguous.

DEAR EDIE from 4

VIRUSES from 4

you to contact everyone you know.

Verifying Warning Messages

• Check the following Web sites for information on hoaxes:
  - http://hoaxbusters.ciac.org

• Run a Google™ search on a key word from the message.

Dealing with a Virus Infection

If you suspect that you may have a virus on your computer try the following:

• Install and run a good, up-to-date anti-virus program

• Follow the anti-virus software’s instructions to clean the virus from your system

• Check the anti-virus software’s Web site and support services for assistance

• Check Carnegie Mellon Software Engineering Institute’s Web site (www.cert.org) for easy-to-understand information on dealing with virus infections

• Don’t format your hard drive using FDISK; this procedure won’t clean an infection and may cause more harm.

Remember, just because your computer is acting strangely it doesn’t mean you have a computer virus. Software or hardware problems or operator error are often to blame.

Other Resources

Established in 1988, the CERT® Coordination Center (CERT/CC) is a center of Internet security expertise, located at the Software Engineering Institute, a federally-funded research and development center operated by Carnegie Mellon University (www.cert.org). Here is a CERT/CC test that you can use to make decisions about the e-mail you receive:

• The Know Test: Is the e-mail from someone that you know?

• The Received Test: Have you received e-mail from this sender before?

• The Expect Test: Were you expecting e-mail with an attachment from this sender?

• The Sense Test: Does e-mail from the sender with the contents as described in the subject line and the name of the attachment(s) make sense?

Peggy Stansfield is a freelance writer based in central New Jersey.
News and notes from the American Medical Writers Association—Delaware Valley Chapter

CORRECT SENTENCES from 5

1. All psychiatrists are physicians, so the sentence should read: “Psychiatrists are better able to treat patients with clinical depression than most other physicians.”

2. Measures of 1 or less than 1 take singular verbs. “The anticipated heart rate was reached within 0.5 second” (half of a second).

3. One doesn’t think of individual pounds, so a singular verb should be used in such terms. “Seventy pounds of dynamite was used to implode the old building.”

“Trifles make perfection and perfection is no trifle.”

Michelangelo (as shared with AMWA-DVC members by Dear Edie)

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