

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

UPCOMING MEETING

Phantom of the Manuscript: The Controversies Surrounding the Use of Professional Medical Writers in Preparing Manuscripts — October 19, 2006

The Delaware Valley Chapter of AMWA will host a combined Pennsylvania and New Jersey Dinner Meeting on October 19, 2006, at the Wyndham Mount Laurel, 1111 Route 73 North, Mount Laurel, NJ 08054. The program entitled *Phantom of the Manuscript: The Controversies Surrounding the Use of Professional Medical Writers in Preparing Manuscripts*, will begin at 5:30 PM with networking. Controversy has arisen over the role of professional medical writers in the preparation of manuscripts for biomedical journals and over the failure to acknowledge the role of medical writers in the preparation of manuscripts. A panel of experts from major biomedical manuscript publishing sectors will discuss the contentious issues of medical ghostwriting and authorship. The expert panel includes:

- Barbara Cohen-Kligerman, Managing Editor of Current Science, Inc., publisher of a family of medical review journals
- Art Gertel, VP, Clinical Services, Regulatory, & Medical Writing at Beardsworth Consulting Group, Inc. Gertel is a Past President of AMWA and a Fellow of both AMWA and EMWA
- Christine Laine, MD, MPH, Senior Deputy Editor of *Annals of Internal Medicine* and a member of International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), the organization that published *Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals: Writing and Editing for Biomedical Publication*
- Bob Norris, the founder and president of Complete Healthcare Communications (CHC) and a founding member and current President of the International Society for Medical Publication Professionals (ISMPP)
- Brian Bass, President of Bass Advertising & Marketing, Inc., and an AMWA Fellow, will serve as moderator.

Although advanced registration has closed, registration at the door will be available if space permits. The cost at the door for members is \$50.00; for non-members, \$55.00; and for full-time student members, \$20.00.

Visit amwa-dvc.org for directions and additional information.

CALENDAR

- **Thursday, October 19, 2006** — “Phantom of the Manuscript: The Controversies Surrounding the Use of Professional Medical Writers in Preparing Manuscripts,” Mount Laurel, N.J.
- **October 26-28** — 66th Annual Conference, Albuquerque, N.M.

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AMWA-DVC Members Special Election and Delegates

In a special election held due to the resignation of President-Elect Karen Dutka, the AMWA-DVC Executive Committee, on recommendation of the Nominating Committee, voted to accept the following nomination for the 2006-2007 calendar year: Bernice Schacter for President-Elect.

Dr. Schacter's Biography

With 25 years in biomedical research in both academia and industry, Bernice Zeldin Schacter has been a freelance biomedical writer and consultant since 1994. Schacter served on the faculty of the School of Medicine at Case Western Reserve University and conducted immunology research at Bristol-Myers Squibb Company. She also served as Vice President of Research at BioTransplant, Inc., a biotechnology startup company in Boston, Mass.

Schacter has published over 50 papers in peer-reviewed journals and is a co-inventor on four issued patents. In addition to providing lay audience medical writing for non-profit health agencies, she is the author of *Issues and Dilemmas in Biotechnology* (Greenwood Press, 1999), *Biotechnology and Your Health* (Chelsea House, 2006), and *The New Medicines* (Praeger, 2006).

A member of AMWA-DVC since 2001, Schacter has served on the Nominating and Program Committees. She is currently Chair of the Chapter Program Committee. Schacter will continue in her responsibilities as Chapter Program Committee Chair, until she assumes the position of President in 2007-08. In addition, Bernice will assist the Executive Committee to the degree that she can in its efforts to resolve

Message from the President

To All AMWA-DVC Members,

As your new President and President-Elect, we are excited to welcome you to another year of interesting and educational programs for our chapter! We hope you will find your AMWA-DVC membership rewarding and fulfilling. Please feel free to contact us if, during the course of the next year, you have any comments or suggestions.

Please also consider volunteering some of your time to assist the chapter. We always need help with planning and implementing our activities, and we are currently looking for individuals to help our treasurer, freelance workshop, program and Web chairs.

We look forward to hearing from you!

With best regards,

Debbie Early, PhD MICR
AMWA-DVC President
president@amwa-dvc.org
and

Bernice Schacter, PhD
AMWA-DVC President-Elect (acting)
presidentelect@amwa-dvc.org

the current IRS issue and address other issues as they may come before the Executive Committee.

The AMWA-DVC Executive Committee will hold a confirmation vote of the membership at the upcoming chapter meeting on October 19, 2006 to install Dr. Schacter as President-Elect.

In addition, Chapter President, Debbie Early, and President-Elect, Bernice Schacter, have been elected by the Executive Committee to serve as Chapter Delegates at the upcoming Board Meeting which will be held at the AMWA Annual Conference. In the event that either delegate cannot serve, the Executive Committee will appoint a replacement on her behalf.

Nominating Committee

Brian Bass
Lori De Milto
John Smith

Call for Volunteers

AMWA-DVC has an immediate need for a volunteer to assist the Treasurer in bookkeeping entries, reconciling statements, verifying invoices, and facilitating deposits. Familiarity with Quicken® would be beneficial. Anticipated work would approximate 10 flexible hours per month. Other volunteer positions include:

- Treasurer
- Web Chair
- Volunteer Coordinator

Interested DVC members should contact Debbie Early at volunteer@amwa-dvc.org.

Developing a Publication Plan: from Research to Writing

From the Princeton Conference

By Judith Greif

Attendees of the 10th annual AMWA-DVC Princeton Conference were given the opportunity to learn about and practice developing a publication plan in a new noncredit workshop led by veteran medical writer, Cynthia Kryder. Kryder's interactive workshop guided participants through a step-by-step approach to publication planning, which culminated in a hands-on session where participants with a variety of backgrounds and levels of experience collaborated to develop a strategic publication plan for a fictional product called Writemore® aimed at curing writer's block. Kryder has 15 years of experience in medical writing, and has been the author of a variety of publications ranging from patient education materials to journal articles, chapters in academic textbooks, and articles for the popular press, had articles published in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and CBSHealthWatch.com. She has been doing publication planning for the past two years.

Kryder described a 4-step approach to publication planning that includes: assessment, planning, execution, and evaluation. First, she explained why publication plans are so important, especially in today's environment where there may be shorter lead times for new products, and fewer pivotal trials to compete in a market that includes a broader target audience, a larger variety of journals, conferences, or congresses to choose from, and increased competition overall. The goals of an effective

publication plan, Kryder said, are to develop credible published information, spread awareness and understanding of an emerging product, creating "as much buzz as possible" to increase sales. Without publication plans or ones poorly developed and/or executed, clients may not optimize their timing, they may choose inappropriate meetings or journals, or limit the exposure of the product, which would result in lost opportunities. This all added up to the key message from Kryder: do your research!

Research begins with an assessment phase, which, Kryder referred to as the "core team" (generally a combination of individuals from the pharmaceutical company and the medical communications firm who are experts in this product or therapeutic area), discuss key data messages, target audiences, important opinion leaders to bring onboard, and conduct an analysis of the competition. Once this brainstorming phase is complete, a thorough literature search is conducted, focusing on publications from the past 5 to 10 years. The time span of the literature search is

determined by the core team, and will depend on whether the product is a completely new class, is a new addition to an existing therapeutic class, or whether it is a new indication for an older drug. Other things to consider for a literature search include whether to limit the search to publications within the U.S., if it should be written only in English, what article type (e.g. randomized controlled trials), and whether to include research about what has been written about the product's competition.

Other components of the assessment phase are the so-called "Gap analysis" and "SWOT analysis." Kryder explained that SWOT stands for: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, and refers to internal and external factors from both publication and marketing perspectives. Conducting a gap analysis involves the determination of what share of the "publication voice" the product and its competitors currently have, as well as looking for gaps and opportunities on ways to fill those gaps.

See Publication Plan on 4.

Delawriter

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The Future of Medical Publishing

By *Bharat Burman*

At AMWA-DVC's June 28 dinner meeting, David Woods, PhD, the CEO of Healthcare Media International, a consulting service for healthcare communications, gave a vivid forecast of the future of medical publishing based on his own experiences and on emerging trends. A veteran writer, editor, and publisher of major international journals, Dr. Woods offered remarkable insight into the industry.

Medical publishing in the last five years was the second fastest-growing sector of publishing with over 25,000 journals, periodicals, and newspapers in print worldwide. Spending on healthcare media increased to a rate of 7% per year. However, Dr. Woods pointed out that the digital revolution is affecting medical publishing as drastically as any other field. The movement towards online publishing has increased productivity, decreased costs, and allowed for 24/7 access to medical information.

What does this mean for medical writers today and tomorrow? Dr. Woods asserted that the nature of medical writing reflects changes in the practice of medicine and scientific research. First, healthcare in America is essentially managed care, so healthcare professionals seek literature on management, customer service, legal and ethical information, and information technology. To make policy decisions, managers require writing that is based heavily on evidence. Therefore, writers are expected to employ a technical style rather than a narrative one.

Second, Dr. Woods noted that both patients and physicians are reading less. American patients now rely on television and the internet for quick health information and news. Of the 60 million per month

searches on Medline, an increasing number are from patients researching their own symptoms. Quick, easy-to-read information also appeals to physicians who are overloaded by information stemming from the rapid advancements in medical research. Physicians want less text, and more images, tables, and hyperlinks to related articles. Dr. Woods quoted a study by the American Medical Association that stated over half of physicians now use personal digital assistants (PDAs) to access information instead of reading print publications.

Another trend in medical publishing is the open-access movement. Dr. Woods defined this as the emergence of free, online medical information that can continuously be updated. The movement is a financial threat to traditional publishers who formerly set costs of medical writing at \$500-\$5000 per printed page. Although some traditionalists do not trust online content, publishers are taking measures to improve profitability. One change has been the increase of advertising in journals by pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturers.

In the short and long-term, Dr. Woods said that both publishers and writers would have to adapt to the changing expectations in medical publishing. Nonetheless, the demand for good medical writing will persist, and many opportunities lie ahead in the industry. Dr. Woods said that writers should always be aware of their audience, even if it continues to fragment during the digital revolution. In addition, writers need to have the "four Ps: passion, perseverance, patience, and pachyderma [thick skin]" to succeed.

He continued, "There will always be a role in medical publishing for savvy and linguistically rigorous writers, editors, and publishers.

Bharat Burman is a clinical writer for ECRI, a non-profit health services research agency in Plymouth Meeting, Pa.

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When this research data is gathered, a plan can finally be created. Determining your time line so that each element is released at the optimal period is also key to a successful publication plan. Of course, a publication plan needs to be a fluid document, and Kryder emphasized the importance of ongoing evaluations and making adjustments accordingly once it has been executed (depending on whether your objectives are being met, and whether there may be new data to add).

Audience members were curious to learn how long this process takes, and how to structure their fees. Kryder estimated that the average publication plan takes two months and two medical writers to put together. Fees vary according to the size of the project, and might best be calculated by estimating how much time will be spent on compiling the plan and the hourly rate he or she generally earns to determine a project rate. This may have to be adjusted if the parameters of the project change significantly.

Judith Greif, RN, MS, APNC is a freelance medical writer based in East Brunswick, N.J.

Writing for Video: A Different Animal

From the Princeton Conference

By Darlene Grzegorski

A new noncredit workshop about writing for video was offered for the first time at the Princeton conference and was led by Ann L. Davis, Managing Medical Editor at Discovery Chicago, a medical communications company. With a mixture of skill levels in the room, Davis answered simple questions such as “what is a storyboard?” from writers looking to learn more about script writing, and exchanged production anecdotes with the more seasoned writers.

As with any project, Davis recommended developing a game plan that includes defining the objectives of the video (e.g., what skills will the viewers gain), identifying the audience (e.g., how familiar are they with the topic) and determining the scope of the video (e.g., will it contain dramatizations). She used a script template to show how to lay out the script in one column and the production information in another to facilitate review.

Davis, discussed different styles of dialogue, providing tips on how to use language that is appropriate for the audience and topic. “A specialist speaking to an internist would say dyslipidemia, but a patient speaking to their physician might say too much bad cholesterol and not enough good cholesterol.” Another aspect of the script is whether the narrator is speaking to the viewer or to another person on screen.

Thinking visually was an important message of Davis’ presentation. She described the importance of keeping what’s on the screen in tune with what’s being heard with the adage “Say dog, see dog.” Although a mix of graphics such as bulleted text, tables,

figures, talking heads, and B-roll (video-covering narration), should be used, the overall video should have continuity and flow, which can be accomplished by using similar beginnings, endings, and effects.

In comparing video to print, Davis pointed out that viewers need to grasp the point at first viewing, so details such as *P*-values can clutter the video. “Brevity is golden in video,” she said, “It will always be a little longer than you think.” Thinking about pronunciations is another aspect of writing for video—an actor or narrator may not know how to pronounce certain medical terms or abbreviations, so the writer needs to provide “pronouncers,” such as A-T-P-3 in place of ATP III.

In-class exercises allowed the workshop attendees to put their video-writing skills to the test. This included writing the script for a video segment containing highly complex scientific and medical information as well as directions to the production team.

Beyond the writing aspects of developing a video, Davis provided production tips on how to keep the video development process moving smoothly. Something to be aware of is how closely the actors and narrators will have to stick to the script—changes could require additional regulatory approval or affect accreditation. Her last, but most important, tip was “Do sweat the small stuff!” From text to graphics, the writer should pay close attention that the correct changes have been made at each revision and the graphics are in line with what was requested.

Darlene Grzegorski is a medical writer with Educational Resource Systems in Red Bank, N.J.

AMWA-DVC Listserve

AMWA-DVC has an optional listserve for members. The listserve is separate from e-mails about chapter meetings and other chapter business. Members can sign up to receive announcements about jobs and freelance opportunities.

The list is confidential (no one can tell who the subscribers are) and will not be shared with outside parties. The list is low-volume and will not clog your mailbox. We use spam blocking and do not accept attachments, to prevent the transmission of viruses. Any

See Listserve on 6.

Correction to Long-Term Members List

Each year, AMWA-DVC acknowledges members who are celebrating long-term membership. In the last issue of the *Delawriter*, we did not preface the long-term member listing with our rationale for which members we were recognizing. In 2004, the first year we recognized long-term members with certificates and an article in the *Delawriter*, we recognized those with 25 years of membership and up. Starting in 2005, we decided to recognize long-term members on their 5-year anniversaries, starting with 10 years and up (10 years, 15 years, 20 years, etc.). We continued with this method in the last issue of the *Delawriter*; however, one member with 27 years of membership was included since he was inadvertently missed in 2004. We understand that many other DVC members have been with AMWA for more than 10 years; however, we cannot recognize all long-term members each year due to constraints of space in the *Delawriter*, cost, and volunteer time.



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News and notes from the American Medical Writers Association — Delaware Valley Chapter

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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 listserve provides access to medical writing staff positions and new freelance opportunities, as well as the occasional non-AMWA conference or new products of interest to medical writers. This is a post-only listserve. 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. If it is suitable, we will post it to the listserve.

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