

# Delawriter

Summer 2008

The Quarterly Newsletter of the American Medical Writers Association—Delaware Valley Chapter (AMWA-DVC)

## Message From Your President and President-Elect

This summer ushers in a new slate of officers for the AMWA-DVC. We have a solid group of volunteers whose strengths rival any of my previous 18+ years as a member of AMWA. I am privileged to serve as your president with this stellar group of diverse professionals.

As we look to this new year, we find we are in solid financial shape and will be able to offer even more benefits to our members because of the commitment of our active members who are devoted to AMWA programming. Lisa P. Breck, AMWA-DVC president-elect, and I wish to invite you all to participate more in AMWA's many endeavors. AMWA is a great investment in yourself. You just might be surprised by whom you

meet, what you learn, and the growth possibilities that our chapter offers.

Please stay in touch with your AMWA officers and volunteers by offering your ideas, needs, and services. These dedicated individuals keep our chapter the premier group that it is, and we all want to hear from you. As always, you can reach us via the AMWA-DVC Web site: [www.amwa-dvc.org](http://www.amwa-dvc.org).

Barbara Rinehart, MS  
AMWA-DVC President  
[President@amwa-dvc.org](mailto:President@amwa-dvc.org)

Lisa P. Breck  
AMWA-DVC President-Elect  
[PresidentElect@amwa-dvc.org](mailto:PresidentElect@amwa-dvc.org)

## The Changing Face of CME—What's Next?

By Paula Greenberg

Since the early 1990s, the only constant in continuing medical education (CME) has been change. On May 7, fifty-four members of the AMWA-DVC and 5 guest panelists met to explore this issue in a discussion titled "CME Then and Now . . . What's Next?" in Princeton, New Jersey. Panelists included representatives from both accredited and nonaccredited CME provider groups as well as a member of the pharmaceutical industry.

See CME on 4.

## AMWA-DVC New Officers

By Marie-Therese Zenner

At the June 26 chapter meeting, the following new officers were elected by unanimous vote of the general membership:

**President-Elect/Chapter Delegate:** Lisa P. Breck (term 2008–2009)  
**Secretary:** Cynthia L. Kryder, MS (term 2008–2010)

Their biographies were published in the Spring 2008 *Delawriter*. We are grateful to the nominating committee who presented an excellent slate and extend our best wishes to these incoming officers, who will be working with President Barbara Rinehart, MS (term 2008–2009); Treasurer Michael G. Pappas, MS, PhD (term 2007–2009); and Immediate Past President Marie-Therese Zenner, PhD (term 2008–2009).

### Nominating Committee

John A. Smith, BS, PhD, chair  
Brian Bass  
Lori De Milto, MJ

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## Publication Planning: The Role of the Freelance Writer

By Joseph Breck

Publication planning is detailed, challenging, and at times rewarding. For new converts to medical writing, however, it can seem like a long road full of turns just waiting to confound and confuse.

At the AMWA-DVC Freelance Workshop held on April 12 in Blue Bell, Pennsylvania, Tania Dickson, PhD, Director of Editorial and Medical Services at Carus Clinical Communications, in a short time brought to light the complicated world of publication planning and discussed how freelance writers fit into it.

Dr Dickson's presentation started with the realities of the market, noting that agencies usually expect a 12-week cycle to produce a fully developed plan, whereas a writer might prefer 4 to 6 months. Best case, a plan should be developed years in advance of product launch, although that is seldom possible in practice.

Pub plans grow from a short list of driving forces that, according to Dr Dickson, include maximum dissemination of research data, clear and consistent communication of messages, competitive product differentiation, and the need to increase market share.

A focus on achieving these goals helps build plans that push out product information efficiently and consistently across regions and markets.

### Gap Analysis

The process begins with a gap analysis—understanding the gap between where a product is now and where you'd like it to be. According to Dr Dickson, a well-executed gap analysis is critical not only at the beginning, but also at several points in the product life cycle. Finding out what the client expects out of

the analysis can make or break the project, however, so asking critical questions and getting solid answers is important. If executed correctly, the gap analysis leads to:

- Evaluation of strategy and tactics
- Identification of needs for increased publication exposure or gaps in the drug's publication portfolio
- Measurement of competitive activity
- Determination if clinical data have been used to best effect

### Key Messages

Preparing a clinical publications development plan comes next, with an assessment of the data available from clinical trials. The scientific facts from the trials are then used to construct the key communication messages for the product, or the "walk away" message that the audience receives. Dr Dickson stressed here that the data must support the messages and the messages must be consistent. And at this point, a SWOT analysis—an assessment of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the project—is useful.

Strategic and tactical recommendations for message communication range from the development of specific tools (abstracts, manuscripts, etc) to journal selection. Here, Dr Dickson cautioned that premier journals may sometimes take up to 40 weeks to get an article out in the market, a fact that must be factored into the timeline.

Freelance writers add to the publication plan in various ways, including writing support, review and documentation support, and strategic/tactical support. Dr Dickson noted that, as in most areas of marketing,

developing a solid publication plan hinges on communication and building an effective working relationship with all team members.

### Resources for Writers

International Society for Medical Publication Professionals (ISMPP) Web site, [www.ismpp.org](http://www.ismpp.org)

*Joseph Breck is a partner in Breck & Company, a St. Davids, PA-based provider of writing, editing, and communication strategies for the medical markets.*

## Have You Got What It Takes to Cover Medical Conferences?

By Jennifer Maybin

If you don't mind carting carry-on luggage packed with a few dozen batteries and 2 or 3 tape recorders through airport security, you have nerves of steel, a personality as flexible as Gumby, and a constitution that needs no sleep, you too might want to add medical conference coverage to your resume. Don't be surprised, though, if after 1 or 2 stints, you find yourself saying, "I'm never going to do this again."

With a tongue-in-cheek introduction to "Is Medical Conference Coverage for You?" presentation, Maria B. Vinall outlined the skills, fortitude, and sheer gumption required of writers who cover medical conferences. This presentation was part of the AMWA-DVC Freelance Workshop, held April 12 in Blue Bell, Pennsylvania.

*See Medical Conferences on 6.*

## DVC Volunteer Corner

By Jennifer Maybin

It's a pleasure to report that volunteering for AMWA-DVC activities is on the increase! In the past several months, we have had several new volunteers who have worked on events, the *Delawriter*, and other activities. For example, Janet Manfre, 2007–2008 PA program chair, reports that new volunteers Eileen Girten, MS; Jennifer Clemens, EL; and Ana Maria Rodriguez-Rojas, MS, recently helped with planning and registering attendees for the June 2008 meeting. Janet will be stepping down as program chair in 2008–2009, but will continue to serve on the committee. Therefore, we are seeking a new PA Program Chair.

Kira Belkin, PhD, NJ Program Chair, received the help of honorary AMWA-DVC member Eileen McCaffrey, MA, in planning the May program on CME. Eileen is actually a member of the NYC chapter of AMWA, but also frequently attends AMWA-DVC events. Her residence in northern New Jersey makes frequent attendance at AMWA-DVC meetings difficult, but she's with us in spirit. Eileen was instrumental in lining up the panel of experts who presented the various perspectives of CME at the well-attended May meeting in Princeton.

### Promotions Committee

Incoming AMWA-DVC President Barbara Rinehart has created a new Promotions Committee that includes Barbara as chair, and members Wendy Gloffke, PhD; Maria B. Vinall; Liz Kuhn; and Russ Sprague, MEd. This group is creating a slide presentation about the contributions of medical writers and the AMWA group as a whole. For more information, contact Barbara at [President@amwa-dvc.org](mailto:President@amwa-dvc.org).

### Web Site Committee

During 2007–2008 our Web site committee was chaired by Suzanne C. Klein with help from Lisa Vawter, PhD. Suzanne will be stepping down as chair of the committee for 2008–2009 because of increasing work commitments. Lisa has accepted the position of chair for the coming year. Any members who are adept with Web site management should immediately contact Jennifer Maybin at [Volunteer@amwa-dvc.org](mailto:Volunteer@amwa-dvc.org). During her tenure as chair, Suzanne created snippets of Web site copy to aid the next chair and committee in updating content.

### Delawriter

On another front, our *Delawriter* volunteers would like to thank Peggy Stansfield for her contribution as newsletter committee chair over the past year. Peggy's role will be filled in the new year by Alan Struthers, PhD, who currently also serves as co-editor. The *Delawriter* has seen several changes this past year as Kate DeBevois stepped in as co-editor partway through the year when Darlene Grzegorski, MS, stepped down as co-editor. AMWA-DVC would like to thank them both for their editorial skills this past year. For the upcoming year, Eileen Girten, MS, currently a new proofreader/editor for the newsletter has accepted the co-editorship with Alan. In addition, Monica Nicosia, PhD, will be working on the newsletter, helping with proofing and organizational tasks. Welcome, Eileen and Monica!

Also helping with the editing of the *Delawriter* in 2007–2008 was Elizabeth Manning, PhD, a new volunteer who also served on the membership committee with chair Loretta D. Spotila, PhD.

### Executive Committee

In the 2008–2009 year, Elizabeth will take over as chair of the membership committee. Thank you, Loretta for your work this past year; and welcome, Elizabeth, to your new role.

A new member on the Executive Committee for 2008–2010 is Cynthia L. Kryder, MS, who will serve as secretary, replacing Linda Felcone, MA. Thank you to both. Lisa P. Breck joins the Executive Committee as president-elect for 2008–2009. Welcome, Lisa.

This list of volunteers touches on only a few of the many AMWA-DVC members who have served the association this past year (see "AMWA-DVC Volunteer Recognition 2007–2008" for the complete list). All AMWA-DVC members are invited to become more involved in our group by committing to help with short-term or long-term tasks. Opportunities are available for registering meeting attendees, developing program content, contacting speakers, scheduling program venues, developing Web content or newsletter articles—the list goes on. Remember, volunteers meet and forge close working and personal relationships with other members and, possibly, uncover new job prospects.

For more information, contact Jennifer at [Volunteer@amwa-dvc.org](mailto:Volunteer@amwa-dvc.org).

*Jennifer Maybin, MA, is a freelance medical writer and editor in Branchburg, NJ.*

See the full list of  
2007–2008 AMWA-DVC  
Volunteers on page 5.

## CME . . . from 1

Panel moderator Karen Overstreet, EdD, RPh, FACME, president of Indicia Medical Education, provided an overview of the evolving regulatory environment from 1990 through 2007 and the regulating bodies that have been active in implementing change. Recently, the industry has been seen in an unfavorable light related to ghostwriting, promotional messaging disguised as education, and other issues. The industry has responded with measures to elevate standards, including funding transparency and metrics for selection and evaluation.

### Predicted Changes

Predictions of change for the next 18 months include:

- Certification of CME professionals to continue elevation of standards
- Fewer single didactic educational events and more sequenced activities for a continuum of learning
- Less commercial support, which will require alternative sources of funding

Dr Overstreet reminded the audience to be aware of what is happening in the industry and to be active participants in forums and other venues. As writers, we need to look at the challenges created by the evolution of the CME industry and create opportunities to do better work.

The panelists shared many concerns initially touched on in Dr Overstreet's overview. Jay Magrann (executive director, Lippincott CME Institute) and Eric Peterson (freelance) spoke as representatives of accredited CME. Mr Magrann noted that more documentation will be needed to keep accreditation. He raised the issue of ghostwriting, which affects publishers and medical

writers, and emphasized that all parties must work together to protect what we do and the value we bring.

Mr Peterson spoke about changes in the standards for conflict of interest. Stricter standards force providers to make complete disclosures before being allowed to participate in CME. Prior promotional involvement could disqualify providers—and the need for disclosure extends to copy editors, writers, proofreaders, and medical staff. Medical and editorial staff must supply annual disclosures, and freelance staff must submit a disclosure with each project. Writers' roles have changed as well, with a shift from information dissemination to identification of specific gaps in knowledge and how information will be used.

### Switch to Promotional Work?

Liz Stueck, executive vice president of Medical Education Trust, spoke as a representative of nonaccredited providers. With the decrease in commercial support, some companies will be switching from CME to promotional work. Writers will need to be aware of where the opportunities are. If medical writers are not familiar with the principles of adult learning and instructional design, they should be. Depth of knowledge in specific areas has become increasingly valuable. To be successful, writers should highlight their special talents and training.

Anne Marie DuBois of Novo Nordisk presented the perspective of commercial supporters. It's not just Pharma being scrutinized; CME is as well. The media and the public don't always understand the difference between accredited and promotional education. Sometimes presenters don't either. In the past, Pharma used educational dollars to

promote products. Novo Nordisk is currently putting procedures in place to ensure they pass accreditation review. Pharma, like CME providers, will be judged by different criteria in the future and is trying to anticipate changing guidelines.

Medical writers have a critical role to play in CME, providing checks and balances on content. We must be accurate and credible. People have assumed that medical writers have something to hide. When our role is transparent, there will be little to criticize. One of the best things that AMWA can do is to continue to articulate its policy on the role of writers to both the public and its own members.

*Paula Greenberg is an associate creative director at Surge Healthcare in New York, NY, part of the Corbett Accel Healthcare Group.*

## Did You Know . . .

Google provides shortcuts for simple functions and commonly sought information to help you access information faster. The glossary shortcut is especially useful for medical writers. Simply type in your term after "define:" (eg, *define: CPAP*) and you will find multiple definitions with the Web site where the definition can be found. Related phrases also appear at the top. This is a great way to find topic-specific glossaries on the internet and see how the same term can be presented in a variety of ways depending on context and audience.

Many Web sites have converted to friendly search engines, but others still present their results in a cryptic list. To use Google to search a Web site, enter your search term along

*See Did You Know on 7.*

## AMWA-DVC Volunteer Recognition 2007–2008

### Executive Committee

- Marie-Therese Zenner, PhD
- Barbara Rinehart, MS
- Linda Felcone, MA
- Michael G. Pappas, MS, PhD
- Deborah A. Early, PhD
- Brian Bass
- Shirley Bonnem
- Loretta D. Spotila, PhD
- Janet Manfre

### PA Programs

- Janet Manfre (chair)
- Edie Schwager (speaker)
- Elisha Darville
- Shirley Bonnem
- Lori De Milto, MJ
- Alisa Mayor, PhD
- Marie-Therese Zenner, PhD
- Robert P. Hand, MSc
- Eileen Girtten, MS
- Jennifer Clemens, ELS
- Ana Maria Rodriguez-Rojas, MS

### NJ Programs

- Kira Belkin, PhD (chair)
- Marie-Therese Zenner, PhD
- Jennifer Maybin, MA
- Lori De Milto, MJ
- John A. Smith, BS, PhD
- Eileen McCaffrey, MA
- Linda Felcone, MA
- Karen Overstreet, EdD, RPh, FACME (speaker)
- Elizabeth A. Stueck (speaker)

### Freelance Workshop

- Lori De Milto, MJ (chair)

#### *Advisory Committee*

- Susan E. Aiello, DVM, ELS
- Brian Bass
- Lisa P. Breck
- Kira Belkin, PhD
- Nicole Cooper-Johnson
- J. Lynne Dodson
- Cynthia L. Kryder, MS
- Lynne Lederman, PhD
- Barbara Rinehart, MS

- Maria B. Vinall
- Marie-Therese Zenner, PhD
- Joseph Breck

#### *Workshop Committee*

- Nicole Cooper-Johnson
- Jennifer Maybin, MA
- Patricia McAdams
- Lesley Macphee
- Sarah Reedy
- Kent Steinriede
- Ana Traversa, MA
- Barb Woldin, BS
- Marie-Therese Zenner, PhD

#### *Presenters*

- Maria B. Vinall
- Michael J. McLaughlin, MD
- Keith D'Oria, MA
- Tania Dickson, PhD

#### *Roundtable Leaders*

- Nicole Cooper-Johnson
- Linda Felcone, MA
- Darlene Grzegorski, MS
- Monica Hawkins
- Heidi Hawthorne
- Cheryl Lathrop, BS
- Lynne Lederman, PhD
- Jennifer Maybin, MA
- Patricia McAdams
- Janet Novak, PhD
- Barbara Rinehart, MS
- Gail Rose
- Christina M. Rogers
- Loretta D. Spotila, PhD

#### Princeton Conference

- Brian Bass (chair)
- Lisa P. Breck
- Ellen Schneider
- Patrick Stephens
- Sarah Reedy

#### Listserve

- Kate Casano, MHS

#### Promotions Committee

- Barbara Rinehart, MS (chair)
- Wendy Gloffke, PhD
- Maria B. Vinall

- Liz Kuhn
- Russ Sprague, MEd

#### Finance Committee

- Michael G. Pappas, MS, PhD (chair)
- Marie-Therese Zenner, PhD
- Robert P. Hand, MSc
- Kate Casano, MHS
- Deborah A. Early, PhD

#### Web Site Committee

- Suzanne C. Klein (chair)
- Lisa Vawter, PhD
- Kent Steinriede

#### Newsletter Committee

- Peggy Stansfield (chair)
- Alan M. Struthers, PhD (co-editor; chair)
- Kate DeBevois (co-editor)
- Elisha Darville
- Elizabeth A. Manning, PhD
- Darlene Grzegorski, MS (co-editor)
- Eileen Girtten, MS (co-editor)
- Monica Nicosia, PhD

#### Membership Committee

- Loretta D. Spotila, PhD (chair)
- Elizabeth A. Manning, PhD

#### Volunteer Coordinators

- Jennifer Maybin, MA
- Marge Thorell, PhD

#### Nominating Committee

- John A. Smith, PhD (chair, spring 2008)
- Brian Bass (summer 2007; spring 2008)
- Lori De Milto, MJ (spring 2008)
- Scott Metsger, PhD (chair, summer 2007)
- Robert P. Hand, MSc (summer 2007)

## 6 Celebrating Long-term Members

Congratulation to 49 AMWA-DVC members who have achieved 10 or more years of AMWA membership:

### 45 years – since 1963

Oliver W. Brown, Jr, Berwyn, PA

### 25 years – since 1983

Linda Felcone, MA, Princeton, NJ

Ronald D. Gasbarro, PharmD, New Milford, PA

Lawrence Eugene Liberti, RPh, Holland, PA

Nancy Baxter, Martinsville, NJ

Lisa Goscinsky, Ringoes, NJ

Robert P. Hand, MSc, Springfield, PA

### 20 years – since 1988

John C. Keogh, Philadelphia, PA

Mary Jo Penna, Wilmington, DE

Kathy E. Goldberg, Doylestown, PA

Joanne Antanavage, Philadelphia, PA

Donna May Curtis, PhD, ELS, Chadds Ford, PA

Binnie C. Polonsky, Lower Gwynedd, PA

Garrett Hayner, Plymouth Meeting, PA

Karen M. Overstreet, EdD, RPh, North Wales, PA

### 15 years – since 1993

Carolyn L. Snyder, PhD, Raritan, NJ

Cynthia L. Kryder, MS, Phoenixville, PA

Nena O’Keefe, Fleetwood PA

Eileen Zitnak, Linden, NJ

Marie Sabo Recine, MS, MT, Hamilton Square, NJ

Nancy Connolly, MPH, Belle Mead, NJ

Kelly A. Kurtz-Colone, Kintnersville, PA

Robert H. Cagan, PhD, West Windsor, NJ

Patricia Nastase, RPh, MPH, Norristown, PA

Maureen O’Reilly, Princeton, NJ

Daiva J. Bobelis, PhD, Chester Springs, PA

Cynthia A. Arnold, Malvern, PA

Evelyn Hermes DeSantis, PharmD, New Hope, PA

Jerry A. Eberhart, PhD, Malvern, PA

J. Donna LeBlanc, MS, ELS, Audubon, PA

*See Members on 8.*

## Medical Conferences . . . from 2

Ms Vinall, owner of Medical Communications Depot, Inc., in West Chester, Pennsylvania, broke conference coverage into two types: journalistic and clinical/scientific.

Journalistic coverage, she stated, is less detailed and mostly concerned with the highlights of late-breaking clinical trials. It usually requires no references, is liberally sprinkled with quotes, and is often due the same or next day. A writer in this genre needs to understand what is and is not “News” with a capital “N.” These stories are the type you read in Medscape or MedPage Today.

Clinical/scientific coverage, on the other hand, is more detailed, must be referenced, often is a compilation of several presentations from one or more sessions, and uses limited quotes. These stories focus on clinical applicability for practicing physicians. Typical turnaround time is 5 to 10 days after the conference.

### Story Vehicles

Vehicles for medical conference stories are general news outlets, professional society newspapers, specialty medical tabloids, medical Web sites, pharmaceutical companies, consumer publications, wire services, or conference specialty companies. Stories can be features, selected updates, late-breaking trial stories, news, or coverage of satellite symposia.

Assignments may be pre-assigned by an editor (2 to 3 days before the conference), developed on-site with an editor, or created on-the-fly by an astute writer who sniffs out the news. Typical assignments are 6500 to 8000 words per conference (that’s 7 to 10 stories of varying lengths).

### Needed Skills

Skills needed include interviewing experience, speed, time management, flexibility, news judgment, initiative, an understanding of statistics, accuracy, persistence, note-taking, quick thinking, and stamina. Whew! A typical day may start at 6 AM and end at 9:30 PM.

In addition to a good digital recorder (or two) and dozens of batteries, tools of the trade are a high-quality digital camera that can be used without a flash, a battery charger and tester, a laptop, and sneakers (you’ll be covering a quarter marathon of conference hallways).

Ms Vinall warned prospective writers to watch for “scope creep” in fees, which can be paid by project, story, word, or per diem. You’ll need to register for conferences as press, which may require an assignment letter from a news organization or media identification. Ask permission to use a presenter’s slides and request a presenter’s review of your finished piece. Always check references.

The benefits of working in this field are a chance to travel, access to the most current medical information, networking opportunities, and relatively good pay. The downside includes last-minute schedule changes, hard-to-decipher presenter accents, and travel hassles, not to mention last-minute cancellations, 12-hour days, and major technology failures. So if you decide to pack your bags, be sure you’ve got backup recorders, laptops, and batteries.

For more information about conference reporting, read this blog at [www.medmeeting.blogspot.com](http://www.medmeeting.blogspot.com).

*Jennifer Maybin is a freelance medical writer and editor in Branchburg, NJ.*



