

UPCOMING EVENTS

Pennsylvania Programs Committee Hosts AMWA-DVC Networking Dinner March 1, 2007

The Delaware Valley Chapter (DVC) of AMWA will host a Networking Dinner Meeting on Thursday, March 1, 2007. Join us at the Desmond Hotel's Hunt Room Restaurant. Meet with colleagues in an informal atmosphere and enjoy good food. You may order ala carte from the menu or enjoy the prix fixe special; you pay for what you order. We will have some ice breaking questions that should get the conversation going. For example, what do you love or hate about medical writing? Or, if you weren't a medical writer, what kind of work would you like to do?

Date: March 1, 2007

Time: 6:00 PM informal networking, 6:30 PM Dinner

Location: Hunt Room Restaurant at the Desmond Hotel, One Liberty Blvd., Malvern, Pa. The hotel is located at the Route 29N Exit from Route 202.

RSVP to Bernice Schacter: bschacter@comcast.net or 302-427-9197 (days) 302-427-9192 (evenings) by February 21, 2007.

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

Fifth Annual Freelance Workshop April 21, 2007

Mark Saturday, April 21, 2007, on your calendar for AMWA-DVC's Fifth Annual Freelance Workshop. The full-day workshop will include panel presentations and Q&A in the morning, a networking luncheon, and two sessions of roundtables in the afternoon.

We have a wonderful new site for this year's freelance workshop: Normandy Farm in Blue Bell, Pa. (www.normandyfarm.com). Normandy Farm combines state-of-the-art conference facilities with old-world charm and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Lori De Milto and Marie Zenner are co-chairing the 2007 Freelance Workshop. We're looking for a few more volunteers to help out. If you're interested, contact Lori at loriwriter@comcast.net.

Look for full details coming soon to AMWA-DVC's Web site and your e-mail inbox.

Eleventh Annual Princeton Conference

Be on the lookout for workshop schedules in February and remember to register early!

Date: Saturday, June 9, 2007

Location: Harrison Conference Center and Hotel, Plainsboro, N.J.

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Highlights from the Fall AMWA Board of Directors Meeting

By Debbie Early and Scott Metsger

There were approximately 110 DVC attendees at the AMWA annual convention this year, held from October 26 to October 28 in Albuquerque, N.M. The Chapter celebrates its 50th anniversary this year and commemorative pins were distributed at the “Meet and Greet.” The 3-day period was filled with:

- 95 workshops
- 37 open sessions
- 62 roundtables
- 16 poster sessions

The board of directors met the afternoon before the start of the convention and chapter delegates met after the board meeting to discuss broader issues relating to chapter functions. Highlights from the meeting discussions are included below.

Endowment Fund

AMWA contributed \$25,000 to the endowment fund and matched all donations to the fund received from October 25, 2006, through December 31, 2006 up to an additional \$25,000 limiting AMWA’s total contribution to \$50,000. The target goal of \$85,000 was exceeded, the board of directors is now able to spend a portion of the earnings annually to operate educational programs.

AMWA-DVC Bylaws

The minor house-keeping and dissolution amendments to the DVC bylaws were approved.

Education

A science curriculum is under development to supplement the science background of medical writers who do not have a science education. The first courses were offered as non-credit workshops.

The self-study course, Punctuation for Clarity and Style was launched at the annual conference. The next courses to be offered will be Sentence Structure and Patterns followed by Statistics for Medical Writers. Additional self-study courses are currently being developed.

DVC Members Who Were Part of the Annual Conference Committee at Albuquerque

Our thanks to those listed below who contributed to the success of the annual conference in Albuquerque this year by leading in the following areas:

- Lori De Milto, Open sessions coordinator
- Susana Dodgson, Short session coordinator
- Robert Hand, Coffee and dessert klatch coordinator (also a member of the National Finance Committee for 2005-2006)
- Edie Schwager received special mention and a hand-made quilt from AMWA President Susan Siefert.

Call for Volunteers: Treasurer Needed

AMWA-DVC is in urgent need of a volunteer to serve as Treasurer of the Chapter.

Duties Include

- Maintain bank account records via Quicken; review contracts for Chapter events and authorize payment for Chapter-related expenses. (Time estimate: 5-10 hours/month)
- Prepare annual report to the Chapter Executive Committee and membership. Coordinate preparation of annual budget. (Time estimate: 10-20 hours)
- Serve as Chairperson of the Finance Committee to coordinate an annual review of financial records and submission of IRS documentation (end of fiscal year is June 30). (Time estimate: 20 hrs)

Qualifications

- Familiarity with Quicken
- Willingness to serve the organization
- Record-keeping skills

For Further Information Contact

- Laurie Spotila
lspotila@earthlink.net

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West Meets East: The Evidence Base for Complementary and Alternative Medicine

By Alan Struthers, PhD

During the December 6, 2007, AMWA-DVC meeting, Lan X. Chen, MD, PhD, presented *West Meets East: The Evidence Base for Complementary and Alternative Medicine*. Chen who is the Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine, at University of Pennsylvania, discussed complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), a \$30-billion-a-year industry in the United States.

What Is CAM?

“Alternative medicine” is used in place of conventional medicine, while “complementary medicine” is used alongside conventional approaches. Most CAM therapies are based on tradition, culture, or philosophy and are not typically based on modern standards of evidence. Ongoing and completed clinical trials on CAM techniques are listed at, www.nccam.nih.gov, the Web site of the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM). The site also provides access to published information on some large CAM trials sponsored by the Center. Approximately 75% of U.S. adults have tried some type of CAM, such as prayer, because they thought that traditional medicine would not help them.

Traditions of CAM

Dr. Chen identified 5 important traditions of CAM, ranging from Indian Ayurvedic medicine to chiropractics. Each

tradition has a particular idea of what is necessary for health and focuses on different techniques of curing disease and maintaining health. In traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), for instance, balance is a central principal, as expressed in the concepts of Yin and Yang. Vital life energy, or qi, flows through the body in channels called meridians. If the flow of qi is out of balance, illness will occur. Thus, in TCM, the treatments, whether they be herbals, acupuncture, or others, are designed to help a person regain balance by regulating Yin and Yang and unblocking the flow of qi.

CAM Treatments

The various treatments of CAM, which may be shared by more than one tradition, can be grouped into 4 main types. Manipulative and body-based methods include acupuncture, chiropractic manipulation, and massage. A second type uses, biologically-based therapies, such as dietary supplements, vitamins, and herbal products, or other substances found in nature. A third type is mind-body intervention, which involves mental healing, meditation, prayer, and creative expression. The fourth type, energy therapies, encompasses biofield approaches such as therapeutic touch as well as bioelectromagnetic-based approaches such as pulsed fields.

In her specialty, rheumatology, Dr. Chen has become convinced that “the integration of diet, exercise, body-mind connection and nonpharmacologic approaches should be considered.” She discussed her own research on acupuncture as a treatment for osteoarthritis, where she used sham needling as a method for creating a control group. She described another randomized controlled trial (RCT) of acupuncture in 570 patients with osteoarthritis of the knee that demonstrated a significantly greater improvement in the acupuncture group for pain compared with the control (sham needle) group.

She discussed other CAM treatments that have been tested in RCTs. For instance, among herbal medicines, devil’s claw has been shown to be effective for osteoarthritis in 8 RCTs, and ginger has been ineffective in 2. Yoga has been effective for hand pain and tenderness, while magnetic therapy has not. For fibromyalgia, several widely divergent therapies have been effective, including balneotherapy, strength training, hypnotherapy, acupuncture, and biofeedback.

Safety of CAM Therapies

The safety of CAM therapies is generally very good, considering the number of times

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Phantom of the Manuscript: The Controversies Surrounding the Use of Professional Medical Writers in Preparing Manuscripts

By Darlene Grzegorski

The October 19, 2006, AMWA-DVC meeting was held as a joint effort between the Pennsylvania and New Jersey Program Chairs.

Election

The meeting began with Bernice Schacter being officially voted in as the next president of the Delaware Valley Chapter of AMWA. The amendments to the bylaws were also approved.

Program

The program, *Phantom of the Manuscript: The Controversies Surrounding the Use of Professional Medical Writers in Preparing Manuscripts*, focused on issues surrounding ghostwriting, ghost-authoring, and the host of issues regarding the use of professional medical writers in the development of scientific publications. Brian Bass, President of Bass Advertising and Marketing Inc., and an AMWA fellow, moderated the session.

Panel Members

The panel consisted of:

- Barbara Cohen-Kligerman, Managing Editor of Current Science, Inc.
- Art Gertel, VP, Clinical Services, Regulatory & Medical Writing at Beardsworth Consulting Group; Past

President of AMWA and fellow of both AMWA and European Medical Writers Association (EMWA)

- Christine Laine, MD, MPH, Senior Deputy Editor of *Annals of Internal Medicine* and a member of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE)
- Bob Norris, founder and president of Complete Healthcare Communications (CHC) and a founding member and current president of the International Society

for Medical Publication Professionals (ISMPP)

Ghostwriting

Cohen-Kligerman began with a description of the journal *Current Reviews*, which only publishes review articles. She said she often gets calls at the last minute to add an author, to which she responds that the author may be added if he or she made a significant contribution. After being asked to vouch for the person, “they usually don’t call back,” she said.

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Delawriter

Published quarterly by the American Medical Writers Association—
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Norris described the ISMPP as a 3-year-old organization of about 500 people whose goals are to direct educational and advocacy in this field. His philosophy is “let those do what they are best at doing” – let investigators conduct research, biostatisticians analyze the data, contract research organizations (CROs) recruit patients, and finally, writers write. Defining writing, however, can be a sticky situation, as demonstrated by the current controversy surrounding the contributions of medical writers.

Norris suggested that there is a need to distinguish between “written by” and “written with the assistance of.” As to whether writers should take on projects where the ethics of authorship may be questionable, he stated, “We have to have the fortitude to say no.”

Gertel followed with excerpts from news articles that demonstrated the media’s often negative presentation of the use of medical writers and how the medical community is responding to the growing pressure. In a reaction to the growing skepticism of the quality of “ghostwritten” articles, Stanford University recently introduced a new policy that would prohibit doctors from publishing articles that are ghost-written by industry contractors.

The Principle of Authorship

That brought us to the question – what is authorship? Laine summarized the fundamental principle of authorship: that all persons identified as authors should be authors. She outlined the problems

of guest/gift authorship. “It obscures contribution and credit, it hides conflict of interest, and it blurs the lines of accountability.” She cited an example from a 2003 Vioxx® paper: the first author said he was the author, then said he never really saw the paper once questions surrounding cardiac events reporting were raised.

She suggested that “perhaps we should be using the word contributor rather than author.” She described authors as the people who contribute to the design, concept, and execution of the study. Another word that might be used is guarantor, she suggested, “the one who is heading up the ship.”

Transparency

“We need to work on transparency,” Gertel said, explaining that AMWA and EMWA are working on a checklist for authorship, “a kind of signed affidavit attesting that an author really fulfills the roles of an author.”

Laine said that at Annals, they ask authors if a professional writer was used, and if so, require that the person be acknowledged. Gertel added, “acknowledgements should be used for people who make a less pivotal contribution.” Returning to the main issue of transparency, Norris said, “where the information goes shouldn’t matter, it’s the transparency that’s important.”

Darlene Grzegorski is a medical writer/project manager at Educational Resource Systems in Red Bank, N.J.

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they are used, but their safety is not always easy to establish in a scientific manner. With herbal supplements, for example, there is the issue of quality control or standardization with any plant-based product. Where the plant is grown, the growing conditions, and how the plant is processed could all affect the end product. In addition, there could be the possibility of contamination or adulteration and the risk of interactions or side effects with the other drugs the patient may be taking. With acupuncture, the most common adverse event is a forgotten needle (one not removed after the treatment), and even this is very rare – less than 1/10 of 1% in one large study. However, the possibility of infection, though unlikely, exists with acupuncture.

CAM Awareness

Dr. Chen concluded with the recommendation that medical writers and practitioners should be aware of CAM because so many people use CAM occasionally or regularly. Although evidence from well-designed RCTs is lacking for many CAM therapies, at least some of these therapies have shown effectiveness in RCTs and others are now being investigated in western scientific methodology.

Alan Struthers, PhD, is a freelance medical writer and editor in New Jersey. His company is Struthers & Associates.



AMWA-DVC
c/o Darlene Grzegorski
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News and notes from the American Medical Writers Association — Delaware Valley Chapter

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In addition, our thanks also to the many DVC members who chaired sessions and led workshops.

Upcoming Annual Meetings

- 2007: October 11-13, Atlanta, Ga.
- 2008: October 23-25, Louisville, Ky.

2006-2007 Executive Committee and Key Volunteers

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