

GREAT MINDS DON'T THINK ALIKE

What Excerpta Medica Expects From Freelance Medical Writers

Joanna Bligh, MEd, RT, CMA
Senior Medical Writer/Editor

Rosa Real, MD
Medical Director

Excerpta
Medica
an Elsevier business

Overview

Part I

- Have you got what it takes?
 - Minimum qualifications for freelance medical writers (FMW) at Excerpta Medica
- Database plunge
 - Matching FMW with Excerpta Medica Team
 - Scope of project
 - Target journal/audience
- We're still at it!
- The Excerpta Medica writing process

Part II

- Always the editor
 - Examples of FMW and Excerpta Medica e-mail communication

Part I

Freelance Medical Writers (FMW) and the Excerpta Medica Team Structure

How To Get in the Door: Minimum Qualifications for FMW

Key elements

Experience

High educational
background

Excellent writing skills

Accessibility

Professionalism

Creativity

Organization skills

Great attitude

Responsibility

Minimum Qualifications for FMW (cont'd)

Degree status

- MD (clinician, academian, or researcher)
- PhD
- PharmD
- MPH
- MS in scientific area
- Clinician (NP, PA, RN, allied health professional)
- BA in journalism

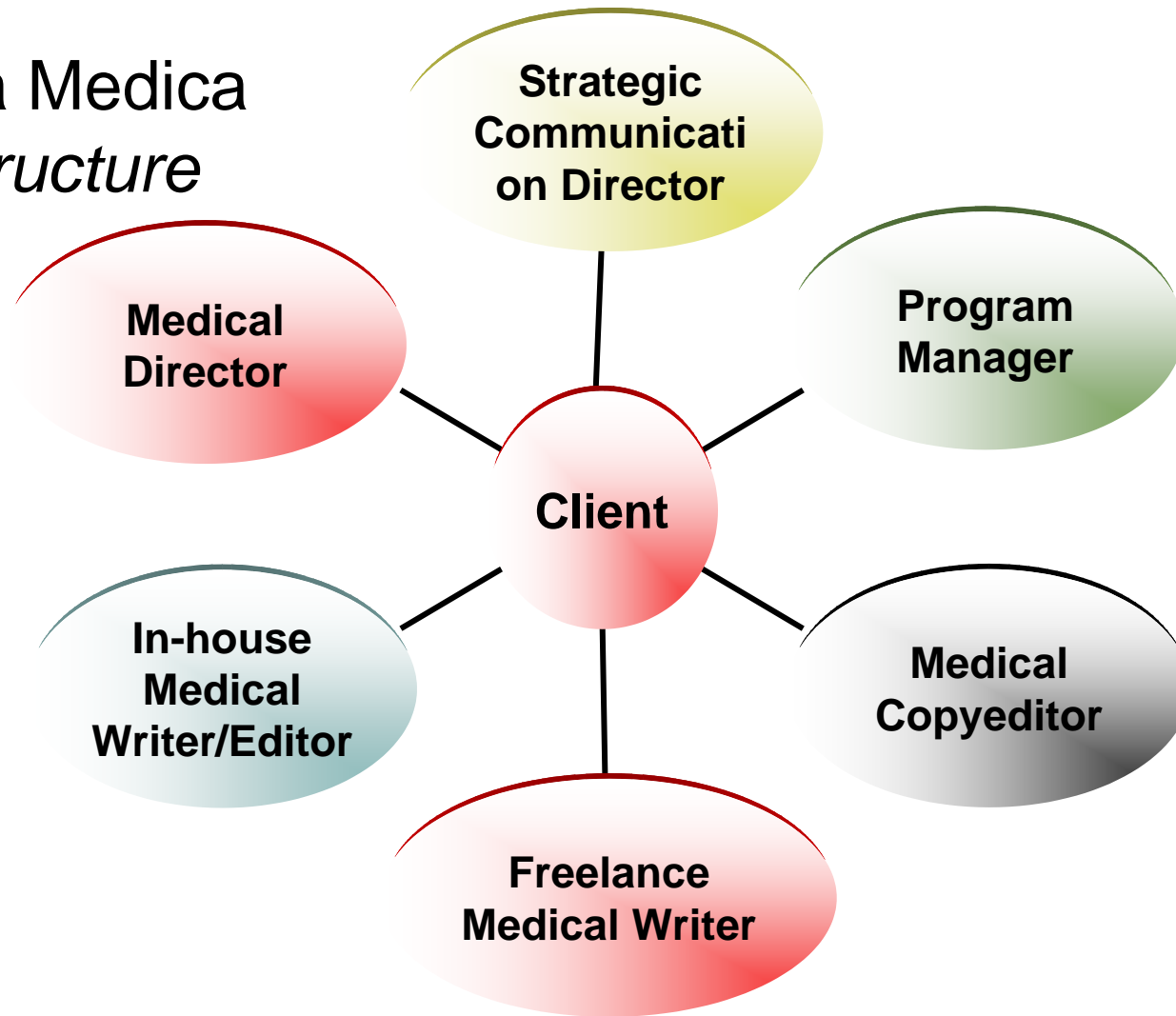
Minimum Qualifications for FMW (cont'd)

Experience

- At least 5 years of writing experience
- How many papers have you authored or written?
- For what audiences?
- In what journals?
 - Impact factor
 - Peer reviewed vs non-peer reviewed
- Writing for non-print (eg, Web sites)
- ACCME Guidelines
- Review articles vs original research
- Writing samples

Matching FMW With an *Excerpta Medica* Team

Excerpta Medica *Team structure*



Matching FMW With an *Excerpta Medica* Team (cont'd)

Scope of project

- Choose FMW based on
 - Therapeutic area of expertise; based on degree status AND writing experience
 - Experience writing for particular type of target journal
 - Familiarity with writing article in particular genre (eg, review, original research, sales manual, continuing medical education [CME] vs non-CME)
 - Background in writing for specific target audience (eg, consumers, sales representatives, clinicians, other healthcare professionals)

Project Development at *Excerpta Medica*

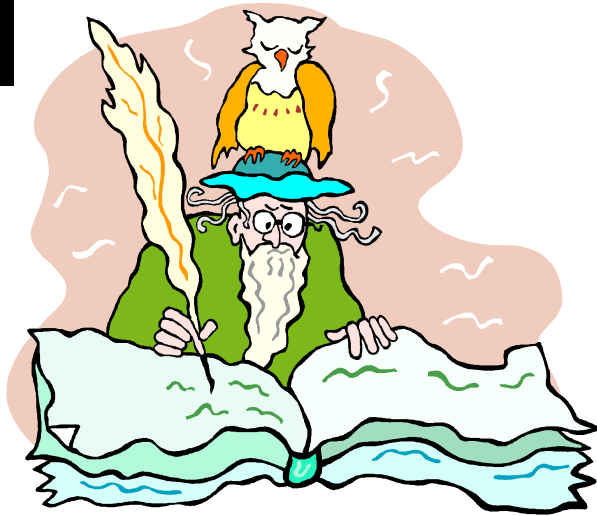
- Business Development proposal approved
 - Teams chosen; start-up meetings take place
 - Deliverables discussed
 - Target journal and physician/authors selected
 - List of objectives for project content
 - Identify branding messages from client
 - Timelines reviewed
 - Budget discussed
- AND
- Medical writer chosen from Excerpta Medica's freelance writer database (if needed)

Project Development at *Excerpta Medica* (cont'd)

Conference call with FMW

- Contract discussions
 - Signed contract and confidentiality agreement
- Content discussion
- Timelines
- Remuneration

Inter-writer Variability



Project Development at *Excerpta Medica* (cont'd)

Conference call with FMW (cont'd)

- Physician/author involvement
 - Affiliation
 - Research; published literature; clinical background
 - Specific focus related to theme of article
- Client/pharmaceutical company involvement
 - Branding messages to be included

Project Development at *Excerpta Medica* (cont'd)

Conference call with FMW (cont'd)

- Content review
 - Detailed outline provided by Excerpta Medica; generally 1500 words, 50–75 references (approved by client and physician/author)
 - References (RefMan format)
 - Article specifications
 - Word count
 - *Excerpta Medica Style Guide for Writers*
 - Discuss style of journal
 - Target audience
 - Expectation of deliverables (eg, manuscript submission or reviewers' comments from journal)

Project Development at *Excerpta Medica* (cont'd)

Conference call with FMW (cont'd)

- Timeline
 - Clearly stated, must be honored; however, if extra time is needed, Excerpta Medica is contacted immediately
- First draft manuscript must meet the Team's approval
 - If the draft is not approved by the Team, rewrite is required
- Remuneration
 - Based on contract, not hourly fee
 - May be offered bonus for completion prior to expected date (eg, 2 weeks)
 - Fee may be based on number of drafts
 - FMW can invoice after draft is approved by Team
 - Range: \$3–\$5K (4000-word review manuscript)

Project Development at *Excerpta Medica* (cont'd)

Conference call with FMW (cont'd)

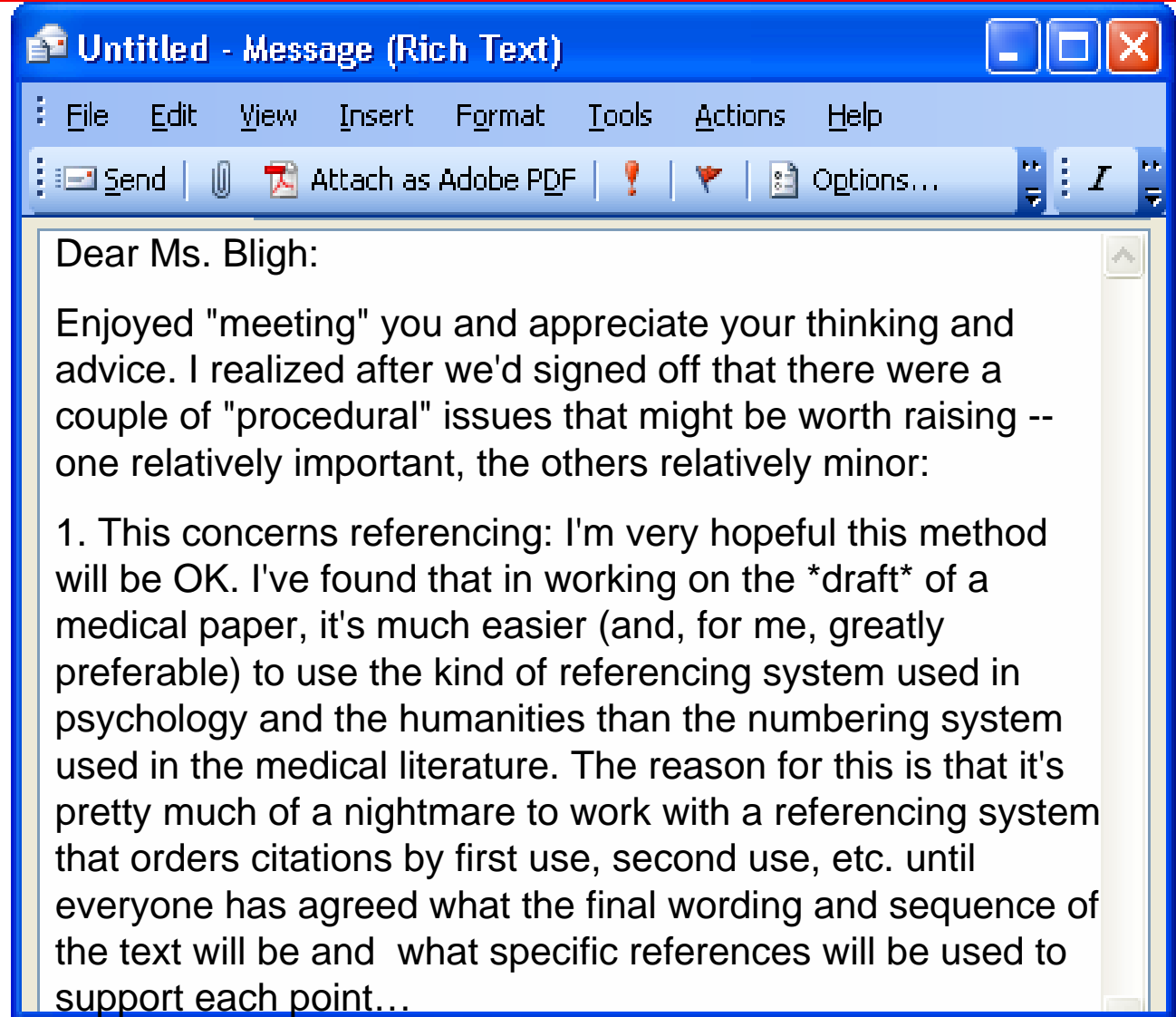
- Writing queries from FMW
 - Team will provide contact information of either Medical Director, in-house Medical Writer/Editor, or other Team member for any communication during business and non-business hours
 - Queries may include medical content, RefMan formatting, clarification of project, etc.
 - DO NOT send superfluous queries

Project Development at *Excerpta Medica* (cont'd)

*Conference call
with FMW (cont'd)*

- Example of superfluous query

[Email1.doc](#)

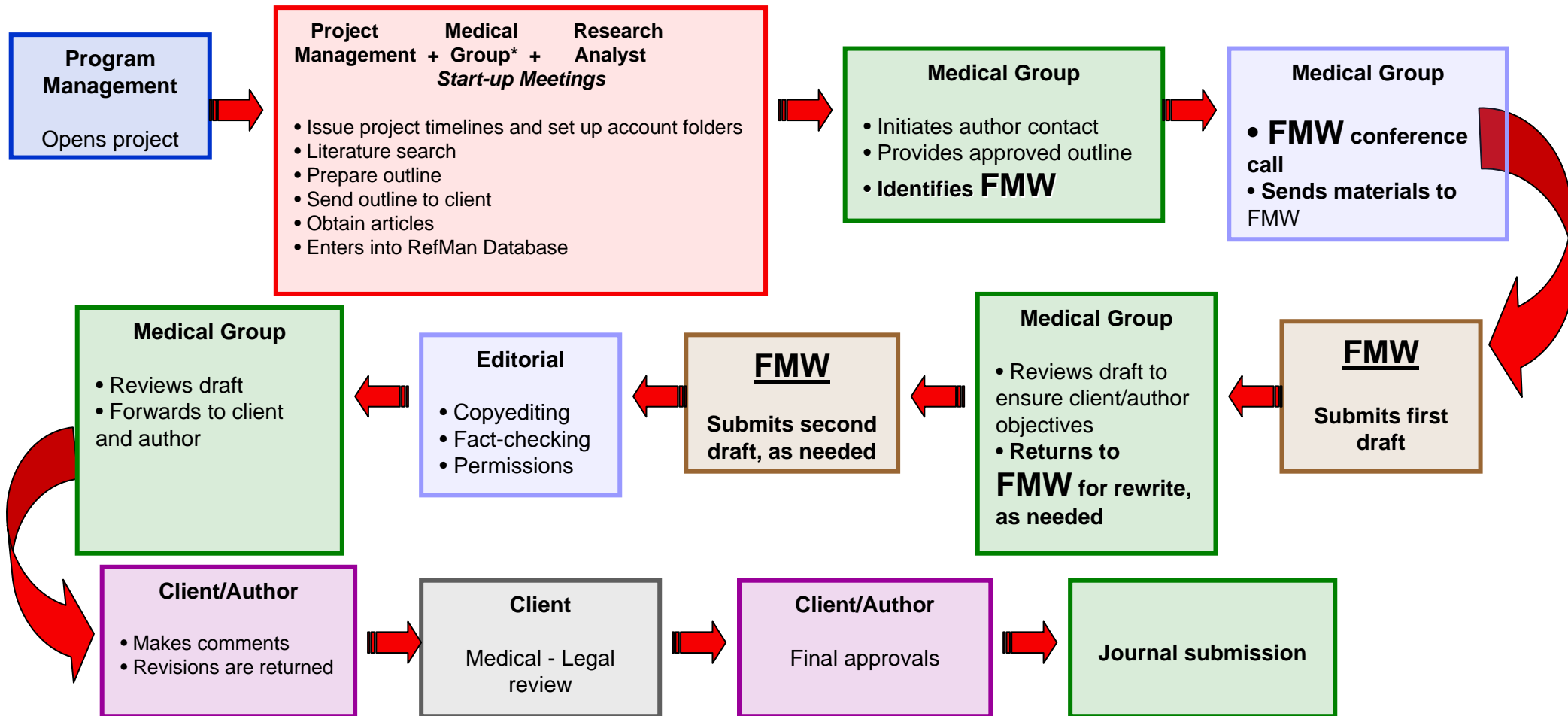


Project Development at *Excerpta Medica* (cont'd)

Conference call with FMW (cont'd)

- Generally open for discussion
 - Payment range
 - Writing time
 - Number of drafts
- Excerpta Medica's wish list
 - Maintain a group of 10 available FMW who are frequently used, are intimately familiar with the Excerpta Medica writing process, and are versatile
 - Send critique of FMW's work

Project Development at Excerpta Medica: Summary



FMW = Freelance Medical Writer.

* Medical Group = Strategic Communication Director; Medical Director; and Medical Writer/Editor.

Part II

The Do's and Don'ts of Communication

Examples of E-mail: Do's

FMW and Excerpta Medica intercommunication

- Make your first contact with a perspective agency a beautiful thing

[Email2.doc](#)

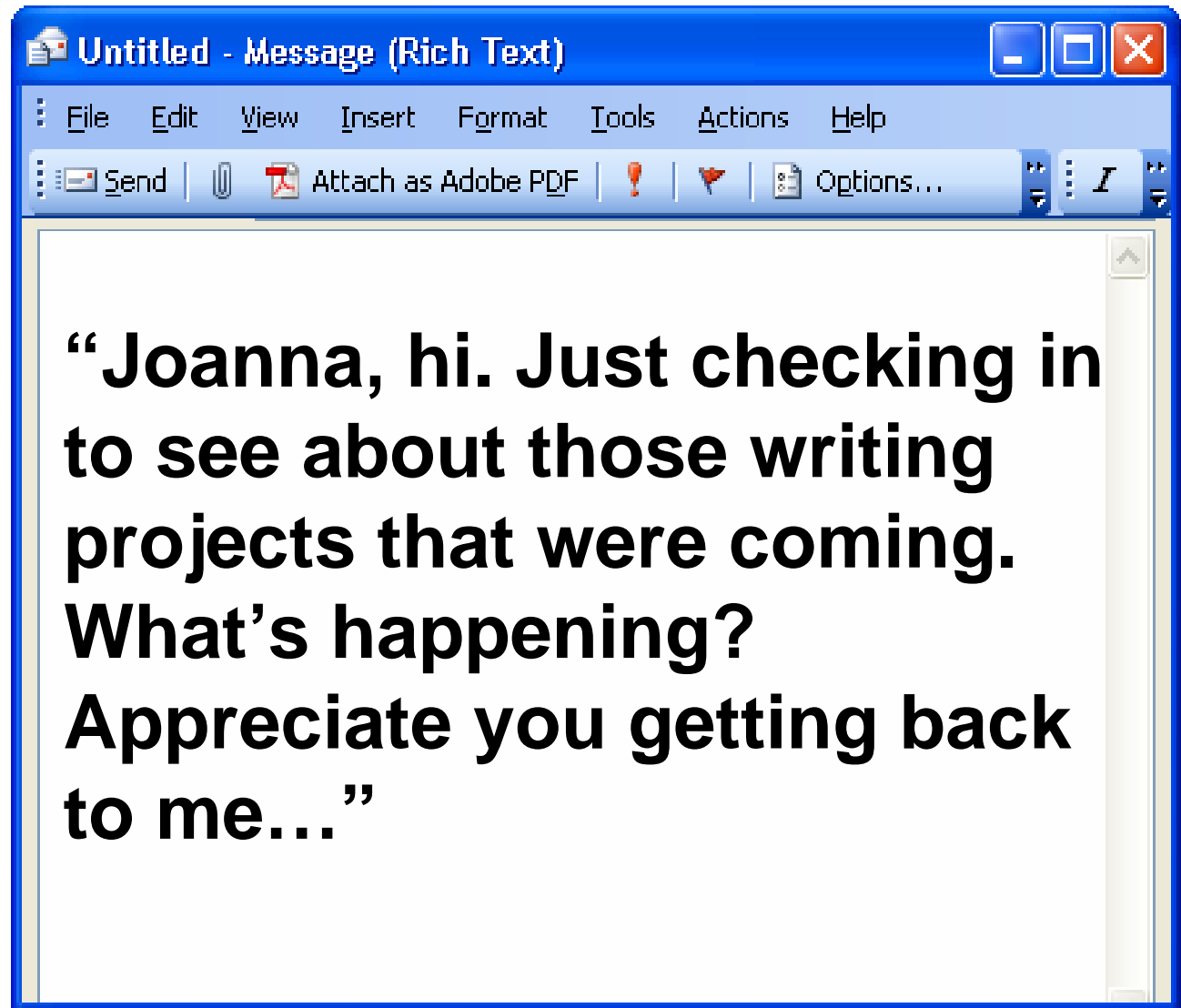


Examples of E-mail: Don'ts

*FMW and Excerpta Medica
Intercommunication
(cont'd)*

- Too familiar

[Email3.doc](#)



Examples of E-mail: Don'ts (cont'd)

FMW and Excerpta Medica intercommunication (cont'd)

- Don't send a file so large that most computers can't read it
- This came from an FMW as a holiday card:

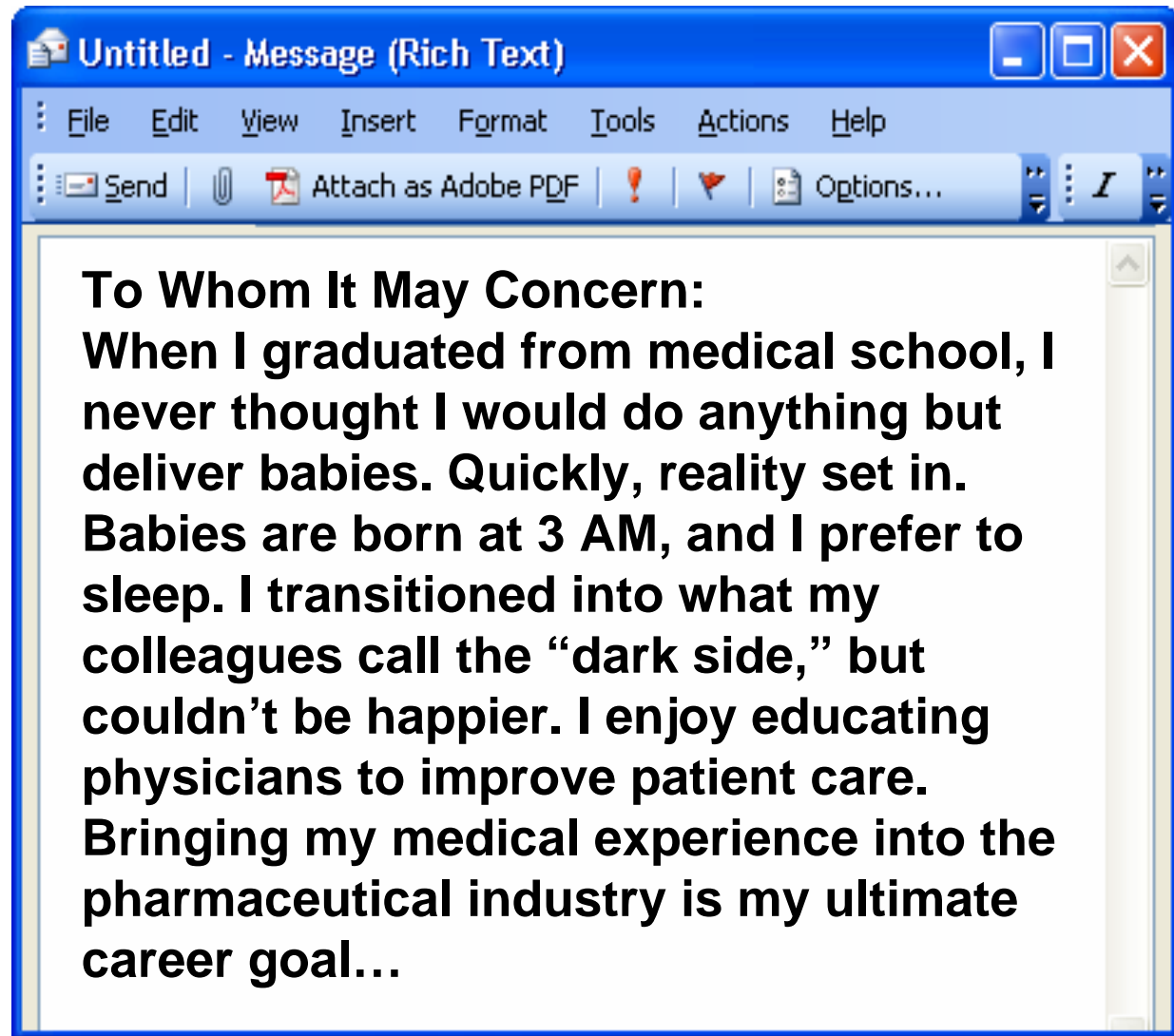


Examples of E-mail: Don'ts (cont'd)

*FMW and Excerpta Medica
intercommunication (cont'd)*

- Too much information

[Email4.doc](#)

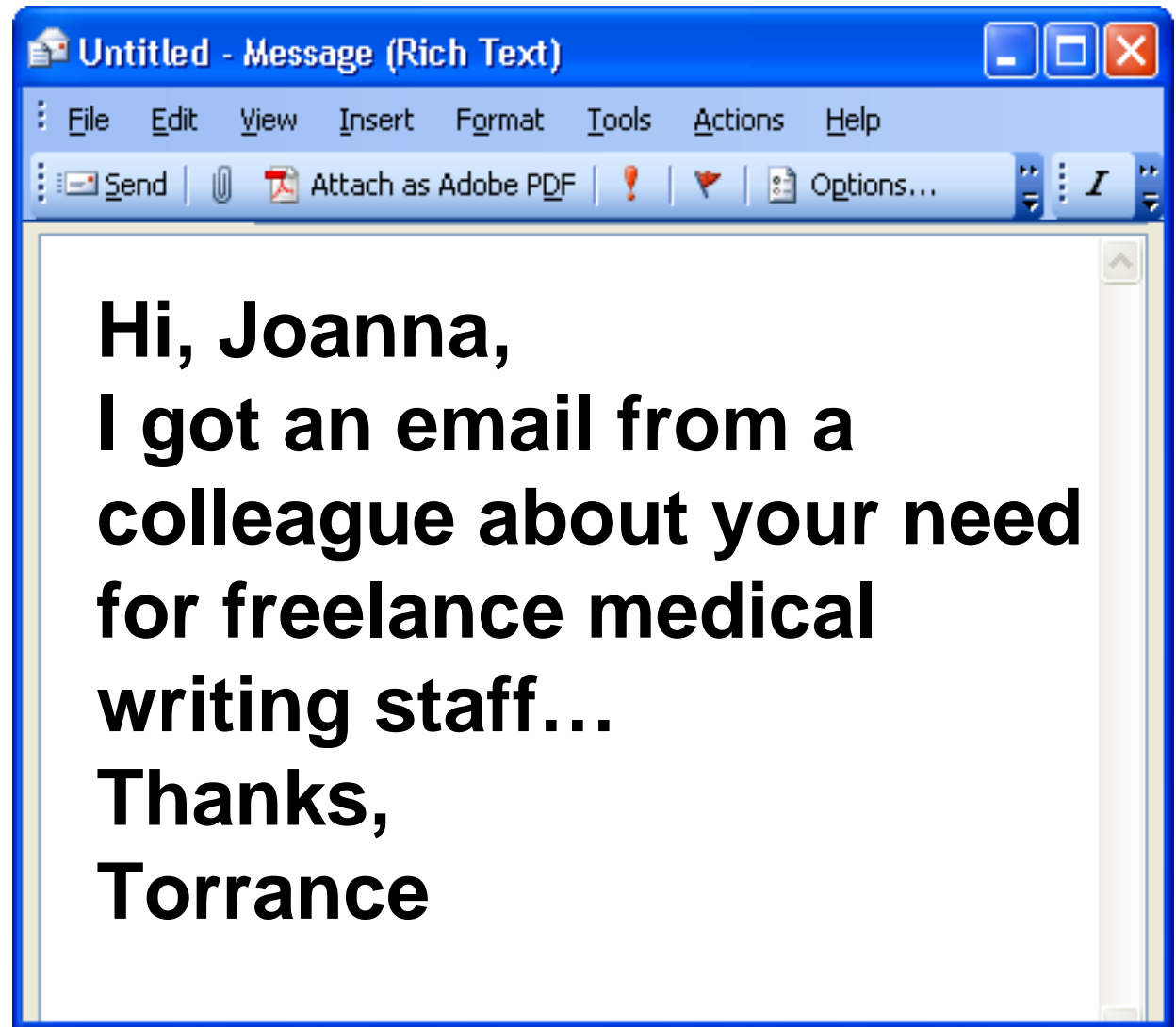


Examples of E-mail: Don'ts (cont'd)

FMW and Excerpta Medica intercommunication (cont'd)

- Please don't use my first name if I don't know who you are; this is an example of a first communication

[Email5.doc](#)

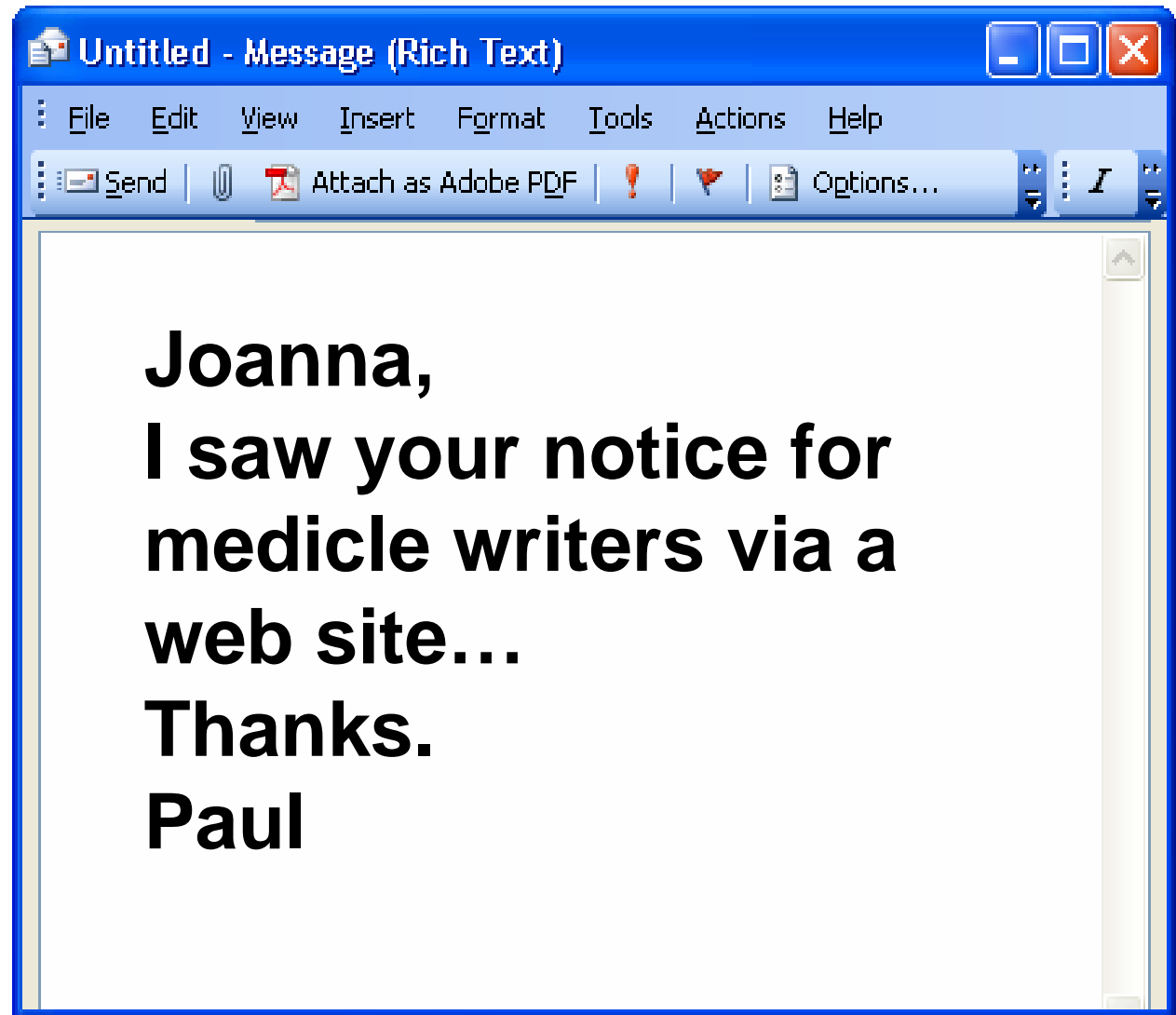


Examples of E-mail: Don'ts (cont'd)

FMW and Excerpta Medica intercommunication (cont'd)

- Make sure your first communication by e-mail is copyedited

[Email6.doc](#)



Examples of E-mail: Don'ts (cont'd)

FMW and Excerpta Medica intercommunication (cont'd)

- Be careful about making mistakes in the title, name, or affiliation of the person you are communicating with

[Email7.doc](#)

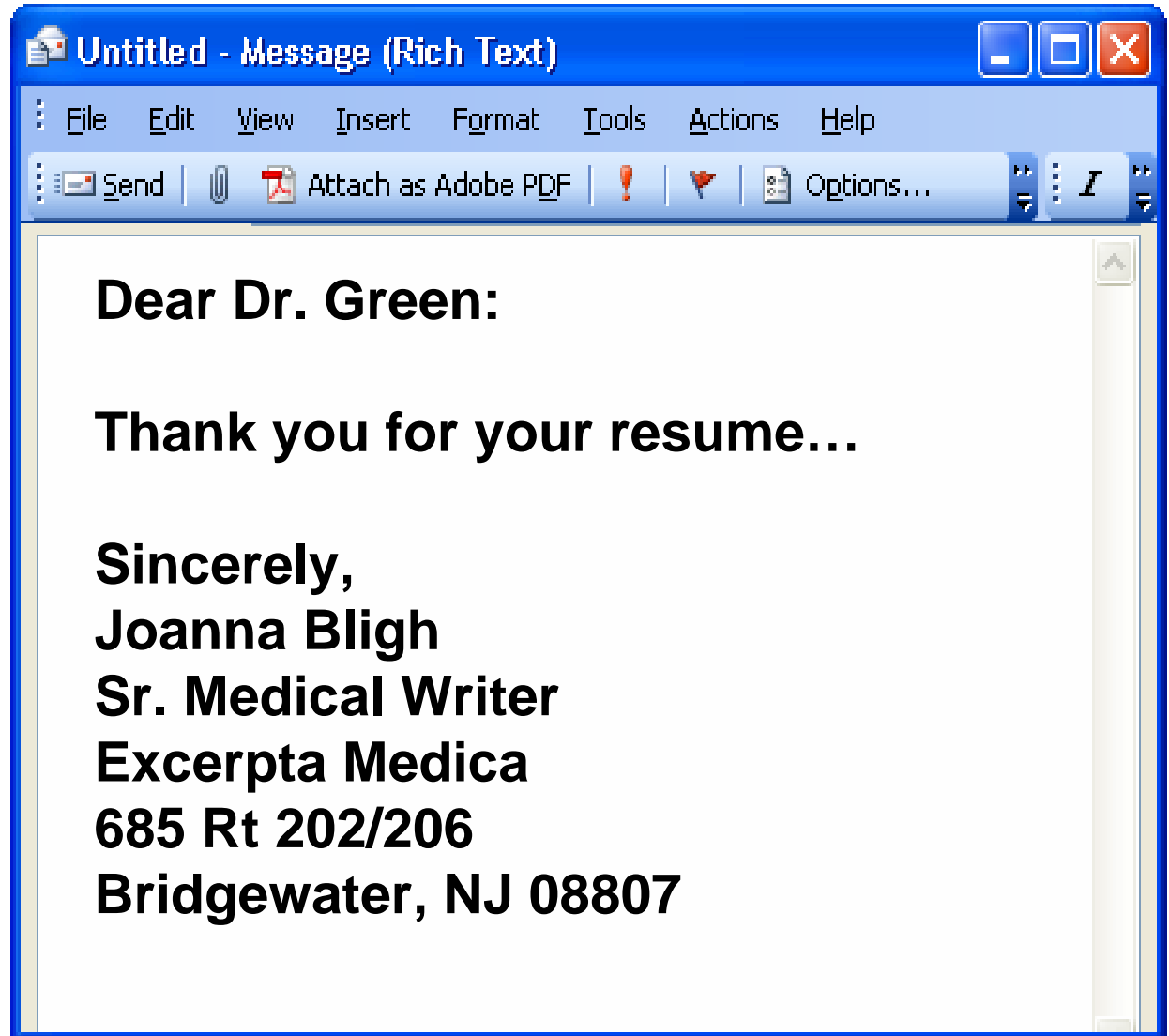


Examples of E-mail: Don'ts (cont'd)

*FMW and Excerpta Medica
intercommunication (cont'd)*

- Follow the writing format of the sender

[Email8.doc](#)

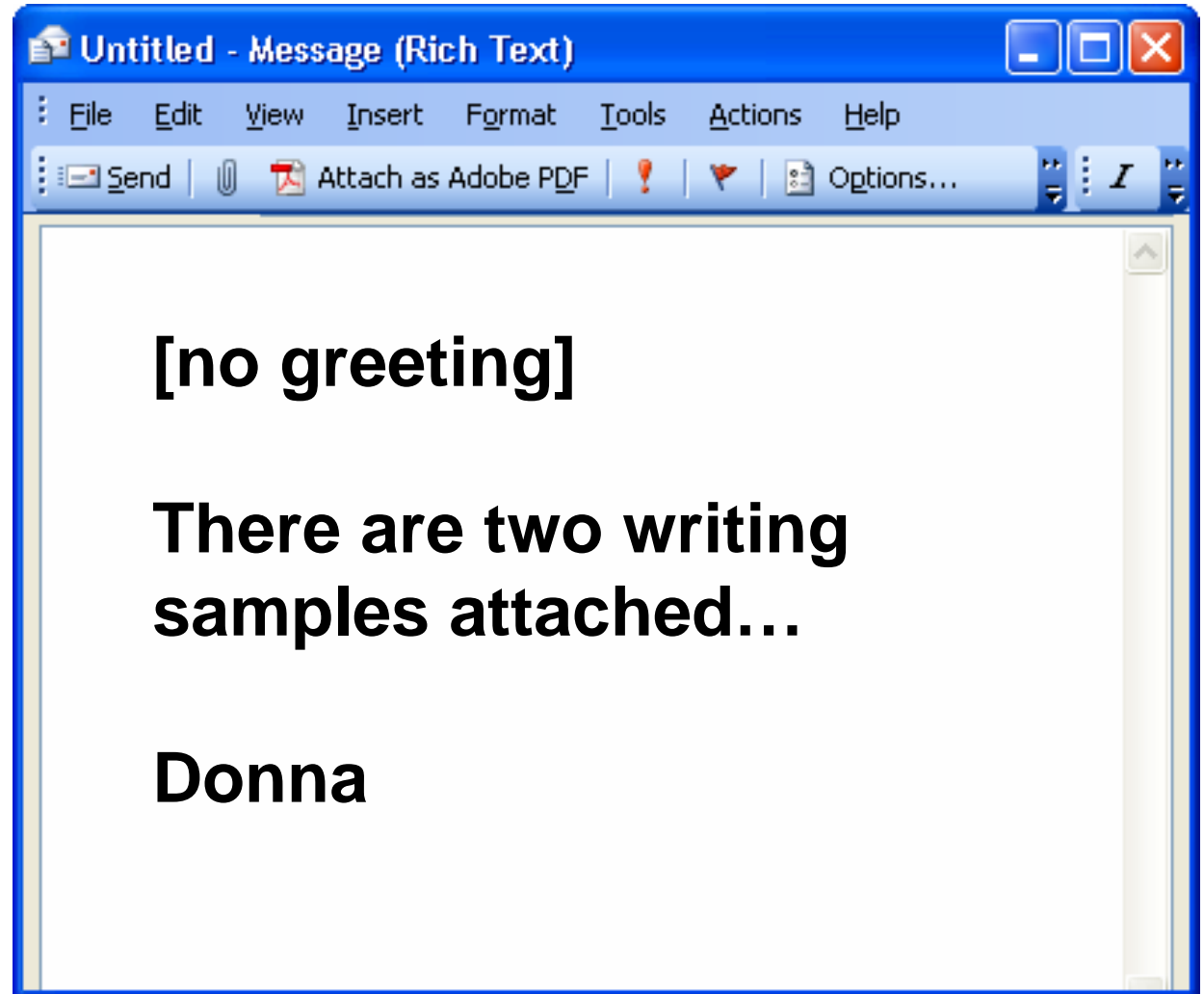


Examples of E-mail: Don'ts (cont'd)

*FMW and Excerpta Medica
intercommunication (cont'd)*

- Follow the writing format of the sender

[Email8.doc](#)



Summary

When seeking work from an agency or medical education company as an FMW, make sure you

- Clearly indicate your degree status after your name
- Emphasize your breadth of experience and therapeutic areas of interest
- Highlight your needs in completion of the project (eg, timelines, fees, listening in on physician/author conference calls, or contacting Excerpta Medica Team members)
- Think before you communicate by e-mail; how will your message be received by a busy staff member?