



Presented at the AMWA-DVC  
2005 Getting Started in Medical Writing Workshop

# Scope of Medical Writing

Getting Started in Medical Writing Workshop  
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# Overview of Scope of Medical Writing

- Introductions
- Characteristics of Successful Medical Writers
- Medical Writing Jobs, Assignments and Employers
- Career Paths to Scientific and Marketing Medical Writing



- Salaries of Medical Writers

# Introductions

# What do you know about Medical Writing as a Career?

- Work is interesting and lucrative, high demand exists

Source: Sahadi, 2004

- Two types of medical writer:

- Scientific (medicine, science, pharmacy degree etc.)

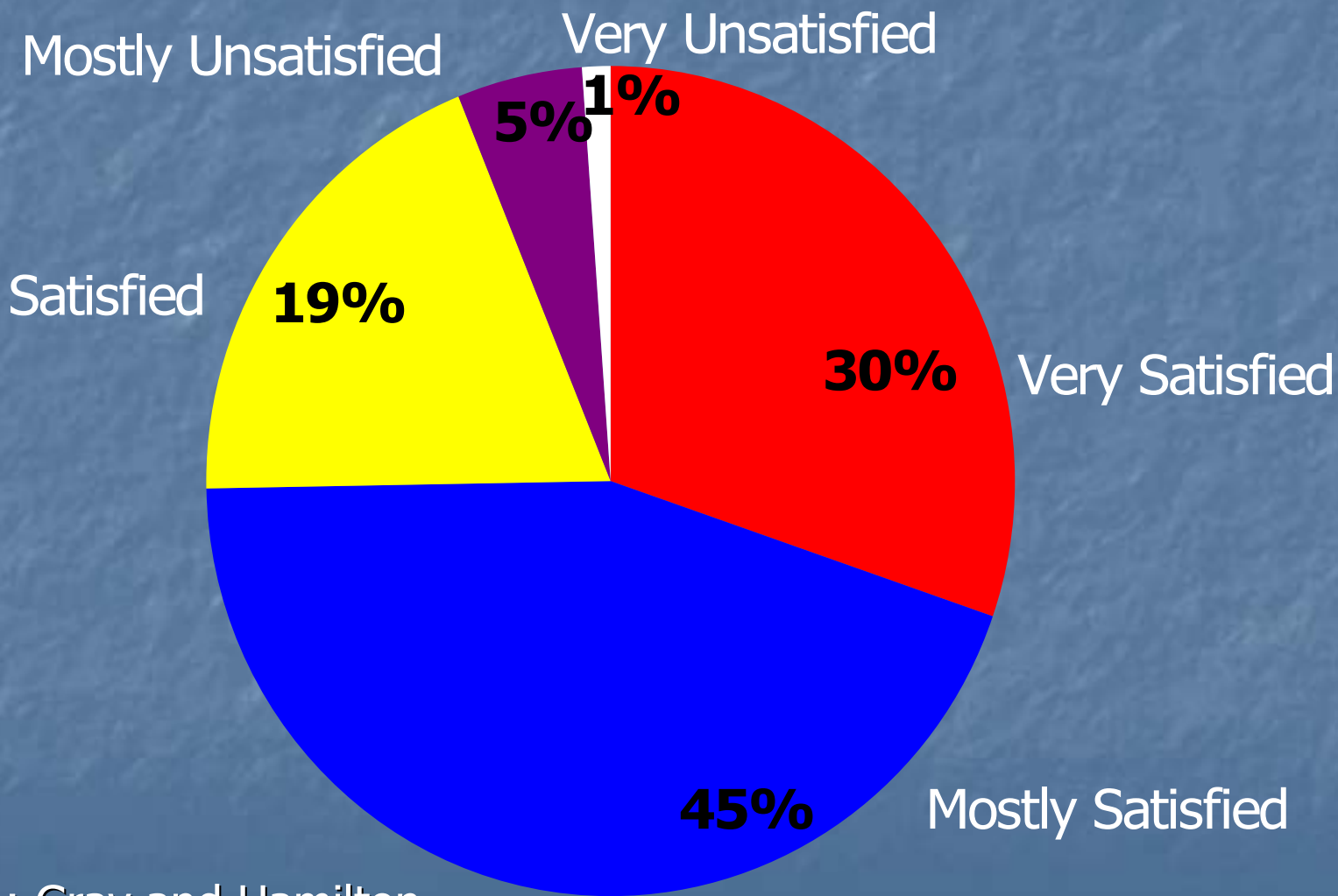


- Marketing (journalism, English degree)



Source: Bonk, 1998

# Medical Writers' Satisfaction With Work



Source: Gray and Hamilton,  
2004

# Characteristics of Medical Writers

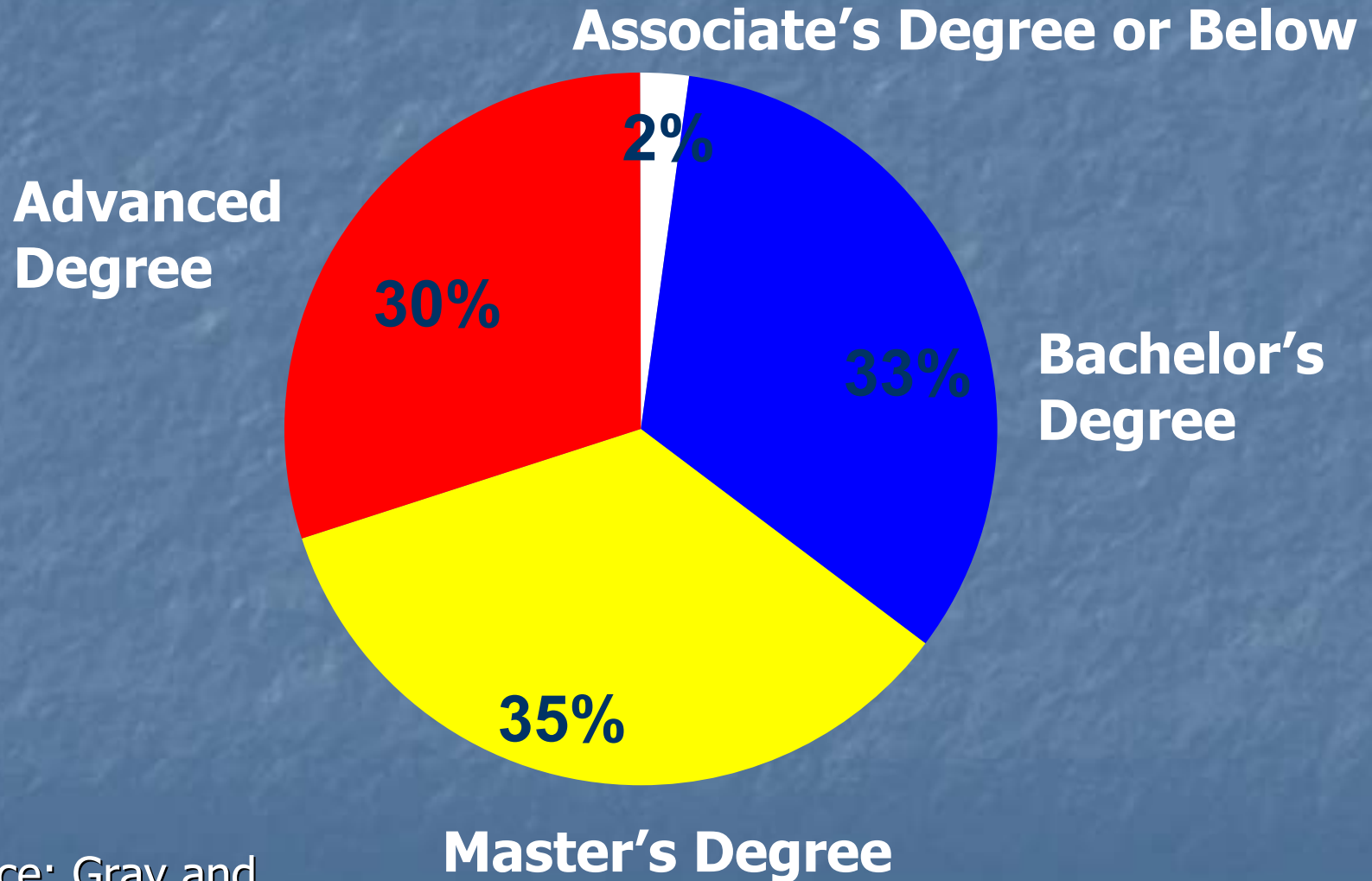
# Who becomes a Medical Writer?

- Requires a combination of technical skills in medical sciences and rhetorical skills in language arts



- 2004 AMWA survey showed approximately:
  - 65% AMWA members are educated at masters or doctorate level
  - 50% are science educated; the other half are humanities educated


# Highest Educational Level



Source: Gray and Hamilton, 2004



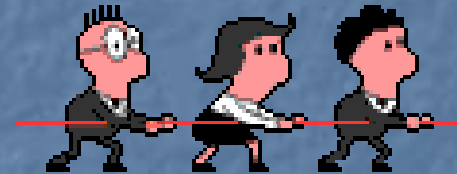
# Field of Highest Degree

- **Science (33.8%)**
- **English (14.4%)**
- Journalism (5.3%)
- Pharmacy (5.1%)
- Medicine (4.8%)
- Communication (4.3%)
- Public Health (3.1%)
- Nursing (2.4%) 
- Technical Writing (2.4%)
- Other (24.3%)

Source: Gray and Hamilton,  
2004

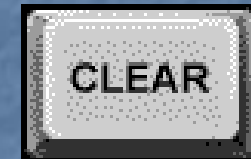
# Some Shared Attributes and Characteristics

- Attention to detail
- Ability to write
- Ability to work across teams (often remotely)
- Ability to work independently
- Good communicators
- Knowledge or aptitude for understanding medicine
- Education: College education in science, medicine, English or journalism



# More Shared Attributes and Characteristics

- Deadline orientated
- Thorough research
- Accuracy
- Logical Organization
- Clear thinking and writing
- Ability to write clearly



Source: AMWA-DVC Web site, 2004

# Medical Writing Jobs and Employers

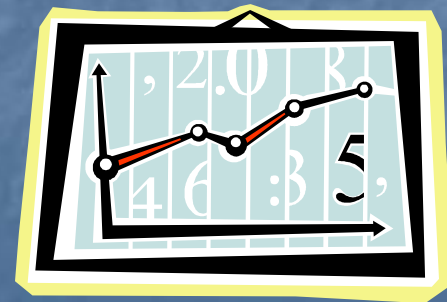
# Examples of Work Scientific Medical Writers Undertake

- Journal abstracts and articles
- Advertising copy for pharmaceuticals and other products
- Internet content
- Medical education materials
- Pharmaceutical marketing and advertising



# More Examples of Work Scientific Medical Writers Undertake

- Physician speeches
- Posters
- Sales training manuals
- Regulatory documents (clinical trial reports, integrated summaries of efficacy and safety, investigator brochures etc.)
- Policy documents



Source: AMWA-DVC Web site, 2004



# Some Scientific Medical Writing Terms



- Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Regulations
- International Conference on Harmonization and Good Clinical Practice Guidelines (ICH-GCP)
- New Drug Application (NDA)
- Investigational New Drug Application (IND Application)
- Informed Consent Form (ICF); also know as Informed Consent Document (ICD)
- Clinical Study Report (CSR); also known as Clinical Trial Report (CTR)
- Protocol



# Examples of Regulatory Documents in the Pharmaceutical Industry

- Submissions (Investigational New Drug Application)
- IND and NDA Annual Reports, Amendments, Supplements
- Clinical Study Reports (Phase I-IV)
- Subject Narratives
- Investigators Brochure and Updates
- Protocols





# Examples of Work Marketing Medical Writers Undertake



- Advertising copy
- Articles
- CDs
- Editing
- Internet content
- Magazine articles - popular press
- Magazine articles - professional press
- Marketing materials



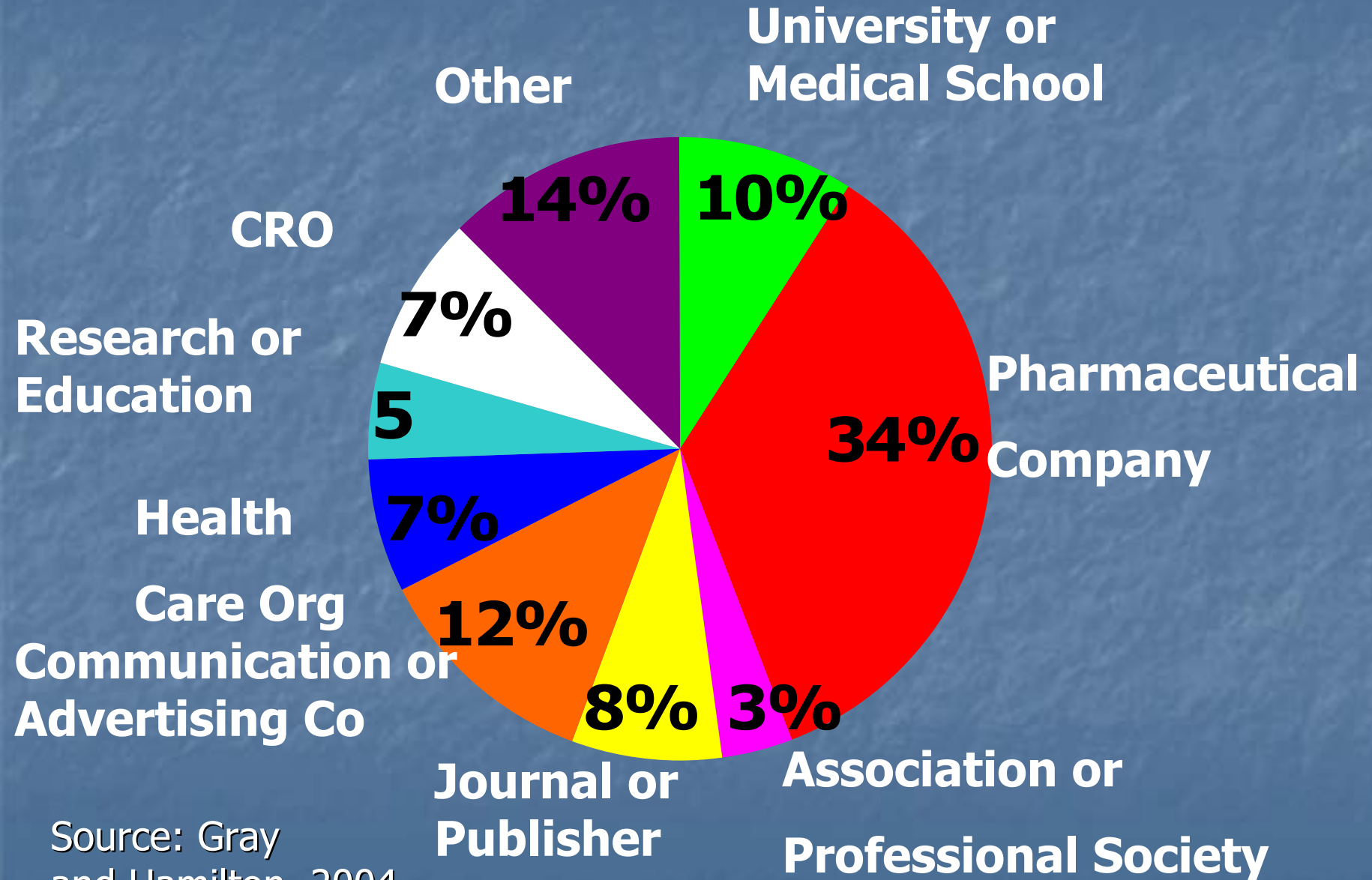
# More Examples of Work Marketing Medical Writers Undertake

- Newsletters
- Patient education materials
- Public relations materials
- Proofreading
- Training manuals



Source: AMWA-DVC Web site, 2004

# Primary Employer



Source: Gray and Hamilton, 2004



# Sample Jobs



- Medical writer for medical communications firm: to create pharmaceutical/health care educational programs
- Scientific medical writer for medical communications company: to prepare clinical and pre-clinical manuscripts, abstracts, and posters; clinical trial reports; and medical education materials
- Director of scientific editing for a biotech company: to edit and/or re-write scientific papers and grant applications, and educate and train staff in scientific writing and editing

Source: AMWA-DVC Web site, 2004



# Career Paths to Scientific and Marketing Medical Writing

# Career Paths to Medical Writing

- There are two main career paths to becoming a medical writer:
  - Writers who learn to write about medicine
  - Scientists who learn to write

Newer path is to study to become a medical writer (e.g. University of the Sciences in Philadelphia Masters in Biomedical Communications)

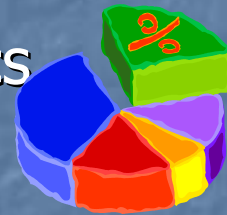
# More about Career Paths to Medical Writing

- Best way to learn:
  - build skills
  - make contacts/network
  - explore career opportunities (e.g., by joining AMWA)
- Also pursue informal/formal training



# Informal Medical Writing Training

- Read medical and pharmaceutical journals
- Subscribe to online newsletters (e.g. National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health)
- Develop an understanding of basic statistics



- Obtain and be familiar with style guides and medical dictionaries (e.g. AMA)
- Keep up to date with
  - FDA guidelines
  - Software skills (MS Word, PowerPoint, Acrobat)



Source: AMWA-DVC Web site, 2004



# Formal Medical Writing Training

- Complete a course in statistics, pharmacology or life sciences
- Enroll in AMWA's continuing education certification program
- Undertake a medical writing program through college or university



Source: AMWA-DVC Web site, 2004

# Freelance or Employee

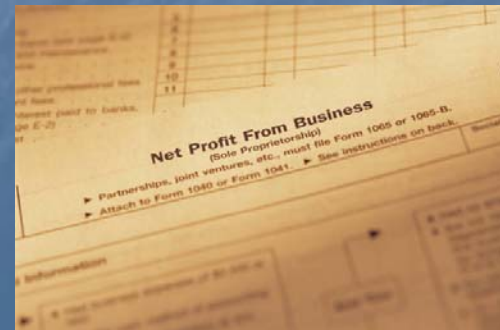
- Decision rests on:
  - Experience
  - Financial and lifestyle needs
  - Tolerance for risk
  - Need to be with other people
  - Ability to market oneself
  - Personal motivation and discipline
  - Industry trends and job market



# Salaries of Medical Writers: Employee and Freelance

# Medical Writers may Earn...

- Between about \$30,000 to \$100,000



Source: Gray and Hamilton, 2004

# Results of Regression Analysis in 1058 subjects

- High correlation between age and years experience, (years experience used for analysis)
- AMWA certification not significant in model
- Men earn more than women, even when they have similar experience and education
- $R^2 = 0.5123$  (model explains 51% of variance in income)

# More Regression Analysis

**Associate's degree or less = \$19,768**

**+**

**\$23,562 for being employed by pharmaceutical or communications or advertising firm**

**+**

**\$1,263 each year of experience**

**+**

**\$8,452**

**Bachelor's Degree**

**+**

**\$16,904**

**Master's Degree**

**+**

**\$25,356**

**Advanced Degree**

**+**

**\$7,969 for being male**

Source: Gray  
and Hamilton, 2004

# To recap.....

- Characteristics of Successful Medical Writers
- Medical Writing Jobs and Employers
- Career Paths to Scientific and Marketing Medical Writing



- Salaries of Medical Writers



# Suggested Additional Reading



- Iverson C. Style. In: *American Medical Association Manual of Style. A Guide for Authors and Editors*. 9th ed. Media, Pa: Lippincott Williams & Williams; 1998.
- Schwager E. Grammar and Usage. In: *Medical English Usage and Abusage*. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press; 1991.





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- Gray T and Hamilton CW. Findings From the 2004 AMWA Salary Survey. *American Medical Writers Association Journal*. 2004;19(4):145-151.
- Sahadi J. Interesting six-figure jobs. A look at lucrative careers that let you roll the dice, defend against terror and write about drugs. CNN/Money 2004. Available at: [http://money.cnn.com/2004/09/08/pf/sixfigs\\_seven/](http://money.cnn.com/2004/09/08/pf/sixfigs_seven/). Accessed December 21, 2004.

# Evaluation