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

- Very Unsatisfied: 1%
- Mostly Unsatisfied: 5%
- Unsatisfied: 19%
- Satisfied: 45%
- Mostly Satisfied: 30%

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

- Bachelor’s Degree: 33%
- Master’s Degree: 35%
- Advanced Degree: 30%
- Associate’s Degree or Below: 2%

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 known 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

- University or Medical School: 34%
- Pharmaceutical Company: 10%
- Communication or Advertising Co: 7%
- Journal or Publisher: 12%
- Association or Professional Society: 3%
- Care Org: 8%
- Health: 5%
- Research or Education: 7%
- Other: 14%
- CRO: 5%

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)

Source: Gray and Hamilton, 2004
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


Evaluation