22nd Annual Freelance Workshop (Virtual)

The Essence of Freelance Medical Writing and Editing

Tips and Networking for Seasoned, New, and Aspiring Freelance Medical Writers and Editors

Saturday, March 9, 2024

Virtual Workshop 12:30 PM – 4:30 PM EST

Registration page: https://amwa-dvc.regfox.com/22nd-annual-freelance-workshop
Program

12:30 – 12:35 PM – Welcome – Helen Fosam, PhD

12:35 – 12:39 PM – Introductions from the Chapter President – Debbie Anderson, PhD

12:40 – 1:40 PM – Keynote: Núria Negrão, PhD
*What You Need to Know About AI in Medical Writing*

1:45 – 2:30 PM – Roundtable Session A (virtual breakout rooms)

2:30 – 2:40 PM – Break

2:40 – 3:25 PM – Oral sessions

  2:40 – 2:55 Sophie Ash, BSc (Hons), DipION, DipLCM
  *10 Misconceptions About Freelance Medical Writing & Why They're Wrong*

  2:55 – 3:10 Janelle Barowski, MSN, RN
  *Cutting the Fluff: Mastering the Art of Lean & Plain Language in Medical Writing*

  3:10 – 3:25 Eloise DeHaan, BS
  *Writing and Editing with the AMA Manual of Style*

3:30 – 4:15 PM – Roundtable Session B (virtual breakout rooms)

4:15 – 4:30 PM – Wrap up and close

Workshop Registration

Visit the registration page (https://amwa-dvc.regfox.com/22nd-annual-freelance-workshop)
Please select one roundtable from session A and one from session B.

Registration Cost

AMWA Members: $20
Non-members: $30
Students and postdocs: $5

Questions?

Contact freelanceworkshop@amwa-dvc.org with the subject line “Q AMWA-DVC 2024 Freelance Workshop”
Keynote Speaker

12:40 – 1:40 PM

What You Need to Know About AI in Medical Writing
Núria Negrão, PhD

In the evolving landscape of medical writing, artificial intelligence (AI)’s role as a research assistant is increasingly vital. This presentation aims to demystify and demonstrate how AI tools can revolutionize the way freelance medical writers approach their work, from research to drafting.

This presentation will provide an in-depth look at leveraging AI for efficient literature reviews, idea generation, and content structuring in medical writing. Attendees will witness a live demonstration of AI tools in action, offering a practical, hands-on perspective.

Integrating AI into medical writing isn't just about efficiency; it's about enhancing the quality and depth of our work. By embracing AI, freelance medical writers can unlock new potential in their writing process, fostering creativity and precision. This presentation promises to be an enlightening exploration of AI's transformative power in freelance medical writing, equipping attendees with knowledge and skills to enhance their professional practice.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the practical use of AI in medical writing from initial research to final edits.
- Explore AI tools through a live demonstration of literature reviews and organizing content.
- Discover how AI integration can transform the workflow, quality, and creativity of freelance medical writing.

Roundtable Breakout Sessions

(Choose 2 roundtables on the registration form, one for Session A breakout and one for Session B breakout)

1:45 – 2:30 PM Roundtable Session A breakout (virtual breakout rooms)
3:30 – 4:15 PM Roundtable Session B breakout (virtual breakout rooms)
Roundtable Options

1. **How to Attract More Clients on LinkedIn** *(Lori DeMilto, MJ)*

More clients are searching for freelance medical writers and editors on LinkedIn these days. But if you want to rank high in search results, you need a client-focused profile, a large and relevant network, and to be somewhat active. It only takes about 10 minutes of activity most weekdays to see results once you’ve optimized your profile and built your network.

Learning objectives:
- Develop a client-focused profile with a compelling headline and About section.
- Grow your network with relevant connections.
- Use the updated LinkedIn algorithm to impress clients and colleagues with your activity.

Come prepared to share your LinkedIn questions and successes.

2. **Generative AI: Friend or Foe** *(Ruwaida Vakil, MSc)*

During this roundtable session, we will focus on how to make the most out of Generative AI models such as ChatGPT, Bard, and Claude. We will discuss the increasing significance of these models, the potential risks they pose, the importance of ethical usage, and how to generate the most effective prompts. Additionally, the participants can share their experiences with Generative AI.

Learning objective:
- Develop an awareness of Generative AI models and their appropriate application.

3. **Tips for Managing Your Freelance Business When You Have Chronic Illness** *(Mia DeFino, MS, ELS, CMPP)*

Background: At least 40% of Americans (~133 million) have one chronic medical condition and by 2030 the projected number is expected to reach 170 million. Also, of those people with a chronic condition, at least half have more than one. Freelance medical writing and editing provides an opportunity for individuals managing chronic illnesses to have a meaningful career and have flexibility for attending medical appointments and taking care of their medical needs while working remotely. However, managing both a freelance business and treatment and medical appointments for chronic illnesses can be stressful.

Description: This round table will cover 10 tips for managing one’s schedule and workload to help reduce stress and increase the success and enjoyment of running one’s freelance business. The round table facilitator has applied these tips over the last 9 years and has been earning 6-figure salaries for the last 7 years.
Key Message: Even though one may not feel well with chronic illness, some strategies can help reduce stress and being overwhelmed with all the things that need to be done for both taking care of oneself and running a freelance business. Learn how to take control and enjoy your business and work.

Learning objective:
- Participants will learn and apply strategies for time management, project and client selection, and communication to help grow their business.

4. Patient-Centric Pages: Writing to Connect and Empower (Anna Shurtleff Smith, BSN, MPH)

Background/Purpose: Freelance medical writers can find themselves disconnected from the patients they are hoping to empower. Patient-centric communication stands as a cornerstone for effective care. "Patient-Centric Pages: Writing to Connect and Empower” delves into the art of creating empathetic and informative content that not only educates but also emotionally connects with patients, fostering empowerment and understanding.

Description: This presentation delves into the critical significance of patient-centric medical writing. It emphasizes the need for empathetic and clear communication in healthcare content creation to foster stronger connections with patients. By focusing on patient needs, this approach aims to empower individuals to take charge of their health journey through accessible and relatable information.

Key Message: The key message of this presentation is to highlight the transformative impact of patient-centric medical writing in establishing meaningful connections with patients, leading to informed decision-making and empowerment in their healthcare journey.

This presentation aims to underscore the pivotal role of patient-centric writing in healthcare communication, advocating for a more compassionate and empowering approach to medical content creation that prioritizes the needs and understanding of patients.

Learning objectives:
- Understand the principles of patient-centric writing and its significance in healthcare communication.
- Explore strategies for crafting empathetic and relatable medical content that resonates with diverse patient populations.
- Learn how patient-centric writing can facilitate better comprehension, engagement, and empowerment among healthcare recipients.

5. Introduction to Medical Writing for Pharmaceutical Advertising (Holly Hagan, MSc)

Pharmaceutical advertising is a $6.5 billion industry, yet the roles and responsibilities of the medical writer in the development of advertising promotional material are often underestimated. This roundtable discussion will address the role of the medical writer (medical
(copywriter) in the development of pharmaceutical-branded promotional material directed to healthcare professionals and consumers. Sharing personal stories will demonstrate that medical writing for pharmaceutical advertising is a valid career path that includes the option to freelance. Many of the common traits among medical writers are useful in pharmaceutical advertising.

Learning objectives:
- Review the process for developing promotional material for the pharmaceutical industry
- Describe the various roles and responsibilities of medical writers in the development process.

6. Professional Project Management for Medical Writers (Kyle Smith, PMP)

The purpose of this round table is to help others leverage core ideas from the PMI (Project Management Institute) and practices surrounding project management. The round table discussion will explain the five stages of a project. I will take the participants through each step, review the main objectives of those steps, and relate those to their projects. We will discuss as a group the best practices, limitations, and shared experiences.

Learning objectives:
- Become familiar with the five stages of a project.
- Apply learning of project stages to medical writing projects.

7. Breaking into CME Writing (Donald M. Harting, MA, MS, ELS, CHCP)

Continuing medical education (CME) writing, which includes developing needs assessments as well as instructional content, has become more difficult in recent years. Pressure to demonstrate measurable learning outcomes, competition among medical education companies, and technological innovations all challenge CME writers to become—and remain—competent. While a competency model for regulatory writers exists, until now there has been no roadmap to guide CME writers.

In this roundtable, you will learn about the first competency model developed specifically for medical writers who wish to excel in the field of accredited continuing education in the health professions.

Learning objectives:
- Recall the knowledge areas, skills, and attitudes needed to excel in CME writing.
- Identify in-demand deliverables that competent CME writers should be able to develop.
- Begin assembling a toolbox of CME writing resources you can use to hone your expertise.

8. How to Boost Your Bottomline by Nurturing Clients into Long-term Relationships (Katherine Molnar-Kimber, PhD)
Keeping clients happy so they continue to request projects is a win-win for both the client and the freelancer. In this interactive roundtable, we will discuss at least 10 tips that help nurture new clients into long-term relationships. Just as important, we will discuss 4 ways to avoid dampening the enthusiasm of clients for your services. Bring your experiences with both ideal clients and difficult clients (anonymous) to discuss. We will also mention at least one or two red flags that suggest the culture of the long-term client has changed. This interactive roundtable can provide additional insights into nurturing new clients into long-term relationships that provide a stream of projects.

Learning objectives:

- Describe at least 10 tips for nurturing clients into long-term relationships.
- Recall 4 issues that can turn off many clients.
- Become aware of 2 red flags that suggest the culture of the long-term client has changed.

9. A Pharma Medical Writing Manager's Perspectives on Partnering with Contract Medical Writers (Mia Nagarajan, PhD)

This roundtable will describe the working environment and focus areas for a pharma regulatory medical writing team with both in-house and contract medical writers, and expectations for contract medical writers. The session will include the do's and don'ts for working in a cross-functional team and provide practical tips for contract medical writers to partner with their pharmaceutical clients and stay in demand. Participants will be invited to share their own strategies and experiences meeting client expectations and discuss best practices for improving collaboration, efficiency, and engagement in cross-functional teams.

Learning objectives:

- Understand expectations and responsibilities for contract medical writers.
- Recognize some do's and don'ts for working in a cross-functional work environment.
- Learn some practical tips to stay in demand and partner with pharmaceutical clients.

Oral Sessions

2:40 – 3:25 PM

2:40 – 2:55 PM Ten Misconceptions About Freelance Medical Writing & Why They're Wrong (Sophie Ash, BSc (Hons), DipION, DipLCM)

It’s not uncommon for fresh-faced freelancers to feel overwhelmed when embarking on entrepreneurship for the first time. Suddenly faced with the prospect of self-promotion, branding, sales, and negotiation, it’s easy to lose momentum or get stuck before you’re even out of the gate. “How much should I charge?”, “Is networking essential for my success?”, and “What should I put in my portfolio?” are just a handful of the questions that are probably running
through your jittery mind. Rest assured this is normal. If you act now, you can get back on the
straight and narrow, well on your way to increased freedom and flexibility in your freelancing
business. It’s time to show up for yourself and quit floundering. Avoid making the ten most
common mistakes that new freelance medical writers make by learning from others’ business
blunders.

Learning objectives:
- List the top ten most common misconceptions that new freelance medical writers make.
- Create an action plan to help you and your freelance medical writing business thrive.

2:55 – 3:10 PM Cutting the Fluff: Mastering the Art of Lean & Plain Language in Medical
Writing (Janelle Barowski, MSN, RN)

Using plain language and lean writing has made medical writing more accessible across disci-
plines as well as to the public. It helps cut down on unnecessary "fluff" while increasing the
readability of the document. This helps with retention for the target audience. Plain language is
more than just writing openly. It’s about grouping appropriate information, getting to the point,
and only including pertinent information. Not every single detail needs to be included in every
single document.

As medical writers, we are on the cusp of a new movement. Long gone are the days of rambling,
passive sentences with no clear goal. Today, we want actively written paragraphs with a shorter
introduction. We're spending less time setting up the scene, and more time getting straight to the
point. At the end of the day, our documents need to be easy to read, or they won’t be read at all.

Learning objectives:
- State 4 best practices of plain language.
- Recognize 4 reasons behind the plain language and lean writing movement.
- State 4 best practices of lean writing.

3:10 – 3:25 PM Writing and Editing with the AMA Manual of Style (Eloise DeHaan, BS)

Background/Purpose:
Clients often ask medical authors and copyeditors to follow the AMA Manual of Style: A Guide
for Authors and Editors. The 11th edition, published in March 2020, costs $50 for a 1-year,
online subscription (add $100 for a bundled hard copy). It is the style manual for the 13 medical
journals in the JAMA Network.

The manual's 23 chapters supply guidance about types of medical articles, references, graphs and
tables, grammar and usage, units of measure, and specialized terms for major medical fields.
Guidance on publishing, such as authorship responsibility and publishing procedures, is also
included.

Description:
Eloise DeHaan, BS, will talk about using the AMA style manual in day-to-day work. She will give tips on its style details and on using it for learning and teaching. She will talk about the manual's quirkiest style points, wringing the most value from the manual, and communicating with its style committee.

An independent and corporate medical copyeditor since 2008, Eloise was first required to hew to the AMA manual 6 years ago by the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), a nongovernment research agency that contracted her employer, ECRI, an independent, nonprofit organization that publishes worldwide about patient safety.

Learning objectives:
- Identify 3 ways to use the manual beyond looking up style rules.
  Become aware of how the AMA Style Committee works.
# Biosketches

**Sophie Ash**, BSc (Hons), DipION, DipLCM, is a freelance medical journalist, adjunct professor, and business coach for first-time entrepreneurs, specializing in the medical communications industry. Sophie mastered the art of personal branding and sales when her own freelance medical writing business kicked off in 2019, having since generated $3M worth of medcomms business for herself, her former agency, and her mentees. Sophie secured every client, job, and contract she's ever had through networking and digital marketing and loves to share her expertise with those who need it. Her LinkedIn newsletters, Freedom-Focused Entrepreneurs and Freelance Medical Writing have over 4,000 subscribers, with many of her publications stemming from digital marketing-related topics. Sophie has been interviewed on ABC 7, ABC 13, ABC 27, FOX, and KRON News stations for her expertise in the business aspects of freelance medical writing, and also coaches other business owners on preparing for their own media appearances.

**Janelle Barowski**, MSN RN, is a medical writer for several outlets, including Haymarket, Alphanumeric, and 2nd Spark. As a registered nurse, Janelle is passionate about client education and accessible health information. She works primarily in the infectious disease, pharmaceutical, and neurology space. Janelle is a promotional speaker being featured at multiple conferences this summer, including the National Nurses in Business (NNBA) conference. She supports new medical writers by providing comprehensive resources to help them jumpstart their journey at [Willow Bark Health Writing](https://willowbarkhealthwriting.com). She lives in New Hampshire and enjoys skiing, hiking, and kayaking. Follow her on [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com) to learn more.

**Eloise DeHaan**, BS, is a medical copyeditor in the Horizon Scanning Department of ECRI, a nonprofit in Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania. She has been with ECRI for 13 years, the past 5 editing under the AMA Manual of Style. Eloise copyedits assignments varying from forms in databases to 5-page and 300-page reports in Word. The 5-page reports are each read by 9 reviewers, including doctors and patients, who judge the disruptive potential of the reported medical treatments. Eloise also obtains these reviews as the stakeholder engagement coordinator. Before ECRI, Eloise had a career in daily newspapers, specializing in business and real estate news. After a 2008 buyout from *The Morning Call* in Allentown, Pennsylvania, Eloise was introduced to medical copyediting by a mentor. Eloise plans to retire from ECRI in September 2024.

**Mia DeFino**, MS, ELS, CMPP, started freelancing in 2016 and has worked with various clients (academic medical centers, medical communication agencies, pharma and biotech companies, and startups) on scientific and medical publications, grants, IND submissions, and regulatory briefing documents. She has a background in pharmacology, biochemistry, and psychology, and has earned two certifications, Editor in the Life Sciences (ELS) and Certified Medical Publication Professional (CMPP). Also, she has presented at several AMWA conferences (local and national) and published in the AMWA Journal.

**Lori DeMilto**, MJ, has been helping clients attract, engage, and motivate audiences through targeted medical content since 1997. By consistently marketing her freelance business, she has always had as much work as she wanted. The author of 4 books on marketing for freelancers, Lori also teaches an online course on this. A fellow of the American Medical Writers
Association, Lori frequently presents at AMWA on marketing and running a successful freelance business. She is the founder of the AMWA-DVC Freelance Workshop and a member of the AMWA Journal Freelance Forum.

Helen Fosam, PhD, is a freelance medical writer and owner of The Edge Medical Writing. Medical writing for medical education brings together Helen’s interest in the sciences, medicine, and communication. Helen applies her 20 years of medical writing experience to help address key needs for content development, including well-written needs assessments, slides, abstracts, manuscripts, or conference reports. Helen’s reputation for professionalism and efficiency, with a commitment to delivering high-quality work to strict deadlines and budget, provides a seamless extension to writing teams in the pharmaceutical, biotechnology, and medical communication industry sectors to meet looming deadlines. Helen is the immediate past president, AMWA-DVC, co-chair of the AMWA-DVC Freelance Workshop from 2020 to 2024, and the founder of the Missing Link to Improved Health Outcomes (MiLHO) Initiative, focused on creating online CME courses for healthcare professionals in Africa.

Holly Hagan, MSc, is a medical writer and medical copywriter. Since 2009, she has been developing promotional copy for ground-breaking prescription products marketed by major pharmaceutical companies. As a freelance medical copywriter, she has worked with more than 15 healthcare advertising agencies on promotional material for US, Canadian, and global markets. With a deep understanding of the pharmaceutical advertising industry, she teaches both freelance and staff medical copywriters in her healthcare copywriting training course and through the University of Chicago Professional Education program.

Donald Harting, MA, MS, ELS, CHCP is the President of Harting Communications, LLC based in Downingtown, PA. He is a professional medical writer with master’s degrees in journalism and biology. Donald has 15 years of experience writing needs assessments and instructional content for accredited continuing education in the health professions, and calls himself a CME writer. He is also a board-certified editor in the life sciences (ELS) and a certified healthcare CPD Professional (CHCP). Since 2009, he has worked with many accredited and non-accredited CME providers to win more than $4.8 million in education grants, mostly in oncology. Since 2014 he has been conducting original research on best practices for CME writing. He has been invited to co-present the first-ever competency model for CME writers at the 2024 meeting of the Alliance for Continuing Education in the Health Professions in New Orleans. Donald currently serves as co-chair of the Member Engagement Committee of the Delaware Valley Chapter of AMWA.

Katherine Molnar-Kimber, PhD, is the President of KMK Consulting Services at Kimnar Group LLC. Her independent medical writing career benefits from nurturing new clients into mutually beneficial long-term relationships. She earned her PhD in Immunology at the University of Pennsylvania. After working in industry and academia as a scientist, she became an Independent medical writer for professional audiences. She uses her 20+ years as an award-winning scientist, reviewer, speaker, writer, and corresponding author to write or substantively edit research papers, reviews, slide decks, continuing medical education (CME) needs assessments, CME programs, NIH/NSF and DoD grant applications, and white papers. Her clients have published more than 120 articles in peer-reviewed journals, published CME
supplements, and hosted many CME webinars. The academic clients have been awarded over $16.3 million in grant funding. At least one white paper has generated more than 5x the expected downloads (leads). She also has published 4 peer-reviewed articles on medical writing. She is an active member of the AMWA-DVC chapter, enjoys exchanging insights with colleagues, and encourages all to consider volunteering for AMWA-DVC.

**Mia Nagarajan, PhD,** is a director of medical writing at Merck. Mia received her PhD in molecular biology and microbial genetics and has worked in various organizations with over 15 years of industry experience in medical, clinical, and regulatory writing in different therapeutic areas. She has written a broad range of regulatory documents and led programs and regulatory submissions for worldwide markets. She has contributed to important department initiatives, is a focused authoring and CSR subject matter expert for medical writing, and is a mentor, coach, and trainer for junior writers. As a manager, Mia actively engages with and guides cross-functional teams, shares knowledge, and fosters a positive, collaborative culture for continuous learning and career development.

**Núria Negrão, PhD,** is a medical writer with a heart for education and a passion for crafting compelling CME/CE content. Born in Mozambique, she now calls Baltimore her home, where she blends her diverse cultural experiences into her work. When not immersed in medical narratives, she finds solace in crocheting, a hobby that echoes her dedication to detail and creativity. As a proponent of AI and automation, she’s committed to helping fellow medical writers integrate these technologies, enhancing our ability to create impactful, innovative content.

**Ndiya Ogba, PhD, MWC,** is an Associate Director of Publications within the Medical Affairs Division at Ascentage Pharma and is responsible for supporting all publication activities of the preclinical research, regulatory, and clinical development teams. Before working as a medical writer, Ndiya earned her PhD in pharmacology and was a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. Her research experience in breast cancer helped her pursue a transition to medical writing in 2016 with the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN), where she helped develop several clinical practice guidelines for oncologists, including new ones concerning pediatric blood cancers. She is a member of AMWA-DVC, earned the Medical Writing Certification (MWC) credential in 2020, and is co-chair of the 2023 and 2024 AMWA-DVC Freelance Workshop.

**Anna Shurtleff Smith, BSN, MPH,** is dedicated to promoting health literacy in medical writing with a strong focus on patient-centric plain language writing. In her writing, she actively works to inspire behavioral changes by recognizing the various stages of change within focus populations. Every document she writes draws from a wealth of experiences. These experiences range from collaborating with Spanish-speaking community health workers (promotors) to working on a medical-surgical unit. Each encounter with patients has taught her the invaluable lesson of meeting patients where they are while pushing for systemic changes, a principle she cherishes when she opens her laptop to write.
Kyle Smith, PMP, is a process-led individual specializing in project management, organization, and business operations. He is Project Management Certified (PMP) by the Project Management Institute (PMI) and has hands-on experience leading high-profile, on-site projects in the healthcare industry. Along with extreme attention to detail, Kyle provides unique insights and perspectives to motivate teams, re-imagine processes, and exceed goals.

Ruwaida Vakil, MSc, has over twenty years of experience as a consultant, speaker, and medical writer in medical communications and sales training. She holds an MSc in Immunology from the University of Toronto and the Ontario Cancer Institute. Over the years, she has developed numerous educational programs for healthcare professionals. She has presented at multiple conferences, including AMWA, the Mid-Atlantic Alliance for Continuing Medical Education (MAACME), and the Alliance for Continuing Education in the Health Professions (ACEHP). Ruwaida is currently serving as the section editor for the Freelance Forum section of the AMWA journal. She has previously served as the Secretary, Membership chair, and Freelance Workshop Chair for AMWA-DVC. In 2016, she co-authored an award-winning poster on Best Practices for Writing CME Needs Assessments, which received the People’s Choice award from the ACEHP. Additionally, she has co-authored an AMWA training guide on writing CME needs assessments and has presented to global publication leaders in the pharmaceutical industry in person and virtually.

AMWA-DVC greatly appreciates the time and effort of the Freelance Workshop volunteers.

Thank you:

Kathy Molnar-Kimber
Suzanne Bujara
Linda Goldstein
Ndiya Ogba

Co-Chairs
Helen Fosam
Ndiya Ogba