

The quarterly newsletter of the American Medical Writers Association—Delaware Valley Chapter

## UPCOMING MEETING “CME Standards for Commercial Support” November 16

The continuing medical education (CME) community is in an uproar over the Accreditation Council for CME’s recently adopted new Standards for Commercial Support. Join us on November 16, when Karen Overstreet, president of Nexus Communications, presents “CME Standards for Commercial Support.” Overstreet will discuss the most controversial aspect of the new standards concerns: the mandate to resolve conflicts of interest before designing educational activities. This session will review the new standards, highlight some of the challenges of putting the new guidelines into effect, and identify possible implications for medical writers.

Overstreet has over 13 years of experience in the area of medical education. At Nexus she coordinates day-to-day operations, including scientific affairs, program management, editorial services, and educational design. Overstreet is active in many professional organizations including the Alliance for Continuing Medical Education, for which she served for more than 3 years as editor-in-chief of the monthly newsletter *Almanac*.

Attendees are invited to submit questions about the new guidelines in advance to Karen Overstreet at [ko@nexuscominc.com](mailto:ko@nexuscominc.com).

### Details

- Tuesday, November 16  
5:30 p.m. networking, 6:00 p.m. dinner, 7:00 p.m. speaker.
- Radnor Hotel  
591 East Lancaster Avenue, St. Davids, PA 19087  
Toll Free: 1-800-537-3000, Front Desk: 610-688-5800
- Cost: Members: \$40 with advance reservations  
Nonmembers: \$45 with advance reservations  
Students: \$10 with advance reservations

### Reservations

- Contact: Andrea Laborde, [atlaborde@aol.com](mailto:atlaborde@aol.com)
- Reservations and checks must be mailed in advance to:  
Andrea Laborde, 234 Glenwood Road, Elkins Park, PA 19027.  
Advance reservations will be accepted until noon Friday, November 12. No refunds will be given for cancellations less than 3 business days before the meeting. NO-SHOWS WILL BE BILLED.

## CALENDAR

- **Tuesday, November 16** — “CME Standards for Commercial Support,” Radnor, Pa.
- **Saturday, January 15** — Freelance and Getting Started in Medical Writing Workshops, King of Prussia, Pa.
- **February** — N.J. Meeting (networking dinner, date, and location to be determined)
- **Saturday April 9** — Princeton Conference, Harrison Conference Center, Plainsboro, N.J.

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## AMWA-DVC Starts 2004-2005 Season with Tantalizing Medical Trivia

By Lori De Milto

Did you know that surgical patients at Pennsylvania Hospital in the early nineteenth century—before anesthesia was invented—could choose rum, laudanum, or a tap on the head with a mallet to dull the pain? Or that the “dearest” AMWA member is AMWA-DVC’s own “Dear Edie” (a.k.a., Edie Schwager)? Or that Louis Pasteur said that “In the fields of observation, chance favors the prepared mind”? Attendees at AMWA-DVC’s first meeting of the 2004-2005 season, held September 22 at historic Pennsylvania Hospital in center city Philadelphia, learned all this and more during our tantalizing medical trivia quiz.

The meeting was held in Pennsylvania Hospital’s elegant Great Hall in the Pine Building. Upon registering, attendees received a name tag with a letter on it. In order to find their teammates for the quiz, they had to network, providing an easy way for people to meet each other.

Before dinner, Pennsylvania Hospital Archivist Stacie Peeples gave attendees a tour of the surgical amphitheater, which was used from 1804 to 1868. Seated in the amphitheater, we learned that the operations were announced in town and anyone could pay a small fee to come in and watch. Surgeons operated between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. because they needed the natural light from a skylight in order to see what they were doing. The most common operations were amputations, tumor removals, and hernia repairs.

We were unable to tour the library as planned since it is being repaired after a mold outbreak. Peeples told us that the library has a 25,000 foot manuscript collection and oversees an extensive collection of fine art (primarily portraits, which hang in the Pine Building) and decorative art (e.g., tall case clocks).

After a gourmet dinner in the Great Hall, attendees took the tantalizing medical trivia quiz. Nearly all teams knew that author A. Conan Doyle’s other profession was physician and that AMWA-DVC is the largest AMWA chapter. Some of the incorrect answers were rather amusing. For example, one team said that Al Gore founded AMWA, after inventing the Internet. Of the three pain killers used in early surgery at Pennsylvania Hospital, AMWA members preferred the mallet.

Congratulations to our tantalizing medical trivia quiz winners\*:

### Team F:

- Susanna Dodgson
- John Hand
- Donna LaBlanc

### Team I:

- Debbie Early
- John Smith.

Both teams had 18 of the 20 answers correct. Each team member received a Barnes & Noble gift certificate.

## News from National

By Lori De Milto and Karen Dutka

- 72 DVC members—nearly 10% of our membership, attended the 2004 Annual Conference in St. Louis, comprising nearly 10% of the conference’s total 825+ attendees (825 attendees who registered in advance plus on-site registrants [numbers were not available at press time].
- AMWA Grows: AMWA recently surpassed 5,000 members.
- New Professional Development Certificate: AMWA will soon be launching a Professional Development Certificate which members can earn through AMWA and medical writing related activities, such as: attending chapter meetings, attending an AMWA workshop, leading an Annual Conference roundtable, chairing or serving on a national committee, publishing an article in the *AMWA Journal* or another journal, or completing a relevant university-level course. Details will be announced as they are firmed up.
- The second core curriculum self-study workshop, Punctuation for Clarity and Style, should be available by the end of 2004.
- AMWA-DVC member Peggy Stansfield won a Chapter Article Award for her article *Effective Web Research*, first published in the Fall 2003 issue of the *Delawriter*. A certificate, presented at the Sablack

# Internet Medical and Scientific Web Addresses

Compiled by Dorit Shapiro, MS

The following list of Web addresses was compiled from a previously published article entitled "Internet Medical and Scientific Resources," by Dorit Shapiro. The article was published in the Late Spring 2004 issue of the *Delawriter*. Due to space constraints we were unable to include the Web addresses at that time, because we felt that members would find this list useful, we have provided it in this issue as a handy pull-out reference.

## Local Resources

- College of Physicians of Philadelphia, Library and Wood Institute  
<http://www.collphyphil.org/libwood.htm>
- Delaware Academy of Medicine  
<http://www.delamed.org/>
- Drexel University, Health Sciences Libraries  
<http://med.library.drexel.edu/>
- Penn State University College of Medicine, George T. Harrell Library  
<http://www.hmc.psu.edu/library>
- Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine (PCOM), O. J. Snyder Memorial Library  
<http://www.pcom.edu/Library/library.html>
- Temple University, Health Sciences Center Libraries  
<http://eclipse.hsclib.temple.edu/>
- Thomas Jefferson University, Scott Memorial Library  
<http://jeffline.jefferson.edu/>
- University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ), University Libraries  
<http://www.umdnj.edu/librweb/index.html>
- University of Pennsylvania; Biomedical Library  
<http://www.library.upenn.edu/biomed>
- Dental Medicine Library  
<http://www.library.upenn.edu/dental>
- Veterinary Medicine Library  
<http://www.library.upenn.edu/vet>
- University of the Sciences of Philadelphia, J.W. England Library  
<http://www.usp.edu/library>

## Databases (free and subscription-based)

- Cumulative Index to Nursing and

Allied Health (CINAHL) [Subscription Packages]  
<http://www.cinahl.com/>

- Cochrane Database [Subscription]: For information on evidence-based medicine  
<http://www.update-software.com/cochrane>
- Clinical Trials.gov  
<http://www.clinicaltrials.gov/>
- Excerpta Medica (EMBASE) [Subscription]: For access to European journals in English and foreign language  
<http://www.embase.com/>
- CAS (Chemical Abstracts) via STN on the Web [Subscription]  
<http://stnweb.cas.org/>
- BIOSIS [Paid Access Options]  
<http://www.biosis.org/aboutus/>

## Free and subscription-based full-text Web sites

- Cyber Café List of Free Journals (Thomas Jefferson University)  
<http://aisr2.jefferson.edu/cfdocs/ejls/public/index.cfm>
- NCBI Bookshelf  
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?db=Books>
- Merck Manuals  
<http://www.merck.com/pubs>
- Medscape  
<http://www.medscape.com/>
- WebMD  
<http://www.webmd.com/>
- MD Consult (Subscription)  
<http://www.mdconsult.com/>
- Harrison's Online (Subscription)  
<http://harrisons.accessmedicine.com/>

- STAT! Ref (Subscription)  
<http://www.statref.com/>

## Web portals

- JEFFSelects (Thomas Jefferson University)  
<http://jeffline.jefferson.edu/SML/JEFFSelects>
- Includes the Directory of Local Government Health Departments  
<http://jeffline.jefferson.edu/SML/JEFFSelects/community/healthdepts.html>
- Health Related Internet Resources (College of Physicians of Philadelphia)  
<http://www.collphyphil.org/resources.html>
- Weblinks for Healthcare Professionals (Delaware Academy of Medicine)  
<http://www.delamed.org/delamed/pages/plsweblinks.html>
- Also available is Consumer Weblinks  
<http://www.delamed.org/delamed/pages/chlswweblinks.html>
- Subject/Internet Guides (Drexel University)  
<http://www.library.drexel.edu/resources/ereference.html>
- Links (Penn State University)  
<http://www.hmc.psu.edu/library/links/index.htm>
- Internet Guides (PCOM)  
[http://www.pcom.edu/Library/Internet\\_Guides/internet\\_guides.html](http://www.pcom.edu/Library/Internet_Guides/internet_guides.html)
- Selected Internet Resources (UMDNJ)  
<http://www.umdnj.edu/librweb/resources.html>
- Clinical Medicine (University of Pennsylvania)  
<http://www.library.upenn.edu/cgi-bin/res/sr.cgi?community=13&>

*Dorit Shapiro, MS, is a freelance medical writer.*

## Medical Writing: Where Will We Be 10 Years From Now?

By Karen Dutka

The subject of where the medical writing profession will be 10 years from now drew a capacity crowd at the October 6th AMWA-DVC N.J. meeting. Susanna J. Dodgson, PhD, Professor of Biomedical Writing and the Director of the Biomedical Writing MS Program at the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia (USP), discussed her vision of the medical writing profession in 2014, including:

- Where the jobs will be
- Academic credentials and training
- Ghost-writing of scientific publications
- Changes in the status of medical writers.

Dr. Dodgson began her presentation by briefly describing biomedical writing as “anything written about life.” She compared the current definition of a medical writer versus the definition 10 years from now:

- Now—A medical writer is a person who is paid to call himself/herself a medical writer.
- Ten years from now—A medical writer is a credentialed person who is paid to call himself/herself a medical writer.

Unfortunately, as off-shoring becomes more commonplace, current medical writing positions may follow the trends seen with many other U.S. jobs. In order to counteract a possibly dim future, Dr. Dodgson suggested an active approach:

- Learning how to write (reading the *New York Times*, *AMA Style*

*Guide*, *Chicago Manual of Style*, etc.)

- Gaining special skill sets or qualifications
- Becoming a manager
- Lobbying for change.

Building on the topic of gaining skills and qualifications, the presentation segued into the importance of academic credentials and training.

Certificate programs currently available for medical writers are offered by:

- EMWA
- AMWA
- University of Chicago Graham School of Communication.

Certificate programs typically involve homework and on-site attendance at the course, but the majority of these programs concentrate on the mechanism of writing rather than the content. In contrast, Dr. Dodgson described

the MS Program in Biomedical Writing at USP, which includes courses that focus on content. There are three semesters (fall, spring, and summer) and classes may be online, on-site, or a combination of online/on-site. Several matriculated students and graduates of the program were in attendance. Typical students in the program are excellent writers who may already have advanced degrees. Dr. Dodgson also indicated that the faculty is developing a Ph.D. course of study in medical writing at USP, which would require having a work published in a “first tier” medical journal.

Dr. Dodgson then addressed the topic of ghost-authorship/ghost-writing, in other words, “should we be seen?” The prevailing attitude towards ghost-authorship outside of the medical writing profession is that it is unethical. Increased attention has

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### Delawriter

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## MEDICAL WRITING from 4

been paid to scientific dishonesty (i.e., the falsification of data), and unfortunately, ghost-authorship has been characterized as such. The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) has created rules for publishing papers and that of authorship/contributorship. In order to be an author, ICMJE requires:

- Substantive intellectual contribution to an article
- Participation in drafting of the article
- Final approval of the article.

All three rules must be met in order for one to be considered an author. They are meant to prevent a final piece being presented to a researcher just to have his/her name used as the author.

However, Dr. Dodgson emphasized that a distinction should be made between ghost-authorship and ghost-writing.

Ghost-authorship implies that a final draft of an article is written, presented, and attributed to an individual who had no involvement in the drafting, while ghost-writing involves the “packaging” of information.

Dr. Dodgson concluded her presentation with the take home message, “be the best medical writer you can be.” Despite, the current trends with U.S. jobs, she is optimistic for what the future holds:

- Better recognition for medical writers
- Higher status in pharmaceutical companies (in contrast to the current ceiling to medical writing)

If they are not already, medical writers will be:

- Skilled writers and communicators

- Proficient at statistics
- Knowledgeable of the clinical implications of therapies
- Familiar with regulatory documentation and law.

A lively Q&A session followed Dr. Dodgson’s presentation.

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*Karen Dutka recently accepted a medical writing position at Theradex in Princeton, N.J.*

## TRIVIA from 2

Thanks to the tantalizing medical trivia quiz developers: Brian Bass, Edie Schwager, and Lori De Milto; Brian for serving as the quiz host; and Andrea LaBorde for finding Pennsylvania Hospital as the meeting site and handling all meeting arrangements.

\* The AMWA-DVC board named Team F winners after the meeting. During the meeting, we used a tie-breaker question, “How many members does AMWA-DVC have (as of September 1, 2004)?” to determine the winners. Team I, which included our Membership Chair, Debbie Early, came closest to the correct answer. We realized that our Membership Chair, and other board members, were likely to have a better idea of DVC’s membership than other members. Therefore, we decided to name both teams winners.

## NATIONAL from 2

Networking and Recognition Dinner, will be mailed to Peggy.

- Searchable online membership directory: AMWA is working on a searchable membership directory, which should be available on AMWA’s Web site ([www.amwa.org](http://www.amwa.org)) in early 2005.
- Credit workshops: AMWA is conducting a pilot project to distribute homework for credit workshops electronically. If the pilot is a success, the

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*Lori De Milto is a freelance medical writer specializing in marketing communications.*

*See NATIONAL on 6*



AMWA-DVC  
c/o Peggy Stansfield  
131 Broadway Road  
Cranbury, NJ 08512

## News and notes from the American Medical Writers Association— Delaware Valley Chapter

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#### NATIONAL from 5

association will begin electronic distribution of homework for the 2005 Annual Conference.

- Future Annual Conferences:

2005: September 29-October 1,  
Pittsburgh, Pa.  
Theme: Building Skills,  
Building Bridges.

2006: October 26-28,  
Albuquerque, N.M.

2007: October 11-13,  
Atlanta, Ga.

2008: October 23-25,  
Louisville, Ky.

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