

UPCOMING MEETING

“Bioterrorism”: November 13

Bioterrorism, the use of biological agents such as bacteria or viruses to cause infectious diseases within populations to intimidate and cause terror, has been widespread throughout history. In the 6th century B.C., Assyrians poisoned enemy wells with rye ergot. In 1710, the Russians used plague against Sweden, and smallpox was used against natives in the 17th and 18th centuries. More recently, in the United States, we have been made aware of the very real threat of bioterrorism with anthrax-tainted mail and concerns over the possible use of biochemical weapons.

Join us on Thursday, November 13 as John P. Maher, MD, MPH, speaks to AMWA-DVC about types of bioterrorism and regional, state, and federal preparations to deal with bioterrorism. Dr. Maher, a regional expert on preparing for bioterrorism, has served as the County Health Director for the Chester County Department of Health for 25 years.

Dr. Maher has held many academic posts in medical schools and is trained in internal medicine and public health medicine. Dr. Maher serves on many committees, including the Medical Society Committee on Public Health and Toxic Substances, the Statewide Bioterrorism Advisory Committee, the South-eastern Pennsylvania Region 9 Counter-Terrorism Task Force, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Public Health Professionals’ Bioterrorism Working Group, and the Chester County Bioterrorism Awareness and Response Capability Group.

Details

- Thursday, November 13
5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
- Sheraton Great Valley
707 E. Lancaster Avenue
Frazer, Pa., (610) 524-5500
www.sheraton.com/greatvalley
- Cost:
Members: \$30 with advance reservation; \$35 at the door (space permitting)
Non-members: \$35 with advance reservation; \$40 at the door (space permitting)
Students: \$10 with advance reservation; \$15 at the door (space permitting)

Reservations

To reserve your place, contact Andrea Laborde by November 6:

- atlaborde@aol.com.

When reserving your place, please pre-select your dinner entree:

- sesame-seared salmon,
- chicken sonoma, or
- pasta primavera.

No refunds will be given for cancellations less than 3 business days before the meeting. No-shows will be billed.

CALENDAR

- **Wednesday, October 29**—
“Multimedia Communications and the Medical Writer,” with Debra L. Newton, Princeton, N.J.
- **Thursday, November 13**—
“Bioterrorism,” with John P. Mahr, MD, MPH, Frazer, Pa.
- **Saturday, January 17**—Annual Freelance Workshop
- **March**—Meeting topic, speaker, and location to be determined
- **Saturday, April 17**—Annual Princeton Conference
- **June**—Meeting topic, speaker, and location to be determined

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An Evening with Dear Edie

By *Lori De Milto*

Edith Schwager, better known to AMWA members as “Dear Edie,” treated attendees at the season opener of the Delaware Valley Chapter to her wit and wisdom on English usage and abusage. The meeting was held on September 30 at the Renaissance Airport Hotel in Essington, Pa.

“English usage is using the right word in the right context. There are many gray areas, subtleties, and nuances,” said Schwager, who is a freelance writer, teacher, and editor, specializing in medicine, pharmaceuticals, and English usage. She is the creator of the “Dear Edie” column in the *AMWA Journal* and one of AMWA’s most popular workshop presenters.

Schwager noted that the good writers and speakers of English determine what is right or wrong in English usage, but that “Nobody’s perfect,” and that our language is continuously evolving. During the interactive meeting, she highlighted errors in English usage and then entertained questions from the audience. She quizzed attendees on the actual meanings of such commonly misunderstood words as “verbal” versus “oral,” the correct spelling of the most misspelled medical words (pruritus and ophthalmologist), and why these sentences were wrong:

1. Psychiatrists are better able to treat patients with clinical depression than most physicians.
2. The anticipated heart rate was reached within 0.5 seconds.
3. Seventy pounds of dynamite were used to implode the old building.

See *DEAR EDIE* on 5

The Inaugural New Jersey Satellite Meeting to be held October 29: “Multimedia Communications and the Medical Writer”

The first AMWA-DVC New Jersey satellite meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 29 in Princeton, N.J. Debra L. Newton, president of Newton Gravity Shift, will speak about “Multimedia Communications and the Medical Writer.” Newton Gravity Shift is a technology-based communications company. Newton will cover:

- How current technologies have changed the nature of medical writing
- How writing for video, interactive, and online media is different than preparing printed text
- The benefits of a multimedia approach and when it is most appropriate.

Ms. Newton will share her insights into the growing importance of multimedia in medical communications. Attendees will learn:

- The different types of interactive media that are used in health sciences marketing and training
- The approach required for writing for video and animation
- The approach required for writing for interactive media
- What an e-solutions company expects from medical writers.

Details

- Wednesday, October 29
5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
- The Westin Princeton at Forrestal Village
Princeton, N.J.
(609) 520-6338
- Non-members: \$35 with advance reservation; \$40 at the door (space permitting)
- Students: \$10 with advance reservation; \$15 at the door (space permitting)

Directions from Route 1 (North or South):

- Take the College Road West exit toward Forrestal Village.
- Continue past one traffic light. The Westin will be on left.

Cost:

- Members: \$30 with advance reservation; \$35 at the door (space permitting)

Reservations

To reserve your place, contact Kira Belkin, PhD:

- (732) 247- 5893, or
- kbelkin@att.net.

No refunds will be given for cancellations less than 3 business days before the meeting. No-shows will be billed.

Don't PANIC! What You Need to Know about Computer Viruses and Hoaxes

By Peggy Stansfield

Medical writers rely on their computers and e-mail services to get their jobs done. If you haven't already had experience with a virus on your computer or received e-mails telling you that you may have a virus – no doubt you will at some point in the future. How do you safeguard yourself from computer viruses and e-mail hoaxes?

What is a Computer Virus?

A virus is a software program written to make copies of itself and affect a computer's executable files or the system areas of its hard and floppy disks. Computer users are rarely aware of a virus's operation. The actual effect of the virus depends on what its programmer designed it to do. Some viruses damage files or interfere with a computer's operation, others are designed to just spread and duplicate themselves. Viruses cannot damage hardware, melt down CPUs, burn out hard drives, or cause monitors to explode. Warnings about such events are usually hoaxes and because you are asked to alert everyone in your address book have a virus-like effect.

How Does a Virus Infect Your Computer?

Your computer becomes infected with a virus when an infected program code is executed on your computer or any computer connected to yours. Newly infected programs try to infect more programs.

Second Annual Freelance Workshop: January 17

On Saturday, January 17th, AMWA-DVC will hold our second annual freelance workshop. Topics under consideration include:

- Computer issues for small business owners, such as security and protection, back-up and archiving, Internet access, and creating a presence on the Web
- The business of freelancing, including rate setting, contracts, invoicing, and marketing
- The client-freelance relationship: how to find and keep your clients satisfied, and what hiring managers are looking for in a freelance.

There will be an optional lunch following the morning workshop and question-and-answer sessions to give attendees the opportunity to network with fellow freelancers. The panel of experts will also rotate from table to table to address any additional questions you may have.

We are finalizing the location and workshop topics. A brochure with the complete program will be mailed in early December. If you have any suggestions for topics or panelists contact Dorit Shapiro at DoritShapiro@yahoo.com.

Files that your computer treats as pure data are safe, including:

- Graphics and sound files (.gif, .jpg, .mp3, .wav)
- Plain text (.txt).

Risky files are:

- Program files (.exe)
- Word and Excel files (.doc, .xls).

Trojan Horse Programs

A Trojan horse program is not a virus but a type of program that pretends to be something other than what it seems to be. For example, you download what you believe is a game, but when you play the game it deletes files on your hard drive or e-mails your saved passwords to someone.

Simply downloading a virus infected file or Trojan horse program will not activate them; the code in the files must be executed in order to trigger them. You have to run an infected program file or open an infected Word/Excel document within Word or Excel to execute the macros

in the document to spread the virus.

E-mail and Viruses

You cannot get a virus from reading a plain-text e-mail message. Viruses transmitted by e-mail contain embedded executable code (e.g., JavaScript in an HTML message) or have an executable file attachment (e.g., an encoded program file or a Word document that has macros).

Precautions

- Treat file attachments that might contain executable code carefully. Save the attachment to disk and then check it with an up-to-date virus scanner.
- Disable your e-mail and news software's ability to automatically execute JavaScript, Word macros, or any other executable code in or attached to a message.
- Delete unexpected e-mail containing attachments for which you

See *VIRUSES* on 4

NEWS FROM NATIONAL

By Lori De Milto
and Debbie Early

- 2003 Annual Conference: 770 people attended AMWA's annual conference in Miami from September 18-20. This year's conference featured:
 - 84 workshops
 - 8 open sessions
 - 5 special interest sessions
 - 11 how-to sessions
 - 64 breakfast roundtables
 - 7 poster sessions.
- AMWA-DVC remains the largest and most active chapter, with 766 members. We are 1 of 3 chapters with more than 400 members, and the only chapter with more than 700 members.
- New AMWA National Web site: AMWA is revising its Web site to add content and make it more user friendly. The new Web site will be launched in early 2004.
- First distance learning course now available: A distance learning version of the core curriculum course "Basic Grammar and Usage for Biomedical Communicators" is now available. The course includes a workbook and an interactive CD and can be taken for core credit. It is available at AMWA's Web site (www.amwa.org) for \$155.
- Upcoming Annual Meetings:
 - 2004: St. Louis, Mo.: October 21-23
 - 2005: Pittsburgh, Pa.: September 28-30
 - 2006: Albuquerque, N.M.: Dates to be determined.

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can't verify: what it is, where it came from, and why it was sent to you.

Virus Protection

- Install anti-virus software from a reputable company. Update and use it regularly.
- Install an *on access* virus scanner (usually included in good anti-virus software packages). Configure it to start automatically when you boot your system.
- Virus scan any new program or file that may contain executable code before you run or open them: **NO MATTER WHERE THEY CAME FROM.**
- Exercise caution when opening binary files and Word/Excel documents from unknown sources – anti-virus programs don't recognize Trojan horse programs as easily as virus programs.
- Be extremely careful about accepting programs or other files during on-line chat sessions.
- Do regular backups. Some viruses

and Trojan horse programs erase or corrupt files on your hard drive.

Recognizing Hoaxes

Don't panic if you receive an e-mail saying you may have inadvertently received a virus. Remember, you cannot get a virus from reading a plain-text e-mail message. Hoaxes and chain letters usually have a three-part form:

- Hook: a message line that gets your attention
- Threat: a warning that something terrible will happen unless you react to the message
- Request: you are asked to do something (delete a file, send money, e-mail the message to everyone in your address book).

Successful hoaxes usually contain technical sounding language and attempt to provide a credible source of information. Don't react to a warning without verifying the information. No legitimate warning from a credible source will ask

See *VIRUSES* on 5

Delawriter

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Executive Editor: Kate Casano

Editor: Lori De Milto, lorid@voicenet.com, 856-232-6821

Editorial Assistants: • Jennifer Long • Peggy Stansfield

Changes of address/information:

Mail: American Medical Writers Association
40 West Guide Drive #101
Rockville, MD 20850-1192

Phone: (301) 294-5303

E-mail: rob@amwa.org

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you to contact everyone you know.

Verifying Warning Messages

- Check the following Web sites for information on hoaxes:
 - <http://hoaxbusters.ciac.org>
 - <http://www.fedcirc.gov/library/documents/homeusers/index.html>
- Run a Google™ search on a key word from the message.

Dealing with a Virus Infection

If you suspect that you may have a virus on your computer try the following:

- Install and run a good, up-to-date anti-virus program
- Follow the anti-virus software's instructions to clean the virus from your system
- Check the anti-virus software's Web site and support services for assistance
- Check Carnegie Mellon Software Engineering Institute's Web site (www.cert.org) for easy-to-understand information on dealing with virus infections
- Don't format your hard drive using FDISK; this procedure won't clean an infection and may cause more harm.

Remember, just because your computer is acting strangely it doesn't mean you have a computer virus. Software or hardware problems or operator error are often to blame.

Other Resources

Established in 1988, the CERT® Coordination Center (CERT/CC) is a center of Internet security expertise, located at the Software Engineering Institute, a federally-funded research and development center operated by Carnegie Mellon University (www.cert.org). Here is a CERT/CC

DEAR EDIE from 2

(See the correct sentences on page 6.)

Schwager then amused the audience with inadvertent errors in newspapers (including *The New York Times* and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*), advertisements, Web sites, and other sources:

- I found a Jefferson doctor walking my dog. ("How nice of him," quipped Schwager.)
- The company was in the lead to market a new antivirile drug being tested for cancer.
- Her mother is a victim of Lugerics disease.
- Wanted: Chemical lab technician with a background in tight trading.

Here are some questions from the audience and Edie's answers:

Q.: Should we vote for a politician who promises to "grow the economy"?

E.: No, we should vote for a president who is literate.

Q.: Is it better to "speak with" somebody than "speak to" somebody?

E.: There's a nuance of difference. "Speak with" is more intimate and interactive than "speak to."

Q.: What's the difference between "more than" and "over"?

E.: Very little, but "over" can be ambiguous.

test that you can use to make decisions about the e-mail you receive:

- The Know Test: Is the e-mail from someone that you know?
- The Received Test: Have you received e-mail from this sender before?
- The Expect Test: Were you expecting e-mail with an attachment from

Q.: What is a clear rule for using a singular or plural verb with "none"?

E.: Either could be correct. It boils down to the meaning, since "none" doesn't always mean "no one." Use your editorial judgment.

Q.: Could you comment on use of the phrase "as well as"?

E.: For the sake of variety we sometimes use "as well as" instead of "and."

More about Dear Edie

Edie Schwager is the author of two books: *Medical English Usage and Abusage* (Greenwood/Oryx) and *Better Vocabulary in 30 Minutes a Day* (Career Press). She is the executive and copy editor of more than 40 books and 2,000 articles. She was the editor of *AMWA Medical Communications* (forerunner of the *AMWA Journal*) for 8 years.

She has served AMWA as president of the Delaware Valley Chapter and in other offices. She is editorial consultant to the *AMWA Journal*. She is a fellow of AMWA and has received the AMWA President's Award, the Delaware Valley Chapter President's Award, the Swanberg Distinguished Service Award, and the Golden Apple Award. The Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS) has named her an Honored Editor.

this sender?

- The Sense Test: Does e-mail from the sender with the contents as described in the subject line and the name of the attachment(s) make sense?

Peggy Stansfield is a freelance writer based in central New Jersey.



AMWA-DVC
c/o Lori De Milto
1018 Hartley Court
Sicklerville, NJ 08081

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

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CORRECT SENTENCES from 5

1. All psychiatrists are physicians, so the sentence should read: “Psychiatrists are better able to treat patients with clinical depression than most **other** physicians.”
2. Measures of 1 or less than 1 take singular verbs. “The anticipated heart rate was reached within 0.5 **second**” (half **of a** second).
3. One doesn’t think of individual pounds, so a singular verb should be used in such terms. “Seventy pounds of dynamite **was** used to implode the old building.”

“Trifles make perfection and perfection is no trifle.”

Michelangelo (as shared with AMWA-DVC members by Dear Edie)

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kate@casano.com

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