

## AMWA-DVC New Officers and Special Election

At the June 28 chapter meeting, the following members were elected by a unanimous vote of the 47 members present:

- Michael G Pappas, MS, PhD, as treasurer
- Marie-Therese Zenner, PhD, as president-elect/chapter delegate

Due to the resignation of President Bernice Schacter on July 1, President-Elect Marie-Therese Zenner assumed the position of president for the 2007–2008 fiscal year. In addition, the AMWA-DVC executive committee, on recommendation of the nominating committee, voted to accept the nomination of Barbara Rinehart, MS, for president-elect for the 2007–2008 fiscal year.

### Ms Rinehart's Biography

Ms Rinehart has been a member of AMWA since 1990 and has been

an active volunteer in the Delaware Valley Chapter for many years. She has led more than a dozen different workshops (since 1994) and breakfast roundtables at annual and Princeton conferences (since 1998); nearly all of her topics deal with issues of relevance to freelance medical writers.

Additionally, Ms Rinehart has served previously on the executive committee of DVC as secretary and membership chair. She has written in numerous therapeutic classes, including several book chapters and a book on closed head injury.

Ms Rinehart is a graduate of James Madison University (biology and art) and Johns Hopkins University (general science, and marketing and management). She has completed the AMWA core and advance curriculum programs in

medical communications with a pharmaceutical emphasis, and has earned the AMWA professional development certificate. Additionally, she is certified as a literacy teacher.

At the chapter meeting on September 19, the president called for a confirmation vote by the membership to install Ms Rinehart as president-elect. Ms Rinehart will also serve as chapter delegate with Dr Zenner. In the event that either delegate cannot serve, the executive committee will appoint a replacement on her behalf.

### Nominating Committee

- Scott Metsger, chair
- Brian Bass
- Robert P Hand

## Our Own National Treasures . . .

Delaware Valley Chapter has created two of its own national treasures for biomedical communicators: the Toolkit for New Medical Writers (see page 4), which now appears under Links: Medical Writing Resources on the national Web site ([www.amwa.org](http://www.amwa.org)), and “Dear Edie,” a column featured in the *AMWA Journal* since 1978 (see page 5).

### Speaking of Style . . .

AMWA has recently updated its style sheet. This link is available on the home page of the national Web site's home page under the heading “What's New:” [www.amwa.org/default/publications/AMWAstylesheet2007.pdf](http://www.amwa.org/default/publications/AMWAstylesheet2007.pdf)

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## Volunteers Who Served the Chapter During 2006–2007

### Elected Officers

- Deborah Early
- Scott Metsger
- Bernice Schacter
- Linda Felcone

### Programs Committee

- Bernice Schacter (chair)
- Kira J Belkin
- Janet Manfre
- John Smith
- Darlene Grzegorski
- Linda Felcone
- Marie-Therese Zenner
- Laurie Spotila
- Lori De Milto

### Publicity Committee

- Shirley Bonnem (chair)
- Kate Casano (listserve)

### Web Site

- Deborah Early (chair)
- Suzanne Klein
- Jennifer Maybin
- Tara Rachinsky

### Delawriter

- Peggy Stansfield (chair)
- Alan Struthers
- Darlene Grzegorski
- Elisha Darville
- Kate DeBevois

### Finance Committee

- Robert P Hand (acting chair)
- Deborah Early
- Scott Metsger
- Bernice Schacter
- Michael G Pappas
- Rubina Ismail
- Karen Holloway

### Membership Committee

- Laurie Spotila (chair)
- Melanie Goodman Dante

### Volunteer Coordinator

- Marge Thorell

### Education

#### Princeton Conference

- Brian Bass (chair)
- Susan E Aiello
- Jessica S Ancker
- Gregory Cuca
- Thomas P Gegeny
- Judy Greif
- Monica Nicosia
- Helen Osborne
- Karen M Overstreet
- Barbara Rinehart
- Ana Traversa

#### Freelance Workshop

- Lori De Milto (co-chair)
- Marie-Therese Zenner (co-chair)
- Susan E Aiello
- Brian Bass
- Kira J Belkin
- Joanna Bligh
- Lisa P Breck
- Nicole Cooper
- Lynne J Dodson
- Cynthia L Kryder
- Lynne Lederman
- Lesley MacPhee
- Kim McFarland
- Kathy Mingione
- Rebecca O'Donnell
- Karen M Overstreet
- Rosa Real
- Barbara Rinehart
- Bernice Schacter
- Kent Steinriede
- Barb Woldin

#### Roundtable Leaders

- Brian Bass
- Nicole Cooper
- Lori De Milto
- Colleen Flickinger
- Cynthia L Kryder
- Cheryl Lathrop
- Lynne Lederman
- Pat McAdams
- Barbara Rinehart
- Bernice Schacter
- John Smith
- Rupa Sunder
- Christina Valente
- Marie-Therese Zenner

### Nominating Committee

- Laurie Spotila (chair, spring 2007)
- Scott Metsger (chair, fall 2006)
- John Smith

To find out more about volunteering for AMWA-DVC, please contact Marge Thorell ([volunteer@amwa-dvc.org](mailto:volunteer@amwa-dvc.org)).

## AMWA-DVC Listserve

AMWA-DVC has an optional listserve for members called AMWA-DVC Announce. Members can sign up to receive announcements about jobs and freelance opportunities. This listserve is separate from e-mails about chapter meetings and other chapter business.

The AMWA-DVC Announce listserve provides access to staff positions and new freelance opportunities, as well as the occasional non-AMWA conference or new products of interest to medical writers. This is a post-only listserve.

Subscribers cannot be identified, and the list will not be shared with outside parties. The list is low-volume and will not clog your mailbox. We use spam blocking and do not accept attachments, to prevent the transmission of viruses. Any information sent to the lists, including job postings, should be provided as plain text in the body of the e-mail. HTML messages and those with attachments will be discarded.

To subscribe, send an e-mail to [amwa-dvc-announce-request@casano.com](mailto:amwa-dvc-announce-request@casano.com) with only the word “subscribe” in the body of the e-mail.

To share positions or freelance opportunities, send the information to [kate@casano.com](mailto:kate@casano.com). If it is suitable, we will post it to the listserve.

## Special Section—50th Anniversary Issue

### When AMWA Was Young

by Shirley Bonnem

My introduction to the American Medical Writers Association occurred in 1966 when I received notice of its 7-week course in medical writing and editing. A few months earlier, I had been appointed public relations director of The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. I thought that the course would help my understanding of the material produced by our medical staff and the significance of their research program. It did.

The course was taught by editors of medical journals published in Philadelphia. After learning about the components of a well-written medical article, students were given actual manuscripts in their original form to work on. "Physicians are notoriously poor writers," to quote one of the faculty. No one ever saw a doctor; people "presented with." Their conditions never just improved; they became "markedly better." The material contained trite phrases, poor grammar, misspelled words, and creative punctuation.

One student was almost always the first to have her hand up when she encountered an error. Her grin could not have been wider had she discovered uranium. The entire group enjoyed her absolute joy at being the first to find a mistake. Yes, the AMWA course was my introduction to a fellow student who became a good friend, Edie Schwager. The weeks flew by as I not only learned about medical writing and editing, but absorbed Edie's absolute logic about words, grammar, and usage.

At the end of the course, we were invited to join AMWA's Delaware Valley Chapter. Most of my classmates were medical

writers or editors, some worked with universities or pharmaceutical firms, and a few worked in hospitals. A faculty member extolled AMWA, its programs, and other benefits of belonging to the organization. I told him that I did not regard myself as a medical writer, and, therefore, I did not feel that I was qualified to join. He was startled, actually shocked, and tried to explain that I did not have to spend most of my time writing to become a member.

At that point my writing had included publicity releases, booklets, and speeches. It did not include anything directly involved with medicine. I told him that as soon as I felt that I had become a medical writer, I would join. No one expected to see me again.

About a year later, I felt that I was qualified at last to join AMWA. Two of our scientists at The Children's Hospital, Doctors Werner and Gertrude Henle, had discovered the cause of infectious mononucleosis. To prepare myself for this momentous finding, I read every medical paper they had ever published, interviewed both the Henles, and read a number of their unpublished papers on "mono." I drafted my story and Dr Werner Henle made only one change: he removed the words "known as the kissing disease" that I had inserted after my first mention of infectious mononucleosis. He did not think it was appropriate, but later was gracious enough to bring foreign clippings to me to show that editors throughout Europe and Asia had reinserted the words "known in America as the kissing disease." American editors had also put "kissing disease" back into the copy.

Coverage included receiving more than 2,000 clippings, and helping several encyclopedias prepare

segments on mononucleosis. All required taking the scientific language and converting it into clear English. Radio and television communication required totally different versions of the material.

To the surprise of many of my former classmates, I became an AMWA member in 1967, a year after I had taken the course. A few years later, Edie became the editor of *Medical Communication*, the AMWA official journal. She served for 8 years. She and I were on the faculty at AMWA's national and regional conferences for several years. During that period, I became a vice president at Children's Hospital and took on administrative duties in various departments, along with the responsibility for marketing, development, and government affairs.

It is interesting to look back and be able to trace developments in medical communication by sifting through old publications and national and regional programs. I was invited to speak at several national conferences. Programs in the 1970s focused more on "how-to" topics. Those of the late 1980s and early 1990s moved toward technology. One drastic change in public relations: publicity was no longer the main modality for effective public relations. Marketing made the transition from commerce to health care. There were few special-interest groups when I joined AMWA.

Few women held top-echelon positions in AMWA in the mid-1960s. In 1977, Virginia Eicholtz became its first woman president, and the number has grown steadily. Along the way, core curriculum courses were developed. I became a fellow, and maintained my participation in AMWA as an attendee at monthly

*See When AMWA Was Young on 6.*

## DVC Toolkit Helps New Medical Writers Get Started

By Lori De Milto, MJ

While freelancing back in the mid-1990s, I happened to get some assignments related to medicine. I found that I enjoyed the work, and was good at it. But I didn't know that there was a field called medical writing.

After some research, I found and joined AMWA. I went to the AMWA annual conference in Vancouver in 1998, and signed on as a volunteer with the Delaware Valley Chapter (DVC). Little by little, I began to learn about medical writing, and the many interesting and lucrative opportunities available to me.

With aggressive marketing and networking through AMWA, I soon had plenty of medical writing work. At DVC meetings and annual conferences, new medical writers and people thinking about entering the field started coming to me with questions.

These were the same questions about medical writing that I had

when I started out. It seemed to me that there should be some way for people to get a broad overview of the field, without spending years, as I had, learning about the field bit by bit. New and aspiring medical writers needed a toolkit.

With the support of the DVC executive committee, I wrote the Web-based Toolkit for New Medical Writers (on the DVC Web site's home page, [www.amwa-dvc.org](http://www.amwa-dvc.org), on the left sidebar of the same name). Other chapter members proofread the toolkit, suggested resources, checked the links, and more. The toolkit provides:

- An overview of opportunities in scientific and marketing medical writing
- Information about the characteristics of successful medical writers
- Tips on getting started as a medical writer
- An overview of AMWA, nationally and within DVC
- Resources for medical writers (general and freelance).

Over the years, many new and aspiring medical writers have used the toolkit to learn about the field. Staff members at AMWA refer

people who want to know more about medical writing to the DVC toolkit; the national Web site also has a link to the toolkit ([www.amwa.org](http://www.amwa.org) under Links: Medical Writing Resources).

The Toolkit for New Medical Writers provides a quick, convenient way for new and aspiring medical writers to learn about medical writing. I'm glad to have been a part of developing it.

*Lori De Milto is a marketing medical writer with more than 24 years of experience, including 12 in medical writing.*

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## Long-Term Members Explanation

Since June, there have been several inquiries regarding the recognition of long-term members. The membership committee of AMWA-DVC began recognizing long-term members in 2004. In the Spring 2004 issue of the *Delawriter*, recognition was given to members who had 20 or more years of membership. In 2005, the recognition list was changed to include everyone who was having a 10th, 15th, 20th, 25th, 30th, 35th, 40th, 45th, or 50th anniversary of their join date. This practice was continued in the recognition list in our last issue. This means that those who had attained 10 to 19 years of membership in 2004 were not recognized then and will be recognized instead when they reach their next 5-year anniversary. The membership committee thanks those who have communicated with us about this and apologizes for any misunderstanding. We want the membership to know that all members are sincerely appreciated.

### Delawriter

Published quarterly by the American Medical Writers Association—Delaware Valley Chapter ([www.amwa-dvc.org](http://www.amwa-dvc.org))

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## An Evening With “Dear Edie”

By Darlene Grzegorski, MS

AMWA-DVC presented “An Evening With ‘Dear Edie’” on September 19, providing the opportunity to present questions face-to-face with Edie Schwager, long-time DVC member and creator of the “Dear Edie” column in the *AMWA Journal*.

DVC Program Chair Janet Manfre, introduced Ms Schwager. For many members in attendance, no introduction was necessary, since Ms Schwager has a long history of service to AMWA. She has been a member for 43 years, was DVC president for 2 consecutive terms, and teaches “English Usage and Abusage,” one of the most popular AMWA workshops at both regional and annual conferences. She was the editor of *Medical Communication*, the predecessor to the *AMWA Journal*.

Ms Schwager has received the following AMWA awards:

- The AMWA President’s Award, which is given by the AMWA president to AMWA members of at least 10 years for distinctive contributions to the association at the chapter or national level
- The Swanberg Distinguished Service Award, the highest AMWA award, which is presented to any active member of AMWA who has made distinguished contributions to medical communication or rendered unusual and distinguished services to the medical profession
- The Golden Apple Award, which recognizes workshop leaders who have demonstrated excellence in teaching in the AMWA education program.

She has also been recognized as an Honored Editor by the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences.

Ms Schwager is the author of the immensely popular *Medical English Usage and Abusage* (Greenwood/Heinemann/Oryx) and *Better Vocabulary in 30 Minutes a Day* (Career Press). She was also the executive editor and copy editor of more than 40 books and 2,000 articles.

Many AMWA members have come to consider “Dear Edie,” as Ms Manfre described, “the last word on English usage and abusage.” Ms Schwager, on the other hand, has a more modest view of her authority on English grammar and usage. “Everything I say is my opinion, and my opinion is subject to change, although not quickly or momentarily.” Anyone who has read “Dear Edie,” attended her workshops, or spoken with Ms Schwager can attest that her opinions on the English language are always presented thoughtfully and with the support of multiple references.

Ms Schwager began the program by presenting her definition of good English usage as “the right word in the right context.” She then took questions from the audience. The first topic was the use of “and/or,” about which she expressed strongly negative feelings, questioning what this phrase really means. On the subject of using *man* as a general term for person, she said that there is good reasoning for this, since human being in Latin is *homo*, which also means *man*. This does not mean, however, that women should not be recognized separately. “All of the old writers used *man*, but they didn’t know any better.”

She added that the plural can be used to circumvent the problem of sex-specific pronouns, but when this won’t work, there is nothing wrong with using “his or her.” As for using the plural “their” as a substitute, Ms Schwager said that she has never used it, but that she may someday. “The language has changed so much,” she

added, citing the use of the plural term *data* as a singular term (which generally occurs in the context of computers to mean a data set).

Other topics discussed included the disappearance of the en dash; how to handle the new trend of using lowercase letters for proper names; the importance of avoiding dangling modifiers; the difference between acronyms, initialisms, and abbreviations; and the hazards of electronic spellchecking.

Ms Schwager interspersed her answers to the audience’s questions with interesting anecdotes from her long career as a writer, editor, and columnist. She told the story of the only mistake she ever found in *Dorland’s*—the misspelling of the plural of “os” (mouth). (The correct term is “ora.”) “I saw stars in front of my eyes!” she said, and immediately called an editor at the company. As an aside, she discussed the role of dictionaries as an authoritative source on the English language, saying that they are descriptive, not prescriptive. They present what is used, but not necessarily what is correct.

In listening to our beloved “Dear Edie,” one can easily sense her natural instinct for teaching and sharing knowledge. With each “By the way, did you know . . .” Ms Schwager imparts a morsel of information that makes each of us a bit more informed.

*Darlene Grzegorski writes pharmaceutical sales training materials for Educational Resource Systems, Inc in Red Bank, NJ.*



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## News and notes from the American Medical Writers Association— Delaware Valley Chapter ([www.amwa-dvc.org](http://www.amwa-dvc.org))

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DVC meetings, as a national conference speaker and roundtable leader, and as the author of several articles in *Medical Communication*.

My husband's serious and final illness forced me to resign from AMWA. During those years, Lillian Sablack, then AMWA executive secretary and later executive director, and Lois Gaeta of New York helped me keep in touch with AMWA. When I rejoined, I found that AMWA had not only remained vibrant and forward-thinking in its services to members, but that an entirely new generation of medical communicators had become part of the organization. Their vitality and interest have added thousands more members, and that too augurs well for the future.

#### 2007–2008 Executive Committee and Key Volunteers

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