

## What is a medical writer?

On February 3, 2001, several AMWA members wandered over to the home of the Newspaper Guild in a rowhouse on 1312 Buttonwood Street and participated in a workshop sponsored by the National Writers Union Philadelphia Local. Members of the National Writers Union include journalists, technical writers and a sprinkling of AMWA members.

The topic of the workshop was "What is a Medical Writer?" The moderator was your editor, the only panelist who is additionally a member of the NWU.

Three AMWA members were the other panelists:

Michael L. Jones, who travelled all the way from Kenilworth, NJ, spoke about IND/NDA writing (Michael is the National AMWA secretary).

Mary Whitman, Ph.D. spoke about writing for publication.

Lori de Milto spoke about marketing writing.

In summary, medical writing encompasses five different forms: manuscript preparation, training materials, marketing (ads, websites), medical journalism and IND/NDA preparation. Medical writers come with diverse backgrounds: most important are the desire to communicate and the love of the sound and feel of the English language.

*The Editor*

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News of the Delaware Valley Chapter  
c/o Susanna J Dodgson, Ph.D.  
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# DELAWRITER

News of the Delaware Valley Chapter

March 2001



## Princeton Conference: May 5-6, 2001

The 5th Annual AMWA-DVC Princeton Conference will be held Saturday, May 5 through Sunday, May 6, 2001 at The Nassau Inn on Palmer Square in the heart of Princeton. This new location offers a historic backdrop for the conference, and is within walking distance of shopping, restaurants, and cultural activities. Check out The Nassau Inn and surrounding area at [www.nassauinn.com](http://www.nassauinn.com).

Four sessions are offered during the Conference: two mornings and two afternoons. The Conference Committee has worked hard to be able to offer four credit courses as always: this year these courses are three Core Curriculum courses and one Advanced Curriculum Course. The non-credit workshops round out the educational content, and you'll learn a lot!

Visit the [AMWA-DVC.org](http://AMWA-DVC.org) for program updates. Registration forms will be mailed to you. If you need information or want to help, contact Brian Bass, Chairperson, at [bam509@optonline.net](mailto:bam509@optonline.net)

### Princeton Conference Workshops:

#### Core Curriculum Courses:

- Statistics for medical writers & editors
- Improving comprehension: theories and research findings
- Writing abstracts.

#### Advanced curriculum course:

- Advanced data presentation: tables, graphs and charts

#### Noncredit workshops and forums:

- Everything you wanted to know about freelance but were afraid to ask
- Quality in medical communications, Part II
- Uncovering the secrets of powerful presentations
- Creating meaningful interactive communications
- Interactive sales training: writing considerations for digital media
- Topics in Continuing Medical Education

## Next Chapter Meeting March 13, 2001

Christopher J. Miller, MS

Associate Director, Biostatistics Project Team, Quantitative Decision Sciences,  
US Drug Development, AstraZeneca LP

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

networking, 5:30; dinner, 6:30, program 7:30

at Williamson's Restaurant, at City Line and Belmont Avenues on the 12th floor of the Germantown Savings Bank (GSB) Building

For information: contact Charles Sutherland  
at 215 453 9084, [skimmer@mail3.enter.net](mailto:skimmer@mail3.enter.net).

### Medical Writers sought by

Aerotek for contract jobs around Philadelphia. If you have experience with IND/NDA submission please contact Rich Goldbeck at 610-254-5423.



## Nathalie Bacon

graduated with a BFA in photography, and became an aerial photographer. Her first copy writing work was as a free lance for Lenox Collections, where she wrote promotional copy and assisted in designing new collections. She later joined Adis International, a medical publisher. Nathalie gradually moved into editing, desktop publishing/production and project management.

Nathalie moved to the National Board of Medical Examiners in Philadelphia as a medical editor for the United States Medical Licensing Examination, her present employer.

Nathalie joined AMWA in 1997. She earned a Core Curriculum certificate in editing and is on her way to getting an Advanced certificate. In 1999 she completed the Editor in the Life Sciences (ELS) qualification. In her free time she is working towards a Master in Biomedical Writing degree from the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia. She lives in Bucks County, PA, with her husband and two cats.



## David Woods

president of Healthcare Media International (HMI), has been awarded a PhD by his alma mater, the University of Ulster, for his thesis "The Physician of the 21st Century: Management, Accountability and Information Technology."

Dr. Woods served for eight years as the first nonphysician editor-in-chief of the Canadian Medical Association Journal, and is the author of three books on healthcare policy.

### How to get information or volunteer to help:

1. Look up the Delaware Valley Chapter website: [amwa-dvc.org](http://amwa-dvc.org)
2. Look up the AMWA website: [amwa.org](http://amwa.org)
3. Call anyone on the steering committee or email them (addresses on websites)
4. Send an e-mail to the editor.

## Who are you?

This space is reserved for news about you, our members. Send in your picture and your news and we'll feature you. The first members featured are our previous newsletter editor, Nathalie Bacon, and member David Woods. Bios were both supplied by the members. Thank you, Nathalie, for bringing the newsletter into the new millennium.

*The Editor*

The *Delawriter* is the newsletter of the Delaware Chapter of the American Medical Writers Association (AMWA).

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*Articles, haiku, news, advertising: submit to the Editor.*

Please send address changes and membership information to AMWA at 40 West Gate Drive #101, Rockville, MD 20850-1192 or by email to contacts listed at AMWA.org

### AMWA-DVC Executive Committee:

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856 795 2359

Thanks to Julie Barlow  
([jbarlow@managedcaremeasures.com](mailto:jbarlow@managedcaremeasures.com))  
for help with Quark.

## What is the Princeton Conference?

*A wonderful opportunity for members to earn course credits, to retreat to Princeton with other writers for a weekend and to take part in a killer spelling bee.*

## Spelling bee?

Last year I sauntered into the Saturday night cocktail party (sponsored by Sharon Cole and ACCQ Writing) and told the assembled writers that I could spell anything and that they could all surrender immediately. I was not eliminated in the first, or the second round, not until after Gary Cummings and Brian Bass and before Sharon Cole. Finally Robert Hand and Edie Schwager battled through the sixth and seventh round and Robert took home the medical dictionary (as if he needed it). It was a great way to spend a wet Spring evening, with other writers who can (almost) spell the same things I can. *The Editor*

## The Power and Promise of Genetics

On December 5, AMWA members were told of the promise of genetics and the implications for medical writers by Penelope K. Manasco, MD, vice president, Worldwide Clinical Genetics, Communications and Education at Glaxo Wellcome Research and Development.

All pharmaceutical companies are now conducting genetic research to better understand how genes affect the way our bodies respond to medicines. This information will help health care providers prescribe the right medicine for each patient.

"With pharmacogenetics, we have the potential to study patients and understand which patients respond to a medicine and which patients are likely to experience side effects," said Dr. Manasco. "If we can identify that prospectively, we can treat everybody better."

She predicts that pharmacogenetic tests will be available within three to five years.

Genetic testing must be carefully defined because of privacy and insurance concerns. We must understand the utility of genetic testing, what is tested, the benefits, and the risks. Two types of genetic propensities can be tested: disease genetics provide disease prognostics and diagnostics, and pharmacogenetics tests predict a response to medicine profile.

With 14 other pharmaceutical companies, GlaxoSmithKline Pharmaceuticals is working with bioethicists to understand the issues involved through the Pharmacogenetics Working Group. These issues include:  
How will samples be used?  
Who has access to information? Is consent voluntary and informed?  
How and with whom will information be accessed and shared? Who is responsible for samples?

Guidelines have been published by government advisory groups, legislative bodies, non-government

## Medical Haiku

This space is reserved for medical haiku - the challenge of describing a disease, symptoms, demographics and treatment in 17 syllables. Or anything related to medical writing. Your editor kicks off the series with a haiku about acute otitis media.

He wakes "My ear hurts"  
Fever, phone, "Get in the car"  
He holds Mommy's hand.

*SJ Dodgson (c) 2000*

ethics/policy groups, professional groups, and the World Health Organization.

### Lessons for Medical Writers

Medical writers will play a role in informing the public about pharmacogenetics. We should:

- Become comfortable with the language of genetics.
- Learn the terminology.
- Read the literature.
- Focus on potential benefits of pharmacogenetics.

**More information? Link to:**  
[www.glaxowellcome.com](http://www.glaxowellcome.com).

*By Lori De Milto [lorid@voicenet.com](mailto:lorid@voicenet.com).  
Lori is a freelance writer*

Would you like to participate in or organize an activity on the Saturday night of the Princeton Conference? If you would, please contact the Editor.