

DELAWRITER

News of the Delaware Valley Chapter



Farewell from the President

In my first column as the president of AMWA-DVC, I wrote about how transitions “hit many of us with instability and uncertainty, as we momentarily teeter between the old and the new.” Now, in my final column as the president, I find myself again in a transition. But hasn’t the word transition encapsulated this year?



Millennia aside, our chapter tackled a number of critical tasks to move us through the transition into our future as medical communicators:

- *Reactivation and invigoration of our DVC website*

- *Reinvention of the look of our Delawriter newsletter*
- *Extension of our Princeton Conference into 2 days*
- *Implementation of novel topics for our dinner meetings*
- *Attraction of new or absent members to rejoin activities*

(For more details on these and other activities, check out this issue’s article on my Chapter President’s Report to the AMWA Executive Board.)

Now the tough part: Our editor simply cannot allot me enough space to thank all of our many chapter

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Fourth Annual Princeton Conference

We’re happy to report that the 4th Annual Princeton Conference is being expanded to 1½ days: Saturday, April 15 and Sunday morning, April 16. The conference once again will be held on the spacious, wooded grounds of the Merrill Lynch Conference & Training Center in Plainsboro, New Jersey.

Four Core Curriculum courses are planned: *The Creative Process in Pharmaceutical Advertising*; *IND Applications*; *Educating Sales Reps about Science and Medicine*; and *English Usage & Abusage*.

Four noncredit courses are planned: *Intro to Clinical Development of Pharmaceutical Agents*; *Freelance Fee Setting*; *Marketing & Improving Your Web Site*; and *Using the Internet for Effective Medical Research*.

A plenary session will address *Quality in Medical Communications*, and a Business Roundtable will focus on *The Buying & Selling of Freelance Services*. And this year you can compete against your peers in a medical Spelling Bee on Saturday evening!

For further information, contact Brian Bass at bam509@aol.com.

April 2000

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T-shirt ... see page 2



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members who made my term in office an invigorating period of transition. With continued support from all of our members, Gary Cummings will undoubtedly find his transition to the president of AMWA-DVC as rewarding.

With warm regards,



Robert J. Bonk, PhD
President, AMWA-DVC

Notice of Elections

AMWA-DVC will hold its annual business meeting, with election of officers, at the final chapter meeting of the 1999-2000 season in June 2000 (date & venue TBA).

Seats up for election are the secretary and president-elect. Gary Cummings, current president-elect, will

A Piece of Philly!

Whether you attended the 59th Annual Conference in Philadelphia and forgot to get your T-shirt, or couldn't make it but don't want to miss out—order yours today!

The quality "Hanes Beefy" T-shirt is thick and soft, made of 100% preshrunk cotton. The hunter green T is silk-screened with the logo of the AMWA 59th Annual Conference in cranberry, goldenrod and white.

Quantities are limited, so hurry!

L or XL: \$16 each plus shipping.

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To order, contact Brian Bass at BAM509@aol.com.

Letter to Members

Dear fellow freelancers and AMWA members,

I had serious problems with three freelance writing projects last year. In summary: each project was contracted for a specified length; I was asked to do significantly more work than was promised; and they expected this extra work to be done for no additional pay. I lost nearly \$6000 from these three projects, and I spent many hours writing letters, making phone calls, and, ultimately, consulting attorneys.

The tactics of the three contractors were basically the same. Initially, they simply ignored repeated attempts to clarify length over-run issues. Eventually they became aggressive, angry, and, in two cases, abusive when I politely pointed out that I would not do the additional work unless I was paid. In all cases they refused to pay for the extra work. In two cases they delayed payment or threatened nonpayment for the contracted amount.

I feel that my experience warrants discussion among members. Are others giving in to these tactics, which allows the contractors to continue with these practices? Are writers so desperate for work that they allow this type of abuse to go on? As one contractor put it, "Other writers are willing to do the extra work in expectation of future potential work with the company." Is this problem as widespread as I suspect?

I would greatly appreciate discussion in a public forum from other writers. How often have you encountered this problem and how have you dealt with it? We need to stand firmly as a group to stop this apparent "standard operating procedure."

Sincerely,

Kate AW Roby, VMD

assume the office of president. Current president Bob Bonk, PhD, will become immediate past president.

Please send nominations ASAP to Donna Miceli at dmiceli@earthlink.net.

Incoming president Gary Cummings will appoint six chapter delegates. Members may volunteer at the annual business meeting.

Delawriter is the newsletter of the Delaware Valley Chapter of the American Medical Writers Association

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Submit items for publication to the editor.
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20850-1192.

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AMWA-DVC Home Page: www.amwa-dvc.org

AMWA Headquarters: <http://www.amwa.org>

AMWA-DVC President's Report

The 1999-2000 term of the Delaware Valley Chapter (AMWA-DVC) succeeded in our transition to meeting the changing needs and number (now over 600) of our members. This report details our accomplishments against our main goals, highlights of our financial status, and issues for AMWA overall. I thank all members of our Chapter, particularly the Chapter Officers, for their dedication, enthusiasm, and support during my term in office.

Accomplishments

We set these goals, against which we measured our success in terms of accomplishments:

1. Implementation of novel topics for our dinner meetings

This term, we will have had four chapter meetings with dinner speakers: (1) Joel Kahn, MD, "Going Online for Health Information: Trends and Pitfalls" on Internet sources in September; (2) Todd Goldberg, MD, "Increased Longevity: Too Much of a Good Thing?" on geriatrics in December; (3) "Virtual Meeting with the University of the Rockies" concerning online education in March; and (4) our annual Business Meeting with elections and a tentatively slated speaker on ICH Guidelines for pharmaceutical documents in June.

2. Expansion of our Princeton Conference from one day

Our expanded Princeton Conference, scheduled for April 15-16, will include four workshops for core curriculum credit, four non-credit workshops, a plenary session on quality issues in medical writing, and a roundtable discussion on freelance services.

3. Attraction of new or absent members to rejoin activities

All of our goals had the secondary aim of attracting new or absent chapter members by targeting their—not our—interests. Moreover, we deliberately included new representatives as 6 of our 15 Chapter Officers. We also instituted a new Chair in charge of our website.

4. Concerted effort to reach, interest, and attract local students

Along with trying to attract new or absent members, we intentionally targeted area students through university mailings and discounted meeting fees.

5. Energetic support for the Annual Conference in Philadelphia

As the local host chapter, we encouraged our members to participate in as many activities as possible for the Annual Conference in Philadelphia. Our main activities included producing the local guide, selling conference T-shirts, and running the hospitality booth.

6. Reactivation and invigoration of our chapter website

Our website was totally redesigned after a concerted effort at planning content and tools needed by our members. In addition to the services of our Web Chair and Committee, we employed the services of an outside vendor in launching a professional website.

7. Reinvention of the look of our Delawriter newsletter

After a highly successful run of our Delawriter newsletter, we implemented a new design and streamlined procedures by taking advantage of available publishing technology. The Editor for our newsletter now saves personal time while augmenting the flow of information to our members; we are also building links from our newsletter to our website.

Finances

Achieving our ambitious goals perforce required expenditures. The most notable expenditures were chapter meetings, newsletter overhaul, and website implementation. Our bank balance decreased by \$10,695.77 to the current level of \$12,232.44 as of 21 January. We believe these expenditures to be fully justified in terms of meeting our members' needs.

Issues

Throughout this term, we have actively sought input from our members on their suggestions and concerns for the operation of their professional organization. The following list summarizes issues of our members; our Board Delegates plan to discuss these issues in more detail at the April meeting of the AMWA Board of Directors.

- Consider allowance of more than four workshops for core curriculum credit at local conferences to balance insufficient offerings of credit workshops at the Annual Conference.
- Ensure that Board Meetings comply with Robert's Rules of Order so that decisions affecting our members can be debated and decided appropriately.
- Clarify editorial policies of the AMWA Journal, particularly involving independence of the Editor in accepting articles for publication.
- Publish agenda for Board Meetings well in advance and to all Chapter Delegates so that they can be prepared for efficient and effective deliberations.
- Develop our National Executive Board from a traditional hierarchy to a partnership with the Chapters and members that we officers are privileged to serve.

-Robert J. Bonk, PhD

AMWA-New York Metro Chapter Meeting

When? Saturday, June 10. **Where?** The Cornell Club in New York City. **Core Curriculum courses:** *Writing and Producing Materials for Patient Education; IND Applications; and Electronic Regulatory Submissions.* **Advanced Curriculum workshop,** *Strategies for Improving Document Quality for Pharmaceutical Communication Managers.* Contact Ellen Weil for more information at 212-354-8930 or ekweil@aol.com.

Job Opportunities

ACCQ Writing Services, Inc., a provider of premium contract writing services. We specialize in regulatory documents, such as clinical study reports, NDA documents, European dossiers, and investigator brochures, but we also write journal articles, patient education pieces, monographs, and other science-based marketing materials. You may hire us either as a contract support organization and give us a project to execute independently or you may hire us as a temporary agency and contract for specific people to execute your project under your supervision. What makes us different from the usual contract medical writer? We are a team of home-based contract writers, medical editors, quality assurance personnel, and word processors—a complete, floating writing department. What makes us different from the usual temp agency? We send our writers on site with an organization of skilled writers and editors only a phone call away. Please call 610-962-7377, fax 610-992-5569, or

e-mail ACCQmedwriter@ACCQwritingservices.com to learn more about us.

Medical Writers: Aerotek is currently seeking experienced medical writers for contract opportunities in the Philadelphia area. Interested candidates with IND/NDA submission experience should contact Rich Goldbeck at 610-254-5423.

Freelance Opportunity Wanted

Are you involved with clinical research and development? Do you need help with your clinical research projects? I am a clinical scientist with 10 years' experience located in Center City, Phila. I specialize in Clinical Trials Protocol Writing, Auditing, Monitoring, Site Recruitment and Training, and Project Management. Contact Lissa Lamothe, M.P.H. LAMOTHE CONSULTING, INC.: Llamothe@msn.co; (215) 763-8388.

15+ lines	\$150 & up
10 lines	\$100
5 lines	\$50
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AMWA Annual Conference
 November 8-11, 2000
 Inter-Continental Hotel
 Miami, Florida

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