

DELAWRITER

The quarterly newsletter of AMWA-DVC

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Winter 2016

The Princeton Conference Hosts the AMWA Medical Writing Certification Exam

AMERICAN MEDICAL WRITERS ASSOCIATION – DELAWARE VALLEY CHAPTER



THE
PRINCETON
CONFERENCE



*Providing educational excellence in
medical communications for 20 years*

*Friday April 15, 2016 & Saturday, April 16, 2016 at
the Princeton Marriott Forrestal Center
100 College Road E, Princeton, NJ 08540*

AMWA-DVC is excited to host its first **AMWA Medical Writing Certification Exam (MWC)** on Friday April 15, 2016 as part of the 20th anniversary of the Princeton Conference. This special anniversary marks 20 years of educational excellence in medical writing and scientific communications for Delaware Valley professionals. This year's expanded program will offer additional AMWA Credit Workshops and Open Sessions in regulatory writing, publications, document review, and social media.

We are honored to kick off the event with an AMWA National sponsored reception on Friday evening, followed by a dinner program featuring a special guest speaker, Judith Swan, PhD. Dr. Swann is the Associate Director of Princeton University Writing Program and **TEDx talks** presenter.

The 20th Annual Princeton Conference courses will be held on Saturday April 16, 2016. Educational offerings will include AMWA Credit Workshops and Open Sessions in the morning and the afternoon. Roundtable discussions and networking opportunities will be available at lunch, with time

to catch up with friends and colleagues. Come network with industry professionals, medical writing vendors, and freelancers!

This year's Princeton Conference is a great time to add to your knowledge base, earn credits towards an AMWA certificate, sit for the AMWA MWC exam, and network with colleagues - all in our own backyard in the Delaware Valley with minimal travel expense. Hope to see you there!

DATE

- **Friday April 15, 2016** Medical Writing Exam, Reception, and Dinner Presentation Meeting
- **Saturday April 16, 2016** AMWA Credit Workshops, Open Courses, and Networking

LOCATION

Princeton Marriott Forrestal Center

100 College Road East, Princeton, NJ 08540

REGISTRATION: *Coming soon!*

Hodgson: Let Life Present Twists and Turns

By Michelle Dalton

The 2015 Harold Swanberg Distinguished Service Award recipient, Helen Hodgson, PhD, said life will present "horrendous storms" along the way, "but it's okay. Let life take those unexpected twists and turns." Hodgson presented her address during AMWA's 75th Annual Conference in San Antonio, Texas. Among her many achievements, Hodgson founded the Rocky Mountain chapter of AMWA, was named an AMWA fellow in 1990, and served as the association's president from 2001-2002. She also has won the Gore Excellence in Teaching Award. Quoting authors as diverse as Tolkien, Lorraine Hansberry, and Toni Morrison, she said for most of her early career she had no direction-she just wanted to keep learning. She went to Yale University's Divinity School, "but didn't have anything to do. At age 20, I had no idea what my reason for being was," she said.

Her advice to those who may not have a clear path: "It never hurts to stand in a doorway with the option of going either way." After accepting a teaching position at Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, Alabama, she found herself as a 21-year-old professor of English, and fell in love with teaching and education.

After attending the University of Denver to obtain a PhD, she then went onto medical school ("it was free credits, so why not go?" she quipped).

Ray Bradbury is often heralded as saying if someone continuously jumps off cliffs, they'll build wings on the way

down. Hodgson embraced that philosophy, and began her technical writing career with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).

"It was my first 'real' job," she said. "I had a PhD in 19th century American History. I knew nothing about geology. That job started off as the most miserable experience of my life." Thirteen years later, she was the agency's head writer and lead expert on technical writing.

"I taught geologists how to write," she said, "but the truth was, I didn't like rocks. I did like medicine, and that's when I found AMWA."

In 1984, she attended her first AMWA conference and promptly found 25 signatories to start the Rocky Mountain chapter.

She left the USGS to become an adjunct professor at Westminster College in Salt Lake City, Utah.

"My advice to everyone is to be open to a variety of experiences. We may not be able to fly like birds, but if you believe in yourself, you can achieve anything," she said.

Michelle Dalton, ELS, is an award-winning healthcare writer with more than 25 years of publishing experience. She is the founder of Dalton & Associates, Reading, Pa.

Learn and Network at the 2016 Freelance Conference

By Ruwaida Vakil and Lori De Milto

If you're a freelance medical writer, or thinking about becoming one, don't miss AMWA-DVC's 2016 Freelance Conference, to be held on Saturday, March 12 at the **Crowne Plaza Valley Forge** in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. This year, we are introducing new content, such as a freelance directory of participants and a speed learning or networking session. The conference will also have 2 interactive sessions on challenges and best practices: 1 for aspiring and newer freelancers and 1 for seasoned pros; presentations on key topics in freelancing; a networking luncheon; and roundtable discussions.

Why You Should Attend

"This is my favorite conference. I always make sure I attend each year," says Ruwaida Vakil, MS, a freelance medical writer since 1999 (full time since 2007) and one of this year's co-chairs.

"Our Freelance Conference offers extraordinary learning and networking for seasoned, new, and aspiring freelance medical writers," says Lori De Milto, MJ, a freelance medical writer since 1997 and another co-chair.

"This is the 1 conference a year where I know my

investment is worthwhile before I even set foot in the door," says Michelle Dalton, ELS, a freelance medical writer since 2006, and AMWA-DVC's president elect.

"The Freelance Conference is THE event each year where freelancers can come together, share experiences, and learn from one another. Everyone is so welcoming!" says Jennifer Minarcik, MS, a freelance medical writer since 2011.

Get Involved

Gain new skills and build your network even more as a member of the Freelance Conference Committee. "Being involved in AMWA events is an easy way to get to know work colleagues," adds Melissa L. Bogen, ELS, a freelance medical editor since 1997 and the third co-chair. "We often refer work to one another based on relationships built through volunteering together." Melissa is a member of the Empire State chapter and is an active participant in various AMWA activities.

We have many volunteer opportunities available, with varying time commitments. To learn more, or to volunteer, e-mail: freelance@amwa-dvc.org.

Register Early

The full program for the Freelance Conference will be posted on DVC's [website](http://www.amwa-dvc.org) (www.amwa-dvc.org) this month. We expect a large crowd this year, so register early.

If you're a member of DVC, you'll receive an e-mail when the conference brochure is ready. If you're not already an AMWA member or are in a different chapter, e-mail freelance@amwa-dvc.org to join our e-mail list

Ruwaida Vakil is a freelance medical writer and owner of ProMed Write LLC. She specializes in sales training and CME.

Lori De Milto is a freelance medical writer specializing in targeted medical marketing communications and author of The Mighty Marketer: Your Guide to Making More Money as a Freelance Medical Writer.

The 2015 Alvarez Award Address: Take Them on A Journey

By Ruwaida Vakil, MS

Each year during the opening session of the AMWA annual conference, we honor a writer for excellence in communicating healthcare issues in the public domain. On October 1 at the 2015 AMWA Annual conference in San Antonio, Texas the Walter C. Alvarez award was given to Jay Ingram, a radio and TV science program host, book

author, and one of Canada's renowned and popular science personalities. Ingram's Alvarez address focused on the importance of communicating science effectively to the general public. He identified 3 keys to successful communication:

1. People/Audience
2. Storytelling
3. Emotion

People/Audience

Ingram pointed out that when communicating to the public, it is important to consider your audience. There is a huge gap between researchers and the general public. Scientific articles are often written in a way that most people cannot understand. Even articles that are supposed to be written for a nonscientific audience are difficult to understand for most people. According to science literary studies, only 10% to 25% of US adults can understand a science article in the *New York Times*. Additionally tabloid newspapers often try to sensationalize science and thus incorrectly report it. As science writers, we have the responsibility to effectively communicate the message keeping the audience and its cognitive biases in mind.

Storytelling

According to Ingram, writers should use storytelling to effectively communicate. He pointed out that unfortunately science and storytelling are often inversely related. Science builds on a conclusion, whereas storytelling thrives on headlines. He shared several examples of when science met storytelling and how effective that can be. The examples included the AMC show *Breaking Bad*, as well as using animations/visuals to create a story that will engage your audience.

Emotion

Introducing emotion in your writing also is an effective way to engage your audience. Ingram stated, "They did not come to see your slide deck" so engage them.

Ingram's speech was well received by the audience. The twitter hashtag #AMWA15 lit up with favorable comments.

Select Twitter Comments from Conference Attendees

"Jay Ingram taking us on a wonderful communication journey! Alvarez award winner" @brianandcindy

"How to effectively communicate your message. Powerful messages evoke emotion" @Jenminarcik

Comments from Conference Attendees

"Ingram highlighted the importance of understanding the audience to effectively communicate about science, and

also how difficult this can be due to low science literacy and rationalization by readers and viewers."-Lori De Milto, Principal, Writer for Rent LLC

"I wanted to get up and high-five him when he advised to the audience, 'No one came to see your slide deck. Build a story. Connect emotionally if you want to communicate well.' This is a recipe for effective communication."-Larry Lynam, Principal, The Lynam Group

Ruwaida Vakil is a freelance medical writer and owner of ProMed Write LLC. She specializes in sales training and CME.

AMWA 2015 President's Awards for Excellence and Volunteerism

- **Lori De Milto, MJ** for leading the AMWA-DVC Freelance Conference to its current success
- **Jennifer Minarcik, MS** for creating the new, vibrant webinar series serving our Chapter members
- **Darryl Z. L'Heureux, PhD** for excellence in member communications and promotional activity

2016 is here!! During this time of year many of us reflect on the previous year, while looking upon the new year with plans on how to make it a great one!

AMWA-DVC asks you to consider volunteering to help our great chapter. Often in organizations like ours people do not realize the difference that they can make. Every little bit helps!

Take a look at the various activities that DVC is involved in and consider what involvement would suit you. It is a great way to meet new colleagues and help to improve the DVC.

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