

Announcing AERTeM, the Spanish Association of Medical Writers

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Abstract

The Spanish Association of Medical Writers – in Spanish, the *Asociación Española de Redactores de Textos Médicos* (AERTeM) – is a young association focused on the specific needs of Spanish writers. Local organisations such as AERTeM can augment the role of international organisations such as EMWA by providing a local forum to improve and professionalise medical writing and by serving as an expert resource of country-specific knowledge.

Keywords: Spain, Medical writing, Association

The Spanish Association of Medical Writers – in Spanish, the *Asociación Española de Redactores de Textos Médicos* (AERTeM) – was created in February 2005 by Santiago Rosales, a paediatrician from Barcelona who had been doing medical writing work for several years. Having experienced the positive ‘international feel’ of EMWA meetings, he felt that the Spanish medical writing community would benefit from a similar local association. As there was no current Spanish language association he contacted other Spanish medical writers and decided to create AERTeM.

According to its charter, AERTeM’s goals are:

- To promote and facilitate professional training for its members;
- To promote the linguistic quality and accuracy of biomedical documents used in the pharmaceutical industry, for marketing and for the communication of science;
- To facilitate information sharing among its members, as well as between members and sponsors of biomedical publications (i.e. publishers and the pharmaceutical industry).

To reach these goals, members of AERTeM are working on a number of initiatives, such as

establishing a training program, implementing training exchanges with similar associations, developing a web page (<http://www.redactoresmedicos.com>), organising scientific meetings, and publishing general topics of interest for its members. To date, AERTeM has conducted three general meetings. These have focused on topics related to medical writing and have featured discussions on the association itself and our future plans. Since its creation, the association continues to grow and currently (December 2012) has 45 members.

Key findings from our member survey

To understand the needs of its members, AERTeM conducted a survey in the spring of 2012. Major findings were that most (72%) of the respondents were female, all but one were Spanish (we have one member from Panama!), and most were between 36 and 45 years of age (48%). The most common university degree was in a biological science, and 60% had a doctoral degree. The average number of years of medical writing experience was 9.5, with over 50% having 5–10 years of medical writing experience. Forty percent of the members were freelancers, 28% worked for a pharmaceutical company, and 28% worked in a clinical research organisation. All performed their work in Spanish and English, and 4% also in Catalan. The most common types of documents written dealt with ‘scientific communication’ such as peer-reviewed manuscripts, posters, scientific summaries, review papers, and meta-analyses, and the best known and most frequently used guidelines included ICH, CONSORT, and ICMJE. The majority of the responders found AERTeM membership useful, quoting networking as the biggest factor influencing their continued membership. Access to additional training was also a key factor for the responders.

Augmenting the role of international organisations like EMWA

AERTeM can augment the role of international organisations such as EMWA by providing a local forum to improve and professionalise medical writing and by

serving as an expert resource of country-specific knowledge. We encourage writers across Europe to investigate forming similar associations, or if one already exists, to join it and reap the benefits of interacting with like-minded writers who probably have many of the same questions and needs.

Author information

Maria Fernández-Piera is a Principal Medical Writer at PRA International and a member of EMWA since 2005 and of AERTeM since 2007. More information about AERTeM is available at <http://www.redactoresmedicos.com>.

Plagiarism watch (part 2)

In some countries there are laws preventing felons from profiting financially from their crimes, but there seem to be no such rules for plagiarists.

Journalist Jonah Lehrer was forced to resign from *The New Yorker* after it was revealed that he had fabricated Bob Dylan quotes and engaged in plagiarism and self-plagiarism. His disgrace did not, however, preclude him from speaking at an event held by the Knight Foundation, a charitable US organisation dedicated to furthering education, journalism, and the arts.¹

The subsequent revelation that Lehrer was paid \$20,000 for his participation triggered a wave of controversy, which prompted the Knight Foundation to rush out a feeble and contradictory statement expressing regret at their decision, but at the same time appearing to defend it.²

The Foundation invited Lehrer to talk about decision making in the knowledge that he would discuss some of the 'mistakes' he made. Can the fee be justified if his talk prevents others from

engaging in the kind of malpractice he committed? The condemnatory comments the Foundation's statement provoked² suggest that many think not.

References

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