Introducing EMWA's new AI Working Group

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a broad umbrella term that refers to the use of computer algorithms to perform tasks that typically require human-like intelligence, such as reasoning, learning, decision-making, and perception. The new EMWA AI Working Group, designed to keep our organisation abreast of AI developments in our industry, will initially focus on writing, editing, and analytical tools and include literature and data analysis. For the moment, the group will exclude image creation, and diagnostic and analysis tools. In this article, each member will answer some questions about our group and AI in our industry.

An interview with the members of the AI Working Group

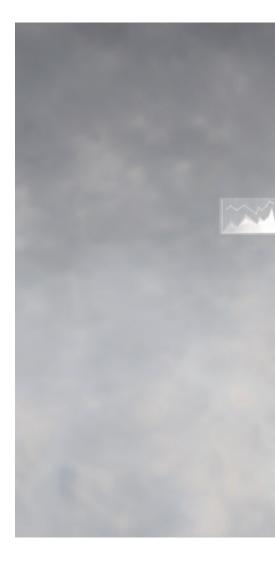### 01 What is the EMWA AI Working Group?

Sarah Tilly: The AI Working Group was formed at the May 2023 EMWA conference in Prague in response to the need to serve our members and ensure that EMWA stays ahead of the curve as this area rapidly evolves. The working group consists of four members: Sarah Tilly, Slavka Baronikova, Martin Delahunty, and Namrata Singh. We serve as a hub to liaise with EMWA Special Interest Groups (SIGs), organise activities and events regarding AI in medical writing, as well as serving as a voice for EMWA and our members to external bodies as regulations will undoubtedly develop in this field.

02 Why is an AI Working Group needed now?

Slavka Baronikova: Since the release of ChatGPT-4 at the end of 2022, most of us with even a slight interaction with social media and the news quickly realised that AI was no longer just for technical researchers and that it would soon impact, to a large extent, our professional lives (many now also realise how far AI had already subtly penetrated into the personal and professional realms). And we medical communicators are no exception. The sessions and exhibitors at the 2023 EMWA Spring conference in Prague gave insight on the need for understanding and education of our EMWA members on AI and its use and limitations. And so emerged the conception of the AI Working Group.

03 What do medical writers understand about AI-powered tools and which ones are they using?

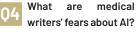**Martin Delahunty:** A majority of medical writers have a level of understanding about AI-powered tools and most notably, ChatGPT. However, only a minority are using ChatGPT and related tools in their work. Examples of other tools mentioned by EMWA members include Triliodocs, Grammarly, Quill-bot, Writefull, and Perfectit.

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04 What are medical writers' fears about AI?

Namrata Singh: One of the major fears that the medical writing community faces is whether AI tools will replace what medical writers are doing now. Also, the writers are sceptical about the evolving skills that will be required to be

publishers of scientific journals and Open Pharma (openpharma.blog) to ensure that EMWA maintains a presence in the field and can contribute to external activities.

Q7 Do you think medical writers will need to use AI over the next 2 to 3 years?

MD: AI has brought significant changes in various industries, including healthcare. The medical writing field is no exception. AI provides an opportunity to automate certain tasks, reduce errors, and improve efficiency. The use of AI-powered tools will have a significant impact on medical writing, and medical writers who embrace AI will have a competitive advantage in the job market as they will be able to produce high-quality work in less time than their peers.

Q8 Are there specific needs for the different fields of medical communication/writing, such as scientific publications, regulatory, medical devices, etc.? How will the AI Working Group address these differences?

AI Working Group: Each area uses different AI tools for different needs. These include not only writing, editing and translation, but also data and literature analysis, and visual interpretation of scientific content. This field is evolving very quickly and the AI Working Group will initiate and continue discussions within the SIGs, as well as externally, and will debate this very important topic to bring to EMWA members the latest developments in the field. We will introduce the members to people who have an active voice in each field and who can share their learning and experiences.

employable now and that certain routine tasks/activities that they had been working on recently might become redundant.

Q5 What activities does the AI Working Group plan over the next year?

ST: For the virtual conference in November 2023, we are planning an educational seminar, where our members can gain an excellent foundation on AI in medical writing, rewind a little and understand the difference between Deep Learning, large language models (LLM), and natural language generation (NLG), and start to get an idea of the do and do-nots that are being established regarding the ethical use of AI in each of the medical writing fields. At the May 2024 EMWA conference, in Valencia, Spain, we will have a full-day symposium on AI and automation where we will go into more depth. In between the conferences, we will be reaching out to understand your views and uses of AI, to liaise with external bodies, and we will begin to

generate a framework within which medical writers can begin to feel more comfortable with embracing these tools whilst also understanding their limitations and risks.

Q6 What bodies are you connecting with to collaborate and to promote EMWA's voice in the use of AI in medical communication and writing?

SB: Use of AI in scientific and medical writing (including translation) is unavoidable, yet the do and do-nots still need to be established. EMWA connects with sister organisations such as The American Medical Writers Association (amwa.org) and International Society for Medical Publication Professionals (ismpp.org) as well as with

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Q9 How can medical writers prepare for the inevitable arrival of more automation and AI in our profession?

NS: First of all, medical writers have to acknowledge that we are in the midst of a revolution and we have to be open to the changes and adapt to a new way of working. It might yet take some time for these AI tools to become a part of our daily lives, but even now medical writers should engage in conversations with their peers and cultivate a curiosity to know more about the field, since at this time there are very few experts and most of us

are in the learning phase. Understanding the dynamics behind these tools, how they work, and how they can impact our day-to-day working is where we can start. The next important skill to work on could be how to create appropriate prompts because what the AI tool will provide will depend upon our questions. It is something like "Garbage in, garbage out", so to become friends with these tools we have to understand how they work and how we can get the best possible responses from them.

A word of caution at this stage: Medical writers have to ensure the correctness and accuracy of the information provided by these tools since they are known to "hallucinate", that is, provide inappropriate or incorrect answers sometimes.

Finally, medical writers need to be aware of the guidelines and recommendations which are coming up (keep an eye out for news from the AI Working Group) and always be responsible for the content, whether it is created with or without AI.

Q10 **What can we learn from translators, who have already been through the transition of AI usage in their profession?**

Claire Harmer, our guest translator: Translators have certainly had to embrace AI in order to remain relevant and competitive in the evolving landscape. Translation workflows have undergone immense change, with professionals often being asked to post-edit machine-generated translations rather than translating a text from scratch. Translators have had to become proficient at integrating AI tools such as translation memories and terminology management systems into their workflows, in order to improve productivity.

Some translators have decided to specialise in niche areas of medicine, where their expertise can add value beyond what AI can achieve. Others have focused on areas that require a greater degree of creativity and an understanding of nuance and impact, such as the translation of medical marketing materials and health campaigns.

Members of the AI Working Group

Sarah Tilly values the people with whom she writes in the same way she values the patients about whom she writes, and the customers for whom she writes. She believes that everyone has their own unique contribution to give to our industry, and this includes understanding how we can adapt to and embrace current trends and challenges. Sarah has been medical writing since 2006 in clinical research organisations and medical writing consultancies. She is Founder and Director of Azur Health Science, a small regulatory writing consultancy based in France. She holds a first degree in Biology, a PGCert in International HTA, Pricing and Reimbursement, and is studying for an MBA with a focus in Healthcare Management. She is the current EMWA president-elect.

Slavka Baronikova is Scientific Publications Head at Galapagos NV. She is trained clinical pharmacist with a PhD in pharmacognosy. For over a decade, she worked in the academic world isolating and testing active anti-cancer and anti-HIV compounds from medicinal plants, and teaching university students. In 2003, she moved to the pharmaceutical industry, mainly working in clinical research and then, later on, in the scientific communication field. Slavka has been an EMWA member since 2006, and has served as Conference Director since 2014 and is co-chair of the EMWA MedComms Special Interest Group. She is also an active member of the International Society for Medical Publication Professionals (ISMPP) and Open Pharma initiative.

Q11 How can medical writers reach out to the AI Working Group and for what purpose?

ST: We have established a liaison with each of the EMWA special interest groups (SIGs) so that the AI Working Group remains up-to-date and relevant to all our EMWA members. If you want to get involved, we suggest joining one of the many SIGs, so that you can have your say on ideas, activities, and educational events around the future of AI in our profession. Find out about the SIGs here: https://www.emwa.org/sigs/

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Q12 How will the AI Working Group keep EMWA members informed of activities in the field?

AIWG: The AI Working Group will plan together with collaborating SIGs many AI related educational activities, starting with the 2023 EMWA November conference. We will inform our members via the usual EMWA channels – the EMWA website (Latest News, etc.), the monthly newsletter, social media posts, and articles in *Medical Writing*, as well as other channels.

Disclaimers

The opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and not necessarily shared by EMWA

Disclosures and conflicts of interest

Martin Delahunty is a Director and shareholder of Inspiring STEM Consulting Limited, an independent publishing consultancy. All of his current and past client names are listed at www.inspiringSTEMconsulting.com and he may be subject to non-disclosure agreements.

The other authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Martin Delahunty, BA (NatSci), MBA, is Founder and Director of Inspiring STEM Consulting which provides publishing strategy, business development and training services to academic publishers, universities, pharmaceutical companies and supporting technology services. A core focus is open science publishing principles and best practices.

Martin is a former Global Director at Springer Nature with over 30 years experience in science publishing. He is a past Secretary and Board of Trustee Member of the International Society for Medical Publication Professionals and currently, a supporting member of EMWA's Medical Communications Special Interest Group.

Namrata Singh is a paediatrician and a medical writer. She is the founder and director at Turacoz Group about a decade back and works with industry and academic institutes to offer solutions to convey their scientific message to their target audiences. She has special interest in adapting to new technological advancements and mentoring aspiring medical writers. She has been an active EMWA member since 2014 and is currently chair of the Entrepreneurship Special Interest Group.

Claire Harmer works with public health organisations, medical journals, research institutes, and CROs to translate texts from French and Spanish into effective, clear, and compelling English. She also works as an English language editor and a project manager for translations into various other languages.