

President's Message

Moving to the virtual space...



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recipient of the 2015 John P. McGovern Medal for excellence in biomedical communication from the American Medical Writers Association, and in 2017 was awarded an honorary doctorate in civil laws from The University of the South (Sewanee). In 2019, the judges for the John Maddox Prize, which promotes those who stand up for science in the face of hostility, gave him a commendation for his work at Retraction Watch.

On Friday Nov. 10, we attended two fantastic mini-symposia: in the morning, on publication writing in plain language, and in the afternoon on artificial intelligence and medical writing. That evening concluded with a very well attended Freelancer Business Forum. The conference continued until late November with a seminar discussing the ways of working efficiently on and in our own business, and 28 online workshops.

A proud tradition

The history of our conference dates back to 1992, with our first meeting in Brussels. In 1995, in Bruges, we hit our next milestone, hosting workshops for the first time. Since then, the conferences have constantly grown in attendance, and the breadth and attractiveness of offerings, including a wide range of workshops and different fora of networking opportunities. For example, in 2012, full-day symposia were introduced; in 2015, the Expert Seminar Series debuted; and in 2017, the Internship Forum, which later became Getting Into Medical Writing (GIMW) initiative, started. Last spring in Prague, we held Expert Discussion Groups for the first time. The number of attendees of spring conferences has increased from 335 in Budapest (2014) to 455 at Prague 2023. Interestingly, the number of participants in the autumn F2F conferences used to range between 200 and 250, and once virtual conferences were introduced, it jumped to over 300 in 2020, reaching almost 450 this November.

My dear EMWA members and friends. We are now approaching Christmas, a festive season that, regardless of personal beliefs, gathers families and friends to celebrate their bonds and relationships. This is also a good time for reflection and recollection of our EMWA family.

I would like to start with the conferences, which are major EMWA activities. This November, we had the 56th EMWA Conference and the first in the series of autumn virtual ones. It is true that during the pandemic, we organised virtual conferences, and building on that experience, the EMWA Executive Committee decided to run autumn conferences virtually; the spring conferences will remain F2F events. However, in an attempt to accommodate all needs and knowing that people want to stay connected, we have opened local hubs during the

virtual conferences. This initiative gives an opportunity for EMWA members from the same country or region to not only attend the opening session and mini-symposia together but also to network in real life. This year, we had hubs in Benelux, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Serbia, and Switzerland.

The opening session on Thursday Nov. 9 included a very inspiring talk on publication retractions given by Ivan Oransky, MD, who is co-founder of Retraction Watch, editor-in-chief of *Spectrum*, and distinguished journalist in residence at New York University's Arthur Carter Journalism Institute. Ivan previously was president of the Association of Health Care Journalists and vice president of editorial at Medscape. He has also held editorial leadership positions at *MedPage Today*, Reuters Health, *Scientific American*, and *The Scientist*. He is the

Getting Into Medical Writing Members

Chair: Evguenia Alechine

Co-chair: Clare Chang

Group Members	Clare Gudex
Marata Singh	Barbara Bartolini
Francesca Capellini	Ivana Turek
Raquel Billiones	Zoya Ashabi
Sarah Hopwood	Abe Shevack (Ambassador programme liaison)



A sincere thank-you goes to the conference organisation

- Slavka Baronikova, our Conference Director
- Nadia Grewal, a member of the Conference team
- Claire Whittingham and the EMWA Head Office team
- Laura Collada Ali and Jules Kovacevic, Education Officers, and the EMWA Professional Development Committee (EPDC)
- Workshops leaders and speakers.

When mentioning GIMW, I need to add a few pieces of information. This initiative has grown outside the conferences and F2F meetings, and it now organises very popular online events. The last one, run in September 2023, was attended by hundreds of participants from all over the world. After a welcome given by Evguenia Alechine and Ivana Turek, who moderated the meeting, Sarah Hopwood introduced medical writing and explained the role medical writers play in the biomedical research world. Then, Evguenia gave a talk on practical hints about leveraging LinkedIn in your professional career. Overall, the programme was very interactive, leaving lots of time for discussion and questions.

The main areas covered were:

1. EMWA offerings such as Special Interest Groups (SIGs), Ambassador Programme, *Medical Writing* (journal), Creative Team, and Freelancer Business Forum
2. Regional networking experience with the latest EMWA initiative, namely, opening the door for Local EMWA Groups (LEGs). We'll talk more about LEGs in the March 2024 issue
3. Overview of the November conference. By the way, the presentation of the November conference most likely encouraged people to attend it and resulted in such unprecedented number of delegates.

All of these activities would not be possible without Evguenia and Ivana who chair the group and the whole dedicated team – Thank you!

I also planned to write about another of EMWA's babies – the

new Regulatory SIG led by Jules Kovacevic, but I am afraid it needs to wait for the next issue as this is already quite long! The President's Message is not meant to take up all the space in the journal ☺.

With this I am leaving you, and wish you the most wonderful, relaxing, and full-of-love Festive Season or Christmas for those who celebrate Christmas, and a Happy and Peaceful New Year. It's hard to believe it is already 2024!

Maria

The GIMW team produced the *Career Guide for New Medical Writers*, a resource highly appreciated by newcomers – and anyone who wants to get more insights about medical writing as a career path. You can find it on the EMWA website.

