

Veterinary Medical Writing

SECTION EDITOR



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From vet to writer

I know all the stereotypes about vets. We work as clinicians as seen in *All Creatures Great and Small* and are intrinsically motivated to help every animal we cross. And yes, that is partly true. There are three major pillars in which vets can work. Most vet school students want to work with pets in a clinical setting after completing their studies, making this the most sought-after pillar and fulfilling the stereotype. In contrast, there is a large need for vets in the second pillar: working with food producing livestock or in abattoirs. In the big picture of general health this is much more important than performing neurosurgery on paraplegic dachshunds, even if it is less glamorous. The third pillar is lesser known: a scientific career. In itself another broad field, this may vary from working on the bench in a university or pharmaceutical company to supervising animal welfare in laboratories.

So what if none of that is for you?

Many vets do not find themselves drawn to work

under any of the three main veterinary pillars. I am one of them. Having worked as a neurosurgeon on the beforementioned paraplegic dachshunds and completing a doctorate in neuroscience, it dawned on me that intrinsic motivation is key, in order to endure poor working conditions with long hours working and sub-par salary in vet clinics. Surgery was not a driving force for me, as wasn't scientific research. The mandatory three weeks working in an abattoir during vet school had ruled the public health pillar out as an option. With no intrinsic motivation for one of the three pillars in sight, I tried to find out what really interested me. To my surprise this turned out to be communication. Translating complex medical information into digestible pieces for worried pet owners and eager students kept me going during 90-hour workweeks. It makes sense as well; with extensive knowledge in all fields of medicine, vets have it easy to understand and relay medical information. If only there was a corresponding job...

Unploughed fields

It was only by chance that I met Lisa Würner of Trilogy Writing. She introduced medical writing as a fourth pillar of work to me and I was immediately hooked. I soon attended my first EMWA conference in rainy Brussels, found employment as a medcom medical writer at Edelman, and am now a medcom freelancer. More and more vets are now learning of medical writing and this is a great opportunity for EMWA to provide a home to these newcomers. If we spread the word that EMWA exists, this could be a good opportunity for established medical writers as well. Veterinary medicine is a relatively unploughed field for medical writers. Vet pharmaceutical companies and research facilities are just now learning that medical writing is "a thing", and with rising awareness, more employment opportunities will come, for rookies and professionals alike. Look out for this section in future issues of *Medical Writing*, if you are keen on exploring these new routes with us.



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