

EMWA and AMWA

Planning for the Future

This is going to be an exciting year for EMWA. Our membership is increasing rapidly, and we are now one of the biggest chapters in AMWA. We hope to maintain this influx of new members, and expand our territory to cover the whole of Europe, from the Atlantic to the Urals.

We are making headway in our educational plans: our next annual conference in Berlin on March 6-8 will have 3 days instead of 2, more workshops and presentations than ever before, and written confirmation of workshop attendance. The preliminary programme is not yet available, but rumour has it that there will be a keen European focus topped off by global issues. By the Berlin meeting, we hope to have completed our review of the EMWA/AMWA relationship. As most members are aware, there was much discussion of this relationship at the time EMWA was founded. We anticipated that differences might arise due to the geographic and ideological distance between Europe and the USA, and that the time would come when these differences would have to be sorted out. Although most of us regard EMWA to be a European association which is affiliated to AMWA, nowhere in the

interchange between EMWA and AMWA has there been any recognition of EMWA by AMWA as anything other than just another chapter. This is a situation which we would like to remedy. Preliminary discussions of the EMWA/AMWA relationship took place at the Bruges meeting, culminating in the presentation of the following three proposals at the recent meeting of the AMWA Board of Directors. For some time, AMWA has considered the possibility of a name change to reflect the international nature of its membership. Recently, an appendage was added to the AMWA name, but we feel that this will receive little recognition, and AMWA will still be AMWA to the membership and the general public. Phyllis Minick, the AMWA President, has informed us that some of the reasons for not changing the name AMWA are financial cost and AMWA prestige. The potential cost will not decrease with time, and outside the USA the name AMWA does not carry the same prestige. We feel that some form of name change is inevitable, and we would like to propose a solution which may satisfy both those who want to keep the name AMWA in the USA, and those outside the USA who want to have an international title. Both AMWA and EMWA could coexist under the name IMWA, the International Medical Writers Associations, with the headquarters in the USA. AMWA has a well-established educational programme,

which we would like to emulate in Europe. However, in recent discussions on European workshop certification, all the proposals from AMWA centred around AMWA committees in the USA being responsible for approving European workshops, either by attending the European meeting, having the workshop leader attend an AMWA meeting in the USA, or even by filming the workshop and sending the recording to the USA. We see the most sensible solution to be certification of European workshops by European members, with mutual recognition of certification by AMWA and EMWA. AMWA will of course be concerned about the maintenance of standards of workshops certified in Europe. For this to be ensured, AMWA must provide us with specific criteria for assessing workshops, and also how to select individuals able to certify workshops. We would like to provide services to EMWA members comparable to those offered by AMWA. Our annual conference is self-financing, and we produce a quarterly newsletter which we would like to improve in content, style and quality. This year our members will receive an EMWA membership and freelance directory. As our membership grows, our overheads will increase. We intend to target companies to bring in new members over the next year, and we expect our membership to increase dramatically. At present, we are reliant upon the goodwill of the employers of the members of the EMWA Executive Committee to foot the bill for almost all our costs. As our membership number increases, this amount will rise, and in the present economic climate we may lose the willingness of our employers to pay this ever-increasing bill. We plan to try to

attract sponsorship for the annual meeting, the newsletter and for EMWA itself, but we have no guarantee of success. We would therefore like to have a greater share of the membership subscription fees. At present we receive from AMWA less than 15% of this money. We feel that this is not enough, particularly since we ask so little of the AMWA head office. Under the present arrangement, our demands upon the AMWA head office will increase as our activities expand, mainly in terms of the type of work AMWA performs for other chapters, i.e. meeting information, workshop registrations and mailing. We would like to propose a 50:50 split of the membership subscriptions between AMWA and EMWA. To justify this, we have some suggestions which would help reduce the future workload on AMWA and the costs of mailing to Europe. The AMWA Journal and any other mail could be sent to us in bulk. This can then be distributed along with our quarterly Newsletter. We receive very few mail items which are so urgent that they could not wait a month or so before the members receive them. We could even time production of our Newsletter to coincide with that of the AMWA Journal. All certified workshop registrations and homework for our annual meeting could be handled in Europe (we already do everything else). This would mean that AMWA would only have to keep track of memberships. In order to address these proposals, Art Gertel, the AMWA European Liaison, has assembled a task force to seek solutions which will satisfy all concerned, and to bring recommendations to the next meeting of the AMWA Board of Directors at the

Annual Conference in Baltimore in October.

We'll keep you posted.

John Aitken, President
Ben Young, Vice-President
Philip Cooper, Treasurer
Leen Ashton-Vanherle

**From "le Président passé"
(but still composé)**

Leen Ashton-Vanherle

I have to admit it: it was fun. . . it was great fun! Being able to call yourself President of EMWA is a great boost for a glorified secretary. All too often, companies regard their medical writers as mere technicians, whose function is to sweep up the bits and pieces left by all-too-busy researchers and turn it into something palatable and wholesome. We writers, on the other hand, wish ourselves to be seen as indispensable members of a team, with a wide viewpoint and useful input. If you want to change wish into fact, then you must cultivate the necessary skills and credibility. EMWA/AMWA can be of help here, with its publications, meetings and workshops. Having wonderful ideas is one thing, but converting them to crystal-clear, concise prose is another matter. Usually, writing is taken for granted: when you read it, it looks so simple and obvious. . . until you have to write something yourself. The despair of blank computer screens and zero inspiration; I know it so well. Even more so as a non-native writer, I constantly have to convince people that my English

is as good as that of the aboriginals; that the mistakes I make are not worse than the ones "they" make; that a lot of the problems do not stem from the actual language itself but from the way it is used, i.e. every field of writing has its own colloquialism. When you actually attend an EMWA gathering and meet a group of voluble, witty penpushers, it is reassuring to learn that they also struggle with exactly the same problems as you do. Dr. EMWA's annual-meeting-treatment is an ideal therapy for this sad condition. Work will yet again take on a rosy tinge, especially after a long evening of networking at the bar and brainstorming over the bill of fare. All this actually leads to what I was really trying to say. EMWA is still in its infancy and a great deal of work still needs to be done to expand our network and curriculum. As Education Manager for next year, I am making an attempt at compiling a compendium of workshop themes, and experts who are willing to give them and us some of their time. Therefore, I would like to invite (polite version of urge) everybody who actually reads this to think carefully (I vil sa sis only vonce) and send me a list of excellent speakers and workshop themes. The idea is that in the long run, we will have an extensive database at our disposal which we can use for meetings and for the certification programme, in parallel and exchange with AMWA.

So please, no wishful thinking, no good intentions: grab that pen and write.

HIGHLIGHTS: Annual EMWA Meeting in Bruges

The fourth annual meeting of the European Medical Writers Association was held in Bruges, Belgium on the 9th and 10th of March, 1995. Seventy attendees enjoyed two full days of seminars and discussions. The conference opened with a business meeting on the evening of March 8 chaired by outgoing President Leen Ashton-Vanherle of Janssen Research Foundation in Beerse, Belgium. A new Vice-President and Secretary were elected. Ben Young of Schering AG in Berlin, Germany, will serve as Vice President and Roderick Hasemen, free lance writer, as secretary. Philip Cooper, F. Hoffman-LaRoche in Basel, Switzerland, remains Treasurer. John Aitken, who served as Vice President in 1994, assumed the job of President of EMWA. Dr. Aitken is currently clinical documentation specialist for Hoffman La Roche in Basel, Switzerland where he has worked for the past 2 years. He earned his PhD in biochemistry and afterward worked 4½ years as an editor for the European Journal of Biochemistry in Zurich, Switzerland.

Workshop 1: Guilt, pain and blank screens Ceara Roche

On Thursday, March 9, four workshops were offered. Each participant was able to attend 2 workshops. Tim Albert of Albert & Associates in Surrey, England presented "Guilt, pain and blank screens". The people in other rooms wondered what was amusing all the participants in this workshop. Tim Albert gave many practical tips and

guidelines for the process of writing in an amusing and thought-provoking way. The process of writing is simply 5 steps: preparing the brief, doing the research, planning, writing and rewriting. The group was given tips for each of these, e.g. for the last step: ask your reviewer to look at the grammar/foolishness (spouse as reviewer), subject matter (colleague), treatment (reader) and politics (boss). When the participants compared the advice given by Tim to what each had logged when doing homework for the course, variations of these 5 steps appeared, except maybe the pre-writing steps may have been interrupted by 15 cups of coffee! This writer came away from the workshop ready to tackle the manuscript on her desk which had long been pushed to the back corner of the lowest drawer.

Workshop 2: Punctuation for Clarity & Style Sheila Cattell

Phyllis Minick, the current President of AMWA, came from La Jolla, California to attend the EMWA meeting and to enlighten those who chose her workshop, "Punctuation for Clarity and Style", to the do's and don'ts of punctuation. Phyllis has been advising writers on this topic for many years and has kept up their spirits when they encounter pitfalls. The pre-workshop homework helped participants remember when, where and how often to use five punctuation marks (. : ; , - Not as easy as you might think!). Attendees sitting for the course were surprised, comforted and bamboozled by the results of their work. The three hours spent discussing punctuation clarified doubts as the group shared experiences. Rules on

punctuation exist and they can be quite different depending on the source. The best suggestion Phyllis gave was to stick to one set of rules and be consistent throughout the text.

Workshop 3: Project Management

Anya Ramalho

The purpose of the well-attended project management workshop, held by Dr. Arthur Gertel from Schering-Plough in the US, was to familiarise participants with project management terminology and concepts and to explore how these concepts could be applied to and by writers. Dr. Gertel discussed the principles of project management and methods of putting them into practice. He identified assignment of priorities, careful planning of time and resources to fit the work requirements, monitoring of progress against this plan, adaptability to changes in circumstances, and establishment and maintenance of a communications network as key elements in successful project management.

Workshop 4: Understanding Research Ethics Committees

Barbara M. Grossman

Geoff Hall, free lance medical writer and journalist and lay member of the Research Ethics Committee for the Wynn Institute for Metabolic Research in London (formerly known as the Cavendish Clinic) and has been its chairman since 1993, presented "Understanding Research Ethics Committees". The aim of the workshop was to increase understanding of the ways in which research ethics committees consider a clinical trial

protocol. In the first part of the workshop, Geoff Hall defined the content of a protocol (what a committee expects to find), and outlined the structure and objectives of a committee that reviews such protocols. He stressed that the committee's main role is to protect patients. In the second part of the workshop, participants were invited to 'role play' ethics committees considering two fictitious protocols based on real cases, one for research with hormone replacement therapy, the second with transplantation. Not surprisingly, the 2-hour session continued for another hour as the 'lay ethics committees' attacked each protocol with zeal, raising possible areas of concern, pointing out flaws and repeatedly highlighting the need for further information from the submitting investigators.

What did the participants learn? By the end of the workshop, they were able to appreciate how a carefully prepared clinical trial protocol will allow an ethics committee to concentrate on the research proposal itself without the frustrations of returning to the investigators for additional information. There are obvious long-term benefits for the medical writer preparing the clinical trial report based on such protocols: time spent (wasted?) extracting information from a poorly constructed protocol can be used instead to examine the study's results. Time savings = cost savings.

EXPERTS TALK

Friday's agenda presented highly qualified speakers on current issues impacting today's scientific writing. Dr. Michael Allen who is Regulatory Consultant for MCRC Group Limited and is Commissioning Editor for ROSTRAM Publications in Romford, Essex, gave the keynote address. Dr. Allen spoke on the structure and function of the European Medicines Evaluation Agency; the European submission, Expert Report and Summary of Product Characteristics; approval procedures; persuasion by appeal: written submission versus committee hearings.

Dr. Werner Coussement, Director of Toxicology at Janssen Pharmaceuticals, spoke in detail on the current status in safety evaluations of new human drugs.

Dr. Françoise de Cremiers, European Regulatory Advisor/Director for Wyeth-Ayerst and active member of the EFPIA Regulatory Affairs Expert Group, provided an informed review of discussions surrounding the latest recommendations regarding clinical trial reports.

Krista Huybrechts who is the coordinator for International Outcomes Research Studies for Janssen Research Foundation, talked on health economic issues.

Dr. Bernard Dixon, current editor of Medical Science Research and is also European contributing editor for Bio/Technology, spoke on the

responsibilities of current medical journalists.

The meeting adjourned with an address from the new EMWA president, Dr. John Aitken. He emphasized the growth that EMWA is enjoying and the future relationship with AMWA.

The Social Side of EMWA Meeting Patty Newell

The meeting in Bruges was definitely not all work and no play. For those members who arrived for the business meeting, a buffet dinner followed at a local brewery. The following day, after profiting from the speaker's presentations, the members met to get acquainted and enjoy a wonderful dinner in the centre of Bruges. Apart from the arranged dinners, different groups took advantage of the many interesting local attractions such as a boat trip on the canals and touring the beguinage.

Plans for Next Year

The newly elected Vice President with assistance from Colm Benson, Program Coordinator for the group, will organize next year's EMWA meeting which will be held in Berlin, Germany on March 6-8, 1996. If you have any suggestions of proposals for speakers or workshop leaders for next year's event, please call either Ben (49 30 468 76 47) or Colm (49 30 468 76 47).

*There are three ingredients in the good life:
learning, earning and yearning*

Christopher Morley

EMWA Meeting Inspires Poetry

As part of her preparation for the seminar, "Guilt, pain and blank screens", Liz Healing of Janssen-Cilag in Buckinghamshire, England, waxed poetic on the writing process. With her permission, the poem is printed here for your pleasure:

The process of writing

Liz Healing

I start off by planning my message
and think about what I will say.
Then I try to remember the reader,
and decide if the format's OK.

If it's complex I write lots of headings,
to encourage a logical plan;
then I boldly sit down at the keyboard,
and bash out as much as I can.

I print out whatever I've written,
and cut out the gross and impure,
remove the worst errors, and fill in the
gaps,
then leave it a while to mature.

Once the prose is sufficiently ancient
I review all my earlier action.
Then I edit and prune it and polish
'til it gleams and provides satisfaction.

Then it finally goes to the client
with crossed fingers, a prayer and
'Amen',
who will probably rip it to pieces
so I start the whole process again.

*The best prose is usually written by
poets.*

George Moore

EMWA Questionnaire Results

Liz Healing

The recent EMWA AGM in Bruges provided an opportunity to gauge members' views on the future of EMWA and, in particular, its relationship to AMWA. Those of you who weren't at the meeting will have another chance to voice your opinions, as we plan to do a separate mailing of the questionnaire sometime, but here are the results of the 48 which were returned at the AGM.

Although only 12 people had attended an AMWA meeting, compared with 36 who had not, there was a range of views about likelihood of attending a future meeting in the US, with 20 thinking that this was a possibility, 13 saying that this was likely, four saying they didn't know and eight saying that they or their employer would never pay for them to attend.

About half the members had taken part in AMWA accredited workshops (25 had, 22 hadn't) and 28 planned to use the accreditation system in the future. The majority of people (29) did not feel that the accreditation system was important for their careers, compared with 13 who did, the rest didn't know.

About half the members (23) thought that the current AMWA subscription was about right, while 13 felt it was too expensive and 7 thought it represented good value for money. However, most people (29) did not feel that the subscription was off-putting for potential EMWA members. The subscription was paid by the member's company in 32 cases (or their business in the case of

freelancers), and by the member themselves in six cases.

Sixteen people said they always read the AMWA journal, compared with 25 who sometimes read it and six who never read it. Similarly, 15 people said that the AMWA journal was not at all important to them, while 27 people felt that it was fairly important and just two found it very important. Only 10 people had ever used the AMWA job sheet, compared with 38 who had not.

An overwhelming number (40 out of 48) said that they would like to attend more frequent EMWA meetings, and half (24) liked the idea of smaller, local meetings.

Taking out the responses from the eight freelancers, to see if their views were different from those employed by larger companies, only one had attended an AMWA meeting, four said they never would, one said they might possibly, and three thought they would in future. Three freelancers considered the AMWA subscription too expensive, while three thought it was about right and two thought it was good value. Five said that they sometimes read the AMWA journal, and three said that they always did. Two out of eight freelancers had used the AMWA job sheet. All of them welcomed the idea of more frequent EMWA meetings, and one specifically asked for one aimed at freelancers.

Several people wrote extra comments, here are some of them:

'I am very unhappy about the proportion of my membership fee that goes to the USA'

'EMWA should get a higher percentage of the subscription paid to AMWA so that more meetings can be organised in Europe'

'Being affiliated to AMWA is important because I want to obtain accreditation'

'EMWA has a lot to gain from being part of AMWA'

'The system of accrediting European workshops is obviously causing problems and needs to be looked at'

'AMWA can offer EMWA a wealth of experience and help in our growth'

Overall, members were divided about the future relationship between AMWA and EMWA, but there was a clear message that members in Europe would like more regular meetings, and several suggested that these could be financed from EMWA receiving a larger share of the individual members' subscriptions (this was specifically noted by four members). Many would like to see more accredited workshops taking place in Europe.

Clearly, EMWA members and their executive committee need to consider these issues in more depth, and consult more widely before any decisions are taken, but this initial questionnaire is probably a useful start in finding out what EMWA members want, and we thank everyone who completed it.

NOTICE

We invite authors to submit original material on any subject pertaining to medical writing for consideration for publication in the newsletter.

REPORT from the AMWA BOARD from the President Phyllis Minick

- President-Elect Joel Tau announced that the Nominating Committee's clear choice for 1995-96 officers on the first ballot was John Ferguson as the next President-Elect; Art Gertel, Secretary; and Jackie Turner, Treasurer. These candidates' well-documented contributions to AMWA brought confirmation by the Board. Joel Tau will assume the Presidency of AMWA at the next Annual Conference. There, members can vote while attending the combined President's Reception/ Business Meeting (a new Annual Conference event). For those who don't know our nominating process and its safeguards, they are:
- The President-Elect (P-E) selects a committee of five members, which the Board confirms. The P-E is Chair, and the President is a member.
- After open discussion backed up by lists of EC members' activities, the committee nominates officer candidates. Activity lists for non-EC candidates are then supplied and questions answered.
- Committee members vote (on paper); a second ballot resolves ties.
- The full Board confirms the candidates, whose names are then published in the *AMWA Journal*.

- Members attending the Business Meeting at the Annual Conference give the final vote.
- Alternative candidates can be suggested at any/all these points, as specified in the Constitution, Bylaws, and Executive Committee Handbook.

Secretary Michele Vivirito cited four constitutional changes proposed by last year's Constitution and Bylaws Committee. Three changes suggested removing future AMWA Presidents from the Nominating Committee, because their presence conflicts with *Robert's Rules of Order*. These proposals were defeated in the interest of allowing Presidents to assist in transitions among existing and proposed officers. Our Bylaws (Article X) specifically state the *Robert's Rules* is our authority only in instances "not covered by the Constitution and Bylaws".

The fourth change, to remove "professional accomplishments" as a criterion for awarding Fellowships, (along with "significant contributions to AMWA") was not accepted. Some Fellows' accomplishments are truly earth shaking!

Treasurer Jackie Turner gave us the sad news first; the Annual Conference registration will rise to \$250.00. (The good news is that the program is so outstanding, we who must keep up-to-date can't afford/won't want to miss it.) The even better news is that some accumulated economies seem well-positioned to bring new life to our treasury. For example, we will replace

one issue of the *Journal* with a post-Conference newsletter, a big cost saving and a rapid-reporting vehicle for spreading the Conference news to all members.

"**Annual Conference** theme is 'Complex Issues, Complex Times'," said organizer Jim Yuen. Three subject areas dominate: managed care, computer technology, medical communication skills and knowledge. The general session will "rock with medicine" as presented by the National Medical Association through gospel singing and community meetings. Forums will offer:

- new information about diagnosing and treating cancer
- a panel on *Clinical Practice Guidelines-New Tools for Health-Care Providers and Consumers*
- speaker Peter Rheinstein of the FDA on the subject *Aids and Vitamin Treatment*
- paper presentations centered around *Conveying Complex Issues to the Public*.

Sections Administrator Art Gertel says Plenary Sessions feature the titles: 1) Role of the Freelance Medical Communicator in a Managed Care Environment; 2) New Careers in the Pharmaceutical Industry Resulting from Managed Care; 3) Managed Care: Impact for Editors and Writers; 4) New Clients/New Customers (PR); 5) Information Technology in Teaching Medical Communication. With a

preConference seminar on electronic communication - featuring Internet and multimedia technology, 73 workshops (Workshop Administrator Karon Schindler in charge), networking and meal events, and Baltimore's dynamite harbor setting, record attendance is expected.

Awards Chair Dr. MaryAnn Foote announced award recipients who our registrants will see and hear at this year's annual conference. Dr. Susan Blumenthal, U. S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Health and Assistant Surgeon General, has accepted the John P. McGovern Medal and will speak on the subject of women's health as a focus of the Clinton Administration. We are equally honored that Dr. Brian McDonough, President-Elect of the National Association of Physician Broadcasters and Health Reporter on KYW-TV, Philadelphia, will appear to accept the Walter C. Alvarez Award. Lottie Applewhite, an originator of AMWA's Core Curriculum program is the Swanberg Distinguished Service Awardee. The President's Award goes to Bernice Heller and Joseph Bloom for long-time service to AMWA on the chapter and Board levels. Newly elected to AMWA Fellowships are Lynn Alperin, Jane Krauhs, Dr. Jane Hodgson, Richard Bell Smith, and Jackie Turner. If you know an awardee, please give him/her a special thanks for hard work well done, as the Board did here.

Chapters/Membership Administrator Joan Nilson has completed a "checklist" for presenting chapter and regional conferences, now in the hands of the Education Committee. Similarly, a plan to allow any member to belong to two

adjacent chapters in the works. Joan is promoting membership with newly designed ads in journals we've never reached before, and she is dragging us into the technology age by posting an AMWA ad on Internet via the skills of Roger Johnson. Ben Young, Vice President-Elect of the European chapter and a medical writer at Schering in Berlin, just joined this technogroup.

Chapter delegates met separately from the Board and mourned, as ever, 1) the too few members at meeting, 2) the geographical distances that keep them apart, 3) the high cost of restaurant meals. One solution for 1 and 2 was having regional or chapter conferences with Core Curriculum workshops (a rising trend in AMWA) and, for 3, serving box lunches with programs held in employers' conference rooms instead of restaurants. Networking about shared problems encouraged everyone to keep trying new solutions.

European chapter President, Dr. John Aitken, sitting at his phone in Basel, Switzerland, talked with the full AMWA Board. This was the first time we've telecommunicated chapter issues, but this precedence shows great promise. The distances and differences between our European and American members require some special planning for the future with respect to mailings, regional conferences, finances, etc., and this teleconference gave us all a chance to set an agenda, assign a committee Chair, Art Gertel, and appoint a committee.

Development chief John Ferguson's fundraising plans include promoting Exhibitors at this and the next Annual

Conference (we expect three in Baltimore, more in Chicago) and expanding the scope of Corporate Sponsorships beyond the present base of pharmaceutical companies. Additionally, he will join the proposed publication program modeled on our first book, *Biomedical Communication: Selected AMWA Workshops* (John was its design/production master). His immediate project is to lead a preConference Seminar (October 24, Baltimore) titled *The Electronic Information Revolution: Turning Chaos to Profit*. Eleven members of the Board signed up immediately after hearing his outline.

Education Administrator Dr. Barbara Good was too sick to join us but has engaged her committee in setting new guidelines for: 1) chapter/regional conferences; 2) approval of Core Curriculum workshop leaders; 3) selection of Golden Apple awardees; 4) establishment of medical content courses.

Public Relations Administrator Cathryn Evans described promotional brochures her team is developing, the first to be *Careers for Medical Writers*. This one may appear first as a journal "pullout". Also on the boards is their prototype for a "How-to" brochure series focusing on skills for specific medical communication projects; simultaneously they'll do a marketing/publicity plan. We should see both publications this year.

Publications head Dr. Helen Hodgson and her committee are developing publication standards so that all AMWA print products reflect our professional

image. They have reviewed/edited six documents to date, with quick turnover time. A search is under way for a new *AMWA Journal* editor, because Pamela Paradis Powell must resign (December 31) to handle expanded work assignments - just when she was learning to put up with us! Our end-of-year publication will be a post-Conference newsletter.

Freelance Frustrations

Dear Editor,

In the Spring edition of the EMWA newsletter there was a call for articles with a list of possible topics. While not claiming to be exhaustive, it highlighted one of the frustrations of being a freelance medical writer; we are often overlooked! I have yet to discover an organization that has our interests at heart, although I have no doubt there are a number of freelance members in most associations allied to the written word. As freelances we probably have a greater need than most of the support, information and training opportunities provided by EMWA and its like. My challenge to EMWA is to address those needs.

In particular the freelance writer is faced with the task of finding new work while meeting deadlines on current projects. Would anyone like to suggest ways of managing this juggling act or provide insight into the best way to market oneself?

Isolation is probably the biggest frustration of being freelance; not everyone revels in being on their own all the time. One solution might be to join a committee; but who pays for phone

calls, photocopying and rail fares, particularly when, like EMWA, the organization is international? And these expenses are on top of lost revenue from a day spent away from remunerative work.

As EMWA matures, I would like it to consider ways of encouraging and supporting freelance medical writers so that, if desired, they can afford to become involved. After all, with their inevitable experience, freelances could provide valuable input at meetings and make significant contributions as committee members.

I have worked on a freelance basis for the past eight years and, as I point out in my chapter "Medical Writing as a Career"*, the experience can be rewarding. The frustrations remain, however, and I would welcome suggestions from fellow members on how these might be overcome!

Brenda Mullinger
Editorial Consultant

*In: *Discovering New Medicines : Careers in Pharmaceutical Research and Development*. Ed. Stonier PD. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, Chichester 1994.

All letters to the Editor are appreciated. We would be grateful for any ideas and/or contributions for future articles. Announcements of a personal nature that anyone would like to share would be enjoyed by other readers.

Book review

Publication Strategy and Journal Choice

Maggie Pettifer

Rapid Communications of Oxford Ltd,
UK 1994

William Stanbury

The huge and escalating total cost in research, development, and approval of a drug before its launch on the market (frequently > £100M), combined with the fact that most drug patents are of short duration (\pm 15 years), means that healthcare organisations need to continuously maximise revenues from their licensed products (within their patent lives) to ensure survival in the long-term. Vital for the success of a drug in its life cycle is a well-organised and extensive publication strategy, with a healthy number of completed studies selected and ready for publication. This book broadly consists of 2 separate sections. The first (chapters 1-5) explains the concepts behind a publication strategy in drug development: Why have a publication strategy? What does a publication strategy achieve? What factors are involved in the actual process of planning and writing manuscripts for publication? In essence, a publication strategy must be planned and implemented well in advance of product launch: 5-6 years is ideal - 2 years may be too late. The publication strategy must also be a team-driven process with relevant team members (such as product/marketing manager(s), clinical project manager(s), regulatory affairs manager(s), as well as scientific writer(s) themselves). When determining the publication strategy, this team must address the crucial issues of circulation,

reach and readership. This first section should make relevant and interesting reading for all medical/scientific writers, and particularly for newcomers in organisations who are writing manuscripts specifically for publication. The second section (chapters 6-9) deals with the "how", or the implementation of a publication strategy: how to maximise the chances that a submitted manuscript will be published, and how to achieve this result on a consistent and regular basis. There are several important criteria to take into consideration when deciding where to submit a paper. These include the quality/reputation of a target Journal's editor and/or publisher, the time taken to publish manuscripts, and the frequency of journal publications. This second section is more general and should be instructive to all medical/scientific writers - whether employees in organisations, freelance writers, or anyone else writing papers for publication in scientific journals. A key message from this concise and informative book is that one paper published (in however obscure a journal) is worth five in the pipeline. This point is especially meaningful in a context where the rate of technological change (and ensuing available information) is growing exponentially, where expanding communication is bringing nations (houses) closer together around the world (village), and where information that appears in print in peer-reviewed publications is increasingly becoming immediate and accepted fact or "benchmark". Given these global trends, chapter 9, on the future of written communication in the scientific community (e.g. by electronic publishing), is particularly pertinent and enticing to read.

Future meetings

This year the Canada Chapter of AMWA is planning to host AMWA Curriculum workshops twice and is inviting AMWA members from other chapters.

June 17-18, Toronto:

"Medical Communication in the Electronic Era: Opportunities and Challenges"

This conference is designed to inform medical communicators about telecommunication-related trends in medicine and new career opportunities, as well as provide them with a chance to enhance their skills through focused, practical workshops.

At the plenary session, health care professionals will demonstrate how the new computer and telecommunications technologies are being used in exciting ways to educate both physicians and the public. They will also discuss their concerns, including authentication, copyright, security and privacy.

Three-hour workshops in two blocks will follow:

- **Tables and Graphs: Howard Smith and Gil Croome**
- **Project Management: Art Gertel and Jennifer Smyth**
- **Organizing the Biomedical Paper: Howard Smith and Sharon Nancekivell**
- **Strategies for Improving Document Quality: Art Gertel**
- **The Electronic Office: Today's Essentials**

Other features will include ongoing Internet and software demonstrations, as well as a chance to sit the certification examination of the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences.

September 14, Montreal:

"Biomedical Communication Workshops"

Four workshops for AMWA members and delegates to the annual meeting of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.

- "Statistics for Medical Writers and Editors": Tom Lang
- "Organizing the Biomedical Paper": Tom Lang
- "Authors' Rights and Responsibilities": Dr. Bruce Squires
- "How to Write Scientific Articles": Dr. Patricia Huston

Registration deadlines: May 15 and August 14 respectively.

For further information, contact Ann Bolster, telephone: +1-800-663-7336, ext. 2117; email: abolster@hpb.hwc.ca; fax: +1-613-523-0937

The EMWA Newsletter will be published on a quarterly basis (Spring: May, Summer: August, Fall: November, Winter: February). Deadline for submissions for publication will be one month prior to circulation.

"It's odd how people waiting for you stand out far less clearly than people you are waiting for."

Jean Giraudoux

Address all communication regarding the newsletter to: Janice Beck

**Rue de l'Institut 89
B-1330 Rixensart
Belgium**

Attention All Non-Members

The EMWA Newsletter is distributed to over 200 people. However, we have only around 150 members, and it is clear that a number of people have been receiving the newsletter for some time without joining EMWA. Starting from July 1, all names in our data base will be allowed a 3-month trial period. If membership has not been confirmed after 3 months, then the name will be deleted.

Anyone requiring a membership form should contact me at the address on the back of the newsletter, either by e-mail, fax or letter.

John Aitken
EMWA President

NOTICE TO FREELANCERS

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is looking for freelance writers who might be interested in covering conferences, writing articles.

Guidelines for Advertising in EMWA Newsletter

The cost per advertisement in the EMWA newsletter is 200 Swiss Francs. The advertisement can occupy up to one column on the printed page.

EMWA will mail job fliers for an organization to EMWA members for a cost of 400 Swiss Francs. The flier can consist of one page, printed on one side only.

Payment for either service must be made via Eurocheck or bank check and made out to EMWA and mailed to:

Dr. Philip Cooper
EMWA Treasurer
F. Hoffman-La Roche
CH-4002 Basel
Switzerland

Names and addresses of EMWA members will not be distributed to any individual or organization.

Questions regarding this service should be directed to:

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