

Veterinary Medical Writing

SECTION EDITOR



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Editorial

With veterinary treatment options becoming more diverse and advancing rapidly, the demand for veterinary medical writers is growing. Currently we are a growing group of

vets in EMWA and we look forward to welcoming more colleagues to our community. Coming from a clinic, research institute or position within a local authority, vets bring a lot

of different experiences to the table of medical writing. Jennifer Freymann is one of us and was kind enough to share her experience on communication and transparency with us.

Transparency on controversial topics: What medical writing can learn from vets

I have a background in laboratory animal science, and I was happy to find interesting ties to medical writing. One good example is the relatively new interest in open communication about animal experimentation. Although animals are (and will be in the future) desperately needed in research, animal experimentation is still a controversial topic. This is in part due to a lack of information and animal rights activists have used this to incite concerns and rejection of animal experimentation. To approach the problem and raise awareness, a growing number of research institutes engage in an open dialogue with the general public. In the UK, institutes can sign the *Concordat on Openness on Animal Research* and thereby commit to a transparent communication about animal experimentation. Following Britain's example, more and more research facilities in Europe speak openly about the research they conduct. The announcement of a clear commitment to animal experimentation on an institute's website is a great first step towards more transparency. Open days for the public provide a meeting point for scientists and laymen. Such events are a great opportunity to answer questions and explain face-to-face the research that is done.

Translating information

Speaking from my own experience during open days, I was often confronted with a mixture of scepticism, curiosity, prejudice, and justified criticism. You need to provide facts and reasonable information to discuss the necessity, advantages and limitations of animal studies with an interested public.

Providing clear and easy-to-understand information will sound very familiar to medical



writers. Speaking about animal experimentation is a form of medical communication: the ability to explain science, medical advances, and procedures to a lay audience is essential; we act as a translator, giving everyone the information they need in the right language. Communicating in an often emotionally charged discussion certainly sharpens your tools.

Where medical writers can gain insights

Besides open communication, systematic reviews are another field where animal experimentation and medical writing can benefit from each other. As an important element in evidence-based medicine, systematic reviews are well known in clinical research. Since animal experimentation

is the basis for a majority of this research, the need for systematic reviews here is undisputed. The Systematic Review Centre of Laboratory Animal Experimentation (SYRCLE) in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, provides a lot of valuable advice, guidelines and tools on systematic reviews in pre-clinical research. The goal is to improve quality and reproducibility of animal studies; however systematic reviews can not only point towards new hypothesis, but also help to avoid unnecessary experiments.

There are so many other links between veterinary medicine and medical writing. I am excited and inspired to discover them together with you!

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