

Medical Communications and Writing for Patients

Editorial

Dear All,

As I'm sure you are aware, EMWA's Special Interest Groups (SIGs) have been hard at work hosting "Meet & Share" sessions throughout the year. These sessions aim to encourage open and honest discussion between medical writers on a variety of topics (usually identified ahead of the session). It's an invaluable resource for EMWA members, since we are lucky enough to have a lot of very experienced and talented medical writers in our community, so I strongly encourage you to look out for the Meet & Share sessions and get involved!

The MedComm SIG's inaugural Meet & Share session delved into the issues surrounding acknowledgement of the support of medical writers/communicators in scientific publications. The intrepid reporters from the Meet & Share session are well known to EMWA members – our very own Beatrix Doerr and Thomas Schindler. They give a fantastic summary of a really interesting and educational session – guaranteed to whet your appetites for the next one!

As 2021 draws to a close, I hope that it has been a good year for you all, and that you and your loved ones remain healthy and happy.

SECTION EDITOR



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I also fervently hope that we will get to see each other in person next year at an EMWA conference.

Enjoy the upcoming Christmas break – may your socks stay snowball-proof and may Santa be kind.

See you in 2022!

Bestest,
Lisa

Ethics in publishing: First Meet and Share session of the Medical Communications Special Interest Group (MedComm-SIG)

The new Meet and Share sessions are intended to facilitate open discussions amongst peers and to offer a forum to dive deep into topics – well beyond the information that is provided in guidelines or books belonging to the daily practice of medical writers.

The first session was dedicated to acknowledging the support of medical writers/communicators (MW) in scientific publications. Like the Introduction, Method, Results, and Discussion (IMRAD) structure, it is almost common knowledge that medical writing support in the preparation of scientific articles needs to be acknowledged. So why dedicate a Meet & Share session to this topic?

The idea arose during medical writer Andrea Rossi's webinar on International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) guidelines. There, a newbie MW reported about her difficulties of having her medical writing support acknowledged. Kudos to the colleague who spoke up so openly. Many of us are established MWs and we have no problem with requesting acknowledgement for our work. However, the situation might be different for someone who is new to medical writing and is desperately looking

for work and pay to make ends meet.

We wanted to provide a forum for open discussion and practical advice to support peers and people who have just started their medical writing career. It is a good thing to develop ethical guidelines, however, we also need to support each other in implementing these. To summarise, these were the main recommendations:

- Even if it is hard at the beginning, it is much better to lose a customer than engage in ghost writing, i.e., accepting that medical writing support is not acknowledged. It will not pay off long term to work with somebody who obviously does not respect a medical writer's contribution.
- If somebody does not want to acknowledge medical writing support, it was suggested to initiate a discussion on the topic by asking for a reason for such a violation of guidelines and common practice. It is strongly recommended to familiarise yourself with the relevant resources, e.g., the various guidelines (ICMJE,¹ Good Publication Practices [GPP3],² EMWA guidelines³), and the publications that demonstrate the value of MWs.^{4,5}

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- Medical writers are well advised to state in their contract that they work according to the ICMJE and GPP3 guidelines and consequently expect acknowledgement of their work; this will clarify the situation upfront.

We had a lively discussion that brought many different aspects to the attention of the audience and therefore this was a great first Meet & Share session. The collective brainpower and the open and respectful discussions were fruitful and refreshing and we all learned something about different work contexts of medical writers.

References

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- scholarly work in medical journals [cited 2021 Jul 21]. Available from: <http://www.icmje.org/icmje-recommendations.pdf>
2. Battisti WP, et al. International Society for Medical Publication Professionals. Good publication practice for communicating company-sponsored medical research: GPP3. *Ann Intern Med.* 2015;163(6): 461–4.
 3. Jacobs A, Wager E. European Medical Writers Association (EMWA) guidelines on the role of medical writers in developing peer-reviewed publications. *Current Medical Research and Opinion.* 2005; 21(2):317–21.
 4. Gattrell WT, et al. Professional medical writing support and the quality of randomised controlled trial reporting: a cross-sectional study. *BMJ Open.* 2016;6(2):e010329. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2015-010329
 5. Hamilton CW, Gertel A, Jacobs A, Marchington J, Weaver S, Woolley K. Mythbusting medical writing: Goodbye ghosts, hello help. *Account Res.* 2016;23(3):178–94.

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Working remotely/working from home has become the norm these days. This issue will focus on various aspects of working from home- the good, the bad, the ugly. We will have articles on the challenges of writing from home, managing teams and also, on how some of us overcome these challenges and enjoy this opportunity.

Guest Editor: Archana Nagarajan

Don't miss!

A virtual workforce