

# Message from the President

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*EMWA President*

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## Dear Members

I am sure you are all very familiar with this situation – sitting in front of a blank piece of paper (or to be more accurate a blank screen) and wondering where to start. Beginnings and endings always seem to be the trickiest part, but I have opted for the classical medical writing approach, and will start with an introduction.

I joined EMWA when the organisation was still in its infancy, and was indeed only a small ‘chapter’ of the American Medical Writers Association. I can still vividly remember the first conference I attended in Edinburgh in 1997 and how impressed I was with the friendliness of all the medical writers I met there and the sheer fun of the whole event. I returned from that conference, decided to join the association, and have been an EMWA member ever since. After that initial step it was not long before I had volunteered to be a workshop leader and then eventually last year I threw caution to the winds and stepped up to join the Executive Committee as Vice President. And now here I am writing to you all knowing that when you read this there will be several new members on the EC, the spring conference in Cyprus will already be over, and the plans for the autumn conference in Berlin will be in full swing with a long list of ‘to dos’ on the agenda.

So what are the plans for EMWA as the organisation enters its twenty-first year? Well we are a thriving and growing organisation, and while not unexpectedly most of our membership is still based in Europe, most of these are from North Western Europe. So one of the top priorities is to try to expand the membership base into countries where we are currently underrepresented. And although we are obviously a European association, many of us work in global organisations so we also want to reach out beyond the borders and look for ways to cooperate with scientific writing associations in other parts of the world. Initiatives have already been started in this direction with the Institute of Clinical Research (ICR) and the International Society for Medical Publication Professionals (ISMPP) and others are to follow. By

becoming more international and creating networks with other organisations, the value of being an EMWA member will increase and the association will be able to have more impact on the medical writing profession worldwide.

A further field for development is to increase our use of electronic media. Although we all email, Skype and Google, I realise that as an organisation we still tend to be rather old fashioned when it comes to communication. However, if we want to reach out beyond our current boundaries and attract the next generation of medical writers to join EMWA, it is essential that we do not miss the opportunities that the WWW provides in order to enhance our reputation. Indeed to start this ball rolling, this is the first message from the president that you will all receive by email and not just be able to read in the journal. Any suggestions by members on how we can improve and increase the dialogue with medical writers around the world are very welcome, so please let us have your ideas!

Of course the EMWA conferences and the EMWA professional development programme (EPDP) will still continue to provide a foundation for the organisation. Happily the attendance at these conferences is still excellent and we are obviously offering a valuable learning programme to people working in the medical writing profession. However, I do realise that only a small proportion of our members are able to attend the conferences and so we will be looking into ways in which we can enable more EMWA members to benefit from the extensive experience within the association. Although it is not a substitute for face-to-face learning, I am aware that there is an increasing demand for interactive online seminars, and this would certainly help our members who are located outside Europe to link up with EMWA. Again any ideas and feedback from members on this topic is more than welcome!

While writing this message I have been browsing through the past issues of our journal on the website and realised that similar topics to the above have featured on the agenda of previous EMWA presidents. So while it is easy to make plans, the real

challenge is to implement them and bring about significant changes. A year passes very quickly and just coping with the day-to-day work of running an organisation tends to use up much of the available 'spare' time of the EC members outside of their full time jobs. But I will remain optimistic and can promise all of you that I will work with the committee to ensure that EMWA continues to offer a professional learning and communication platform to medical writers, which meets their needs while retaining what I feel is the most essential part – namely the spirit of true sharing of experience and lasting friendship.

So here I am at the end of my first president's message and stuck with the problem of how to finish on an upbeat note that speaks to the heart and doubles the membership numbers overnight. Fortunately, the late Geoff Hall (a founder member of EMWA and a true friend) already put it in a nutshell in an article he wrote for the journal in 2008, 'for me the main benefit of EMWA membership has been the friendships made. It seems somehow bizarre that several of the people I consider among my closest friends are people who I only see for a few days each year'. I can only echo his words.

June 2012

**35th EMWA Conference  
8–10 November 2012  
Andels Hotel  
Berlin, Germany**

We are delighted to announce that the venue for EMWA's 35th conference will be the Anders hotel ([www.andelsberlin.com](http://www.andelsberlin.com)) which is situated in the east of Berlin. The hotel claims to be a must for lovers of architecture and design and as anybody who attended the last EMWA conference in Berlin will know the city has an exceptional flare and many interesting sights.

We will be offering an extensive range of workshops on medical writing topics for those wishing to secure credits towards their foundation or

advanced EMWA professional development programme certificates or to keep up to date with emerging knowledge in the field. It will also, as always, be a great opportunity for networking and meeting up with colleagues and friends.

For further details see the EMWA website at [www.emwa.org](http://www.emwa.org)

The 36th EMWA Conference will be at the Manchester Central Convention Complex, Manchester, United Kingdom from 7th to 11th May 2013.