

# Medical Writing

## Mentorship

Mentorship is a topic very close to my heart. If it were not for the numerous mentors in both my academic and professional life, I would not be here today. The definition of mentorship is subjective and how a mentor operates is often up to those involved. Before I took on this role, my own mentor, this journal's Editor-in-Chief Raquel Billiones, and I were concocting our perspectives on mentorship – that of a mentor and a mentee from two different generations.

### What does mentorship mean to you?

*Raquel (Boomer):*

The tradition of passing on knowledge from one generation to the next goes back thousands of years, when the master craftsman took on their first apprentice to pass on the secrets of their trade. Nowadays, knowledge transfer in the professional environment comes in many different forms, the most popular of which is mentorship.

A clear definition of mentorship remains elusive. The group Catalyst tries to capture its essence by distinguishing it from other professional relationships: "A coach talks to you, a sponsor talks about you, and a mentor talks with you."<sup>1</sup> However, these delineations become blurred as the roles tend to overlap. I favour the quote attributed to John Crosby: "Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction."

*Clare (Generation Y):*

I like to think of mentorship as a journey two people take together. The mentor may share their experience to help their mentee navigate their career while the mentee may provide perspectives on how a different generation or a different workforce may think and what they value so that the mentor can apply that to their work interactions too. It is a peculiar journey because both will need to work hard (especially when their lives

have no overlaps or when they have no mutual connections or activities) to maintain the bond between them; yet it is also the lack of overlap that allows the relationship to be freeing due to minimal conflicts of interest so that the two can speak their minds (while remaining professional, of course).

As evidenced by the collection of articles in this issue of *Medical Writing*, the mentorship experience is shared among many of us.

We explore personal stories from both mentors and mentees providing a glimpse of their experiences.

The point of origin into the world of mentorship, medical writing, or industry is often academia. **Selma Reguieg and Diana Ribeiro** shed light on what it is like to be a mentor in academia. **Alejandra Viviescas** then takes us on her personal journey from academia to mentorship that eventually led her into medical writing.

The definition of a mentorship is diverse and subjective. Who can be a mentor is also up for interpretation: those with connections to the mentee or mentors' career and those without. **Surayya Taranum** provides an overview of the mentorship process and how to make the most of the journey. **Jackie Raskind** dissects the anatomy of successful mentors and mentees for a successful mentoring relationship. **Sarah Tilly, Adrian Tilly, and Somsuvro Basu** focus on the human side that drives the success of the mentorship experience. Then we come to the question of the line manager or a leader's role and

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### About the Guest Editor

**Clare Chang, PhD**, is Principal Medical Communication Scientist at AstraZeneca in Shanghai, China, focussed on regulatory medical writing. She has been a proud EMWA member since 2017. She would like to thank Editor-in-Chief Raquel Billiones and Editor Emeritus Phil Leventhal for the wonderful opportunity to guest edit this issue.

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how they may contribute towards their teams' successes as mentors. **Mengmeng Qiao** discusses the similarities and differences between a mentor and a line manager. **Ivana Turek** sheds light on how a great mentor can be a great leader and vice versa. **Shiri Diskin** shares her thoughts on mentoring young professionals in industry from a manager's perspective.

In essence, the success of a mentorship is in seeing the person behind the title to overcome the hierarchical relationship and thereby finding friendship. Meetup sessions are a good place to get to know each other and build rapport. Traditionally, these sessions occur face-to-face. However, with the explosion of video conferencing platforms (especially with COVID-19), virtual mentoring has become an option. **Julie Ely** discusses this modern form of mentorship – how to establish virtual relationships and the perks of virtual mentorships.

The mentor-mentee relationship may come in different forms. Formal mentorship programmes

are those run by a third party such as a mentoring programme within a company or a professional organisation. There are often guidelines for those who enroll and candidates can either look for potential mentors/mentees through a self-service portal or are matched by programme administrators. **Lillian Sandø and Bjarke Stokholm Stærkind** describe their experience in a cross-functional mentorship in a company and the benefits of such a programme. **Elena Kyria and Karen Münz** describe a cross-organisational mentorship programme to help mentees grow within their specialised area of regulatory medical writing. The alternative to mentorship programmes are informal mentorships, which are relationship-based mentorships where individuals develop rapport and friendship, that lead to a mentorship.

Finally, breaking away from the traditional (one-on-one) mentoring model, other mentoring models are now growing too, including peer mentoring and having a team of mentors.

**Susanne Trillingsgaard Venø** describes her mentorship journey, which started with a university mentorship programme that later progressed to forming a team of mentors providing expertise she needed as an entrepreneur in a startup.

I would like to end my introduction with a very big thank you to all the contributors for this issue. It has been an honour to serve as the guest editor, and I have learned so much from your stories. I hope the readers will enjoy reading them as much as I have!

## References:

1. Catalyst. Coaches, mentors, and sponsors: understanding the differences.2019 [cited 2021 Dec 12]. Available from: [https://www.catalyst.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Mentor\\_Sponsor\\_Coach.pdf](https://www.catalyst.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Mentor_Sponsor_Coach.pdf).

**Clare Chang**



## Meet & Share Session with the MedComms-SIG

Have you ever faced a situation when authors or sponsors of a publication did not want to acknowledge you as medical writer?

Have you ever been asked to add an author who has not participated in the study and the article's preparation?

Have you ever had issues with publication conclusions that are not substantiated by clinical data?

In our first Meet & Share session, we will discuss strategies and experiences when communicating with investigators and sponsors of biomedical publications.

Are there any other challenges you would like to discuss? Please email [info@emwa.org](mailto:info@emwa.org) and we will add it to the agenda. Please also email any other topic you would like to see in the MedComms Meet & Share Sessions.

**The session will be held on Wednesday, July 14, 2021, from 5 to 6 pm CEST.**

Email [info@emwa.org](mailto:info@emwa.org) to receive the Zoom link.

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