

EMWA News

Editorial

In this issue, we are bringing to you many updates on different aspects relevant to our medical writing community. Tim Koder from Oxford PharmaGenesis introduces the Open Pharma project, which aims to promote and aid a faster and more transparent publication of medical research. Lillian Sandø, one of the few EMWA members with an ELS suffix, shares her experience with the BELS exam organised for the first time since 1966 in collaboration with the EMWA conference in Birmingham. I personally adhere to her words,

and would like to encourage both our editors and writers to take this exam in the future. Also, since our website has been switched to an improved platform, Diarmuid De Faoite tells us all the improvements that this update entails. We urge you to visit the new website if you haven't done it so far. Finally, Amy Whereat shares the news from the medical writers' get-together this summer in Paris. If you're a medical writer living in France, you can learn what is going on and we welcome you to join the group as well as the upcoming meetings.

SECTION EDITOR



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Last but not least, we would like to remind you that there is the possibility to volunteer for EMWA's various committees and groups, and we remind you to check and register for the many activities available at the forthcoming conference in Cascais, Portugal.

Evguenia

Driving innovations in medical publishing: The Open Pharma project

Open Pharma is a new initiative to drive rapid and transparent publication of medical research. A group of pharmaceutical industry leaders, academics, publishers and other stakeholders is exploring innovations in academic publishing to improve the dissemination of pharmaceutical research.

In the words of Dr Richard Smith, former editor of the *BMJ* and chair of Open Pharma, the current publication model is "slow, inefficient, corrupt, wasteful and expensive". This has a negative impact on biomedical research and, ultimately, patient healthcare. While pharmaceutical companies fund more than half of all biomedical research, to date they have had little involvement in advancing the model of scientific publishing. The vision of Open Pharma involves helping pharmaceutical companies to use their position as major research funders to drive innovation in medical publishing and create a new model that is fast and transparent. The group is currently concentrating on four areas of innovation: open access; ORCID, CRediT, and Convey; preprints and post-publication peer review; and layered publication models.

To learn more and give your views, visit the Open Pharma blog at <https://openpharma.blog>.

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Call for volunteers

As you all know, EMWA is run by our members and relies on them to develop and support all our initiatives. There are currently a number of vacancies for EMWA members to get involved with various groups. This is a great opportunity to develop your skills and experience at the same time as helping to promote the role of medical writers and strengthen our association. If you are interested in getting involved or want more information please contact info@emwa.org.



Certified syntax snob: My BELS Exam experience in Birmingham

“What’s wrong with sentence 1? A: punctuation error, B: wrong word use, C: error of logic, D: dangling modifier”. That’ll be D, thanks – dangling modifier. One of my pet peeves. A freebie among the 100 or so questions of the BELS certification exam, which I took on a sunny May afternoon in Birmingham – my warm-up for the EMWA spring conference. I was thrilled to learn that the conference coincided with the 2017 European BELS exam. Earning the certification has been on my wish list for a few years, and finally the time and place presented themselves. As a medical writer in a pharmaceutical company, I don’t strictly *need* the certification, but it

sure feels nice to have. A nice proof of editorial proficiency in a profession where most of us don’t have a degree in linguistics or communications, yet depend on those skills. Was it hard? Yes and no. It was a great mix of very easy to very hard questions, covering most types of problems an editor in the life sciences comes across. For a syntax geek and grammar snob, it was also quite fun. Being tested on some of your pet peeves – what’s not to like?



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The new EMWA website is live! Faster, more legible, and mobile responsive!

The EMWA website (www.emwa.org) has switched over to a new platform. Although the new website looks very similar to the old one, there is a marked difference in its speed and responsiveness.

We have also taken this opportunity to modify some of the styling. The font used is now optimised to make the online text more readable. The new template is also fully mobile-responsive, so all sizes of screen from the smallest smartphone screen up to a full 4k display, will display the website properly.

Other technical modifications have also been made to the website that will not be visible to the general user – e.g. improved encryption.

Our sincere thanks go to the Kingston-Smith team at EMWA Head Office who worked very hard to deliver the newly revamped EMWA website.

Please let us know if you have any issues with the new website, or any general comments regarding it. Equally, please also feel free to reach out if you would like to contribute content to the EMWA website.

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Medical writers getting (it) together in Paris

Photo: Bigstock

With summertime upon us, the medical writers and communicators in France got (it) together again in Paris on the 12th of June 2017. This growing network of medical writers, translators, and communicators spent a very sociable evening networking before getting down to some “serious” business. As this was now our fourth meeting since last year, it was time to set some objectives to keep the group alive and kicking. This is what we discussed.

EMWA Birmingham

Those who had attended the EMWA conference in Birmingham gave a short overview of their impressions from the conference. Trevor Stanbury (Unicancer) reminded the group that disclosure requirements concerning layman summaries, clinical study reports, etc. are becoming increasingly complex and thus will require more medical writing support. Also, data sharing will come into effect July 2018. We do not know how many researchers in France are aware of these requirements today and whether they have the resources to produce these documents in English. We discussed whether this could be an opportunity for medical writers to provide this support. However, we all agreed that there were likely to be budget issues, considering the current lack of funding for medical writing in some sectors.

The role of the medical writer

The lack of recognition for medical writers in France became apparent as the group discussed the various issues each of us face. First, there is a general lack of awareness of medical writing as a career in France. This became obvious as the

freelance medical writers shared the different professional codes they were assigned at the creation of their activity. They ranged from artist to training journalist. Apart from being a quirky fun fact, this does pose a problem for some writers who are unable to obtain funding to attend the EMWA conference, as EMWA is not a recognised training organisation for certain professional codes. Also, some writers expressed having inappropriate indemnity insurance, as insurers struggle to classify their *relative risk*! Amy Whereat informed the group that EMWA has negotiated an appropriate insurance plan for medical writers and a discount is available for EMWA members. Details can be found on the EMWA website (<http://www.emwa.org>).

Several members of the group identified the lack of job announcements for medical writers and recounted landing their jobs completely by chance. Others spoke of their continual need to explain their role to their internal customers. Michelle Newman highlighted that basic scientists are also unaware of medical writing as a career choice and suggested promoting the role of the medical writer to PhD students and post docs at local career days. This is planned for “La rentrée” (September/October). Amy Whereat added that this was also an EMWA objective and that EMWA would support us using the presentation material available on the EMWA website.

Some research groups currently face various funding problems for medical writing support for publications. Many posts in the clinical trial process are recognised but writing the manuscript is still considered the responsibility of the researcher. Some medical writing posts are

therefore seen as an additional cost. This problem will be complicated to address quickly. The group decided to work on raising the profile of the medical writer as a first step. Results of the Diazepam Study (*Difficultés des Auteurs à la Publication d'Articles Médicaux*) conducted by Martin Duracinsky (AP-HP), Olivier Chassany (AP-HP), and Fabienne Péretz (Abelia Science) outlines the difficulties French researchers face when publishing has recently been published in the *BMC Medical Research* journal.¹ Others have contacts with which we can speak.

The freelancers in the group suggested that we create a jobs board for agency and overflow jobs. Plan of action:

1. Find a better name for the group.
2. Create a website to create awareness about the group and medical writing in general.
3. Share jobs post members via the LinkedIn group (www.linkedin.com/groups/5173211), which will then be transferred to the website once it is up and running.

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References:

1. Duracinsky M, Lalanne C, Rous L, Dara AF, Baudoin L, Pellet C et al. Barriers to publishing in biomedical journals perceived by a sample of French researchers: results of the DIAzePAM study. *BMC Med Res Methodol* 2017;17:96.
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