

From The Editor

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The Editor's **Red** Pencil: A sad goodbye to Keith Veitch, and Medical Writing goes fully digital

This is our first fully digital, paperless issue of *Medical Writing*. It is tragically unexpected that with this milestone issue, in which we look back at our origins, we also say goodbye to our dear colleague Keith Veitch, who died on July 29. (Please see his memorial on p. 8).

You see, not only was Keith a former EMWA President, he was one of the pioneer editors of the EMWA publication, then called the *EMWA Newsletter*, which he edited from 1996 to 1998.

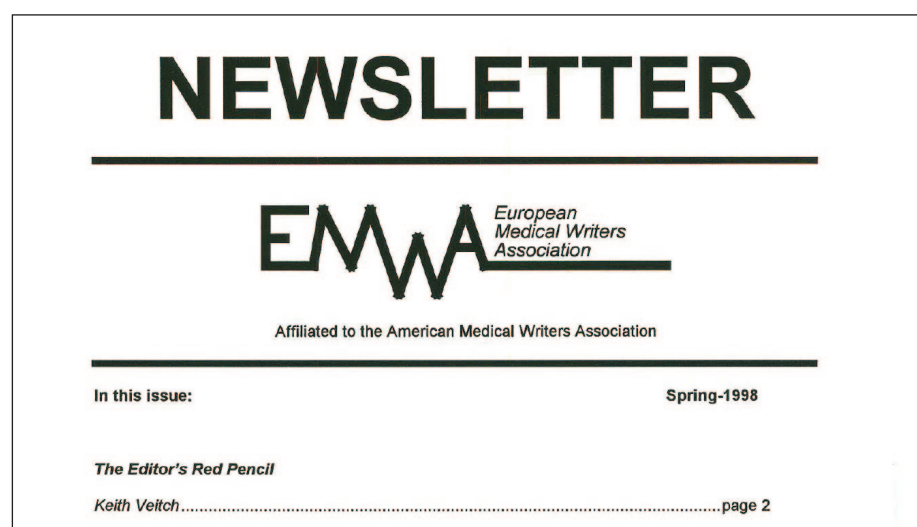
When I joined EMWA in 2006, the name Keith Veitch was already a legend. But funnily enough, despite our common EMWA roots, I met Keith, not through or within the organisation, but when I transitioned from the CRO world to big pharma in 2019. I joined Takeda Vaccines as regulatory writing head, and he was there, the publications writing head, ready to welcome me. Full of warmth and a wacky sense of humour, I was so glad to have a fellow medical writer help me navigate the corporate world. I especially remember his stories about his daughters (he was such a doting father) and the early days of the EMWA (there's a connection, you'll see).

When he took on the task of being newsletter editor, he wrote "... *this should be an easy job because all those professional writers out there will be able to provide tons of well-written, easily edited material for inclusion. Go ahead, prove me right!*"¹

But he was proven wrong:

"*It has always amazed me that an organisation composed of people who make their living from writing, often unacknowledged, are not eager to apply their skills to contribute to their own newsletter...*"²

And like many of us, EMWA sometimes encroached into our private lives and Keith's daughters supported the organisation without



even realising it. "... *My kids were asking when they have to fold papers and stuff envelopes again,*" he wrote.³

Little did I know that I would follow in his footsteps and become editor in 2021.

Well, Keith would be happy to see that during the last few years we have (more than) enough content to fill each issue. And starting this autumn of 2025, we are completely paper- and envelope-free.

Keith, we dedicate this issue to you as I use your red pencil one last time.

What is your role in the data universe?

This issue on real-world data/real-world evidence (RWD/RWE) reminds me of the June 2020 issue on The Data Economy which I guest edited, together with Sam Hamilton. In our

editorial, we wrote "*data are economic assets that power the so-called fourth industrial revolution*" where medical writers and communicators have a vital role to play.⁴ And what would that role be?

As an academic, I was a data collector, be it collecting field samples or conducting experiments in the lab. As a medical writer and clinical researcher, I have always been a data processor of patient health data in the documents I author.

Recently, I participated in the SwissHeart study – as a data subject.

"*The SwissHeart Deep Imaging Data Collection (DIDC) Study records MRI data of the heart as well as information on lifestyle, blood values, body composition and fitness of a representative population living in Switzerland. Based on the information collected, digital models of the heart and vessels will be created and made available in an anonymised form to help improving the understanding of the development, diagnosis and prevention of cardiovascular diseases.*"⁵

Going through the informed consent process, and then on to answering questions on my medical history, and then undergoing the



assessments, I got to experience how to be a study participant. I marvelled at my sense of fulfilment when I met the eligibility criteria to contribute my very own health data to this body of RWD of the Swiss population. Plus, the medical device geek in me really enjoyed the nifty gadgets used in the study.

Yet, as with all precious commodities, data also have a dark side, especially in this age of AI. Everyday, we hear reports of data being faked, manipulated, misused, stolen, deleted. So let us be vigilant and remember another very important role for us medical writers and communicators – as data stewards to help protect quality and integrity of the data we are dealing with.

To close, here's one last quote from Keith:

*"This Newsletter is for you, about you, and written by you ... So let's make this a Newsletter to be proud of."*¹

As MEW enters its fully digital era, kudos to all those who contributed to this fantastic issue on RWD/RWE, especially our guest editors Laura Collada Ali and Maria Koltowska-Häggström and all those working behind the scenes to make MEW a publication we all can be proud of.

References

1. Veitch K. The Editor's Red Pencil. EMWA Newsletter. Summer/Autumn 1996.
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4. Billiones R, Hamilton S. Editorial, The data economy. Available from: <https://journal.emwa.org/the-data-economy/>
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Source: ChatGPT

