



From the Editor



On social media: Once a passive observer – now an active user

It is with great pleasure that I write my first editorial for this amazing issue on social media. The idea of this issue came to me in 2019, inspired by two special colleagues.

I had social media accounts even before I became a medical writer. I recall setting up a Facebook account in 2005 and a Twitter account in 2006. This was followed by LinkedIn a few years later when I started freelancing. Take note – I said I had the accounts. But I seldom, if ever, posted anything. I was more of a passive observer who viewed social media as a frivolous pastime. It wasn't until 2019 that I became an active user.

When I met Melvin Sanicas, MD, in 2019 (see interview p. 16), he was already a social media powerhouse, strongly advocating for science. In a kind of “reverse mentorship”, millennial Melvin encouraged me, a boomer, to share on LinkedIn topics I feel strongly about, including planetary health, sustainability, and research transparency.

Diana Ribeiro helped me take my LinkedIn activities to the next level. When I first met her at the 2019 autumn EMWA conference in Malmö, Sweden, she introduced me to the concept of pre-scheduling social media posts (check out Mariana Rickmann's article on the topic on p. 40). She even followed up a few days later with a self-made “how to” video clip, the kind that even dummies like me could follow step by step. I was hooked, and the idea of a social media issue of *Medical Writing* was born. And Diana was the ideal guest editor.

So if you've been following me on LinkedIn

these past few months, blame it all on Melvin and Diana.

So why am I doing it?

There comes a point in one's life when one has to stop “ostriching” and face reality. There is no denying that social media has become an important part of our professional life. Look at the wide range of articles in this issue. Check out a few examples of how social media is impacting science communications (p. 65), biomedical publications (p. 39), and even drug safety (p. 61).

Let's be realistic. There is no way to make lemonade out of Corona lemons. But there are some silver linings to the pandemic clouds. In 2020, changes in my employment situation and the pandemic gave me the push to dig myself out of the sandpit and embrace technology of all sorts.

For example, my running app tells me that I did a total of 180 jogging runs in 2020, up by 25% compared to the previous year. I realised that in 2019, I spent too many hours sitting in cars, planes, and meeting rooms. My health, and that of the planet, definitely seemed to have benefited from the pandemic.

I got to understand global health better. For want of reliable sources of information, in March 2020, I started listening to the WHO media briefings on COVID-19 during those jogging runs. Amidst criticisms, political turmoil, and

funding cuts, they remained a steady anchor in the global storm of COVID-19.

I also got to know my family better as we got to share more meals, play more card games, and take more walks together than in previous years.

And finally, I had time to be more engaged in social media, at least on LinkedIn.

And yes, I also could take on the responsibility of this journal, *Medical Writing*.

We are all professional communicators and social media has become the most influential communication tool on this planet.

If you are not yet on social media, go in and give it a try. If you are a passive reader who prefers to fly under the radar, that's perfectly fine, too. Be generous with your likes. If you are already an active user, take care before you share. However you engage with and use social media, please remember – act responsibly.

As we move forward in 2021 and continue to navigate the choppy waters of the pandemic and the accompanying infodemic, social media will be a powerful tool to build together a healthier and safer world. Let's do it!

There is no denying that social media has become an important part of our professional life...however you engage with or use it, please remember – act responsibly.

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