

# The Crofter: Sustainable Communications

## Welcome to The Crofter!

This is a regular section maintained by the EMWA Sustainability Special Interest Group (SUS-SIG), with Kimi Uegaki as the Section Editor.

## SECTION EDITORS



**The EMWA Sustainability Special  
Interest Group**



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## Crofting is a sustainable way of living

It is cold and grey, and the wind is strong this morning, carrying a dash of rain. The crofter wakes up early. There is a sick sheep in need of care. A cow should give birth at any moment. There is a storm coming... are the fruit trees well protected?

Crofters run traditional small-scale farms that provide food and shelter for the family.

The croft, a traditional Scottish food production system, is a sustainable living practice, sometimes handed over from one generation to the next. The croft is the crofter's home, job, and hobby. The croft is his or her life.

### Our world is our croft

Our world is one big croft where we, humans, are the crofters. We live, feed ourselves and our families, and satisfy our needs with everything we get from our planet's resources.

But our modern way of life has an impact on our world that we can no longer ignore. We are damaging our own croft, our only source of subsistence and shelter with unsustainable practices.

### Unprecedented exploitation of our croft's resources

Our planet has faced unprecedented exploitation in the last 100 to 200 years: exponential use of water and energy, loss of tropical forest, ocean acidification, carbon dioxide emission, use of fertilisers, to name a few. Massive extinction of species is happening before our eyes. Polluted water, air, and soil is an increasing problem, especially in developing countries. We find plastic in our food chain and our oceans. Science shows

that 2020 marked the year when anthropogenic ("man-made") mass exceeded the living biomass in this planet.<sup>1</sup>

### Our well-being is connected to our croft

The existence of every human being depends on the natural system we live in. And for us, this is ultimately planet Earth. Like the crofter depending on his/her croft, the survival of humans is linked

to the planet, and damaging the planet damages human health.

### Our professional life is part of the croft

Sustainability is not just about the environment, just as crofting goes beyond just food production. Sustainability also covers education, equity, peace, collaboration, and yes – health.

For medical writers and communicators, the healthcare industry and our profession are part



of the croft. Look at our daily professional activities, the documents we write, and the health products we produce. Each of these has their ecological footprint that has an impact – positive as well as negative – on the croft.

## We are all crofters

The Sustainability Special Interest Group (SUS-SIG) of EMWA created this space here in *Medical Writing* to discuss sustainability issues that affect us all, personally and professionally. And because crofting is about a sustainable future, we called this space The Crofter: Sustainable Communications.

We will be sharing regular articles that will help you understand what sustainability is and how we can practice sustainability in our daily work and our daily life.

Share with us your questions, answers, worries, and requests, and we will add them to our SIG agenda. This space is for all of us, a small step towards a more sustainable world. Remember, we only have one planet, and we are all crofters.

## References

1. Elhacham E, Ben-Uri L, Grozovski J, et al. Global human-made mass exceeds all living biomass. *Nature*. 2020;588:442–4.

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# Sustainability is not just a lifestyle choice – it is a professional responsibility

The term “sustainability” means different things to different people. What often comes to mind are lifestyle activities like green living, organic farming, vegetarian diet, recycling, among others. Hence this begs the question: What does sustainability have to do with medical writing and communications?

We firmly believe that sustainability goes beyond lifestyle choices – it is the responsibility of each and everyone. And the profession of medical writing and communications should be in the frontline in supporting the United Nations (UN) Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs).

The EMWA Sustainability Special Interest

Group (SUS-SIG; #EMWA-SUS-SIG) was launched in May 2020<sup>1</sup> in order to inform and support medical writers and communicators on the respectful use of human, natural, and planetary resources. As actors in the healthcare industry, a sector quite known for its considerable carbon footprint,<sup>2,3</sup> clinical researchers and medical communicators have the responsibility to support and steer the industry towards sustainability through our personal and professional activities.

To pursue these objectives, the EMWA SUS-SIG has formed five groups that will work on the following topics:

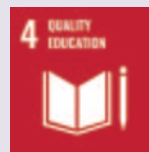
## Group 1: EMWA as UN Sustainability Partner Organisation

We aim to register EMWA as a UN Sustainability Partner Organisation. Therefore, we have analysed the UN SDGs (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>) and propose that EMWA fits well to support the following goals:

In collaboration with the EMWA Executive Committee (EMWA EC), the SUS-SIG seeks to develop an implementation plan for the identified UN SDGs.



- **Goal 3** – Good health and well-being



- **Goal 4** – Quality education



- **Goal 12** – Responsible consumption and production

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## Group 2: EMWA's ecological footprint

With focus on the environment, this work group aims to collect data on EMWA's carbon emission and provide suggestions on how to reduce the ecological footprint of EMWA. The long-term goal is for EMWA to become a carbon neutral, not-for-profit organisation.

**Therefore, the following steps are planned:**

- Organise webinars to increase awareness about environmental topics amongst EMWA members. For further information, please see our recent webinar from Achim

Schneider on sustainability in the healthcare industry: <https://player.vimeo.com/video/471075316>.

- Collect carbon data from EMWA's activities (eg, conferences, journal publication) to calculate EMWA's current carbon footprint. Based on this data-driven approach, we aim to provide goals and an action plan to the EMWA EC. We aim to communicate our results to the EMWA community through the *Medical Writing (MEW)* journal and an EMWA seminar.



### Group 3: The healthcare industry and sustainability

We continuously investigate how the healthcare industry implements the UN SDGs. We plan to provide topical information on recent advances in the industry to the EMWA community.

Hence, we have launched this dedicated journal section. Additionally, a full issue on Sustainable Communications is planned for 2022.

### Group 4: Medical writing and sustainability

We may not be fully aware of it, but our professional activities have an impact on achieving the UN SDGs. Below are just two examples how medical writing intersects with sustainability.

#### Environmental impact of health products

There are regulations and guidelines that look at the environmental impact and life cycle management of healthcare products. Corollary to these, certain documents that medical writers develop for regulatory submissions cover on these topics, including the Risk Management Plan (RMP), the Investigational Medicinal Product Dossier (IMPD), and the Environment Risk Assessment (ERA) report. The ERA may not be familiar to many of us, but it is actually required in the EU for all new marketing authorisation applications (MAA) for a medicinal product, regardless of its legal basis.<sup>4</sup>

#### Avoidance of research waste through responsible reporting and data sharing

Through good reporting practices, data transparency and open science, duplication of efforts, unnecessary mistakes, and waste of research resources are avoided.<sup>5,6</sup> Medical writers and communicators are at the forefront of sharing and communicating clinical and scientific data in a responsible and fair manner.

The SUS-SIG aims to develop educational activities (e.g., webinars, workshops, etc.) on these topics with the support of the EMWA Education Committee.

Examples of topics we can cover are:

- Environmental risk assessment of medicinal products for human use<sup>4</sup>
- Reducing research waste through good reporting and publication practices<sup>5-7</sup>
- Healthcare waste management (EU-HCWM project) / circular economy<sup>8</sup>

### Group 5: SUS-SIG resource centre on the EMWA website

On the topic of sustainability in the healthcare industry, we aim to provide an up-to-date collection of online resources on the EMWA webpage (<https://www.emwa.org/sigs/>

[sustainability-sig/](https://www.emwa.org/sigs/)). Additionally, we will make use of all EMWA communication channels (#EMWA-SUS-SIG) to provide access to these topics.

### References

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### If you are interested in joining the EMWA SUS-SIG, please contact us!

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