Medical translation: A driving force behind equitable access to healthcare

Welcome to this *Medical Writing* issue on Translation, where we explore the transformative role of translation in advancing medical communications and improving access to healthcare. Represented by cogwheels in our cover visual, translation is the intricate process of converting the written word from one language into another, enabling communication on a global scale. But medical translation is about so much more than that, as we'll see in this issue.

Translation breaks down language barriers to enable knowledge sharing across countries and continents. In our first article, **Prado Antolino, Marina Persoglia Bell, and**

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Vonessa Costa look at language access as a fundamental component of health equity.

The language we use has a big impact on how a message is received and plays a part in contributing towards health equity. Translating highly technical and scientific concepts into a language that a non-specialised audience understands helps make information accessible and closes knowledge gaps.

For this reason, among others, plain language has been a hot topic as of late, as demonstrated by the 56th EMWA conference last year. **Romina Marazzato Sparano** delineates five strategies for adapting technical content for lay audiences, offering practical guidance for writers seeking to convey complex medical concepts in a clear and engaging way. **Rachel Jenkins, Johanna Todd, and Olivia Alexander** offer a publisher's perspective on maximising patient engagement with Plain Language Summary of Publication articles (PLSPs) and strategies for enhancing the trustworthiness of medical publications among patient audiences.

One factor that contributes to building trust is the quality of the information we provide. Accuracy is paramount, and in medical translation, inaccuracies can have major implications. **Andrew Bell and Pedro Aguilar Torres** examine the use of computer-assisted translation tools and quality assurance measures specifically to translate medical reports, with a view to maximising accuracy; **Iain Matheson and Barbara Kollmer** provide insights from the language service provider (LSP) perspective, examining both human and automated approaches.

Another crucial aspect of providing quality translations is ensuring they are appropriate for their intended audience. This involves careful decisions on how to render cultural and linguistic nuances. **Karol Tapia de Moya** explores how translators navigate these aspects to adapt mental health tests beyond clinical research settings, and **Raluca Chereji** looks at the challenges of translating "medicalese" in informed consent forms.

In this issue, we also look at the role of translation in a product's path to market. **Emi Pell and Valerie Carlson** focus on the importance of translation in patient engagement, recruitment and retention in clinical trials through its ability to foster trust, ensure safety, and increase efficiency in diverse healthcare settings. **Karen M. Tkaczyk** delves into the intricacies of translating medical device documentation, taking account of the unique challenges posed by regulatory requirements, while **Ekaterina**

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Chashnikova tackles the challenges of localising promotional materials for pharmaceutical companies, offering insights into content creation, localisation strategies, and collaboration with medical writers.

And of course, we haven't forgotten the other hot topic and the theme of the forthcoming EMWA Symposium: artificial intelligence (AI). **Ann Marie Boulanger** examines translation technologies and the pros and cons of using neural machine translation and generative AI tools in medical translation, while **Helen Williams** reflects on the surge in AI and the challenges of integrating it into linguistic validation – a robust and highly regulated process designed to adapt Patient-Reported Outcome (PRO) measures for different cultures and languages.

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Should the translation workflow be 100% human or fully reliant on AI? Similarly, to the medical writing industry (and many others), the answer may lie in combining both. It comes down to the ethical use of every tool at our disposal, with "ethical" being the key word here.

Drawing from personal and institutional perspectives, **Angela Dickson**'s article navigates the complex terrain of ethical decision-making in medical translation, laying the groundwork for a code of ethics tailored to the unique challenges of the profession.

As editors of this issue, we extend our gratitude to the esteemed authors for their invaluable contributions. We also express our heartfelt thanks to the dedicated editorial team at *Medical Writing* for their efforts in making this themed issue possible, as well as regular section article authors for their contributions. We hope that this compilation serves as a testament to the power and potential of translation in propelling progress and promoting equitable access to health information to everyone, regardless of their native language and geographical location.

Ana and Claire

Author information

Ana Sofia Correia is an English to Portuguese medical translator and writer based in Portugal (www.anasofiacorreia.com). For the past 17 years, she has worked with life sciences companies, contract research organisations, language services providers, and medical communication agencies. After 12 years as an in-house translator at the Center for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra and the Nursing School of Coimbra, she became a full-time freelancer in 2019. In addition to her translation and writing services, she runs the Medical Translation Mentoring programme, a community-based mentorship program specifically designed for medical and life sciences translators.

Claire Harmer is a London-based medical translator and editor working from French and Spanish into English. She works with public health organisations, journals, medical communications agencies, and CROs to translate texts into accurate, clear and compelling English. Claire also works as a translation project manager for languages such as German, Russian, Italian, Dutch and Arabic. She has a Masters in Technical and Specialised Translation, focusing on medicine and pharmaceuticals, and is an active member of the Institute of Translation and Interpreting. Claire was EMWA Honorary Secretary from 2018–2020 and coordinates the Translation subgroup under the umbrella of the MedComms SIG.

The two most important keys on your keyboard

This is called the hash, pound, or number character. A hashtag is a keyword or set of keywords that is preceded by the # character. It is used in social media to create a thread of conversations around a specific theme or topic conveyed in short texts or microblogs. It is commonly used in Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, etc.
A dictionary of most common hashtags can be found at https://www.hashtags.org/definition/~h/.
For your info, EMWA is compiling a list of standarised hashtags for our social media use.

@ This is called the "at" sign or symbol. The @ sign is part of email addresses and social media user names ("handles"). Our EMWA handles are as follows: @Official_EMWA (Twitter), @EMWA (LinkedIn), and @europeanmedicalwritersassociation (Facebook)