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# Out on Our Own

## Welcome readers,

We are in an era where information is at our fingertips. If we need answers to our questions, we head straight to the internet and can come up with a search response within milliseconds. Usually, among the endless list of links, there are blogs, podcasts, videos, and YouTube channels to offer more creative explanations. At the last FBE, there was a table discussion on blogs and social media for medical writers. It soon changed into discussing YouTube channels when our author of this issue,

Dr Karim Montasser (also editor of the Veterinary Medical Writing section) who was running another table discussion, joined forces and shared his own experience on the topic.

It is more apparent than ever that podcasts, blogs, and YouTube channels can be hugely beneficial for medical writers. In one way, as Karim explains and Diana Ribeiro wrote in her article “Sound, microphone action: Podcasts for medical writers” in the December 2019 issue of *Medical Writing*, medical writers can assist others when setting up scientific podcasts and videos,

or they can set up their own channel, as Karim has done himself. On the other hand, as time is so precious, especially for freelancers working on an hourly rate, finding the information about a specific topic has never been easier with these scientific and medical channels available.

If you're tempted by the digitalised world of communicating science then read on, follow the links, explore the podcasts that Diana lists and get yourself a YouTube channel or blog page.

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## How many medical writers do you need to film a video?

I promise I will give you an answer to that question and it won't be a lame joke. But first, let's say you quickly want to find out how to get air into your bike with a Presta valve (it's infuriatingly hard). Or you would like to hear what a baby koala sounds like (it's adorably cute). Chances are that your internet search will be directed to a YouTube video. If you are under 35 years old, we can delete the word “chances” and move on to certainty. I won't bore you with numbers explaining the metrics behind YouTube's success. Suffice to say, it is the second largest search engine in the world just behind Google, which of course both belong to Alphabet Inc., and amounts to 10% of all internet traffic.<sup>1</sup> If you are producing video content and would like a large number of people to see it, this is where you go.

more than 10 million subscribers “Kurzgesagt – In a Nutshell”<sup>2</sup> is the largest German channel. They cover scientific topics illustrated through animation. The most prominent example in the #sciencefluencer sphere is “Mailab”<sup>3</sup> with over 500,000 subscribers, in which a former chemistry scientist explains different scientific topics in the form of video essays. People seem to be genuinely interested in learning more about science. That is remarkable in itself, isn't it?

What do these two channels have in common besides their popularity? They belong to a network called “funk” (the German word for wireless transmissions, not the funky funk), which is funded by the German government. Granted, only a few of the 75 channels of funk delve into scientific topics, still, there seems to be a rising awareness of the need for communicating science to the public in new and easily accessible ways.

science.<sup>4</sup> While specific measures are still vague there seems to be an understanding that scientists need to speak up to counteract fake news and their maimed friends. More grants for science communication seem to be close.

Meanwhile, more and more scientific publishers also want to make their papers accessible to a lay audience through video abstracts. One recent example is a paper called “Deconstructing climate misinformation to identify reasoning errors”<sup>5</sup> in which the authors deconstruct logical errors to inoculate against fake climate news. In their wonderful video abstract, a couple argues about whether climate change is real in a restaurant when the authors drop in to explain reasoning errors. You will find the link in the references or you can just google the paper title. It is worth it, and I will wait for you.

## Science channels on the rise

Video seems to be preferred over plain text. While this has been true for a decade now, only in the past couple of years one specific type of content has gained traction. Yes, the biggest channels in the world cover gaming, lifestyle or music. But in the past years, we see more and more channels that cover scientific topics among the major league. With currently a bit

## Funding is imminent

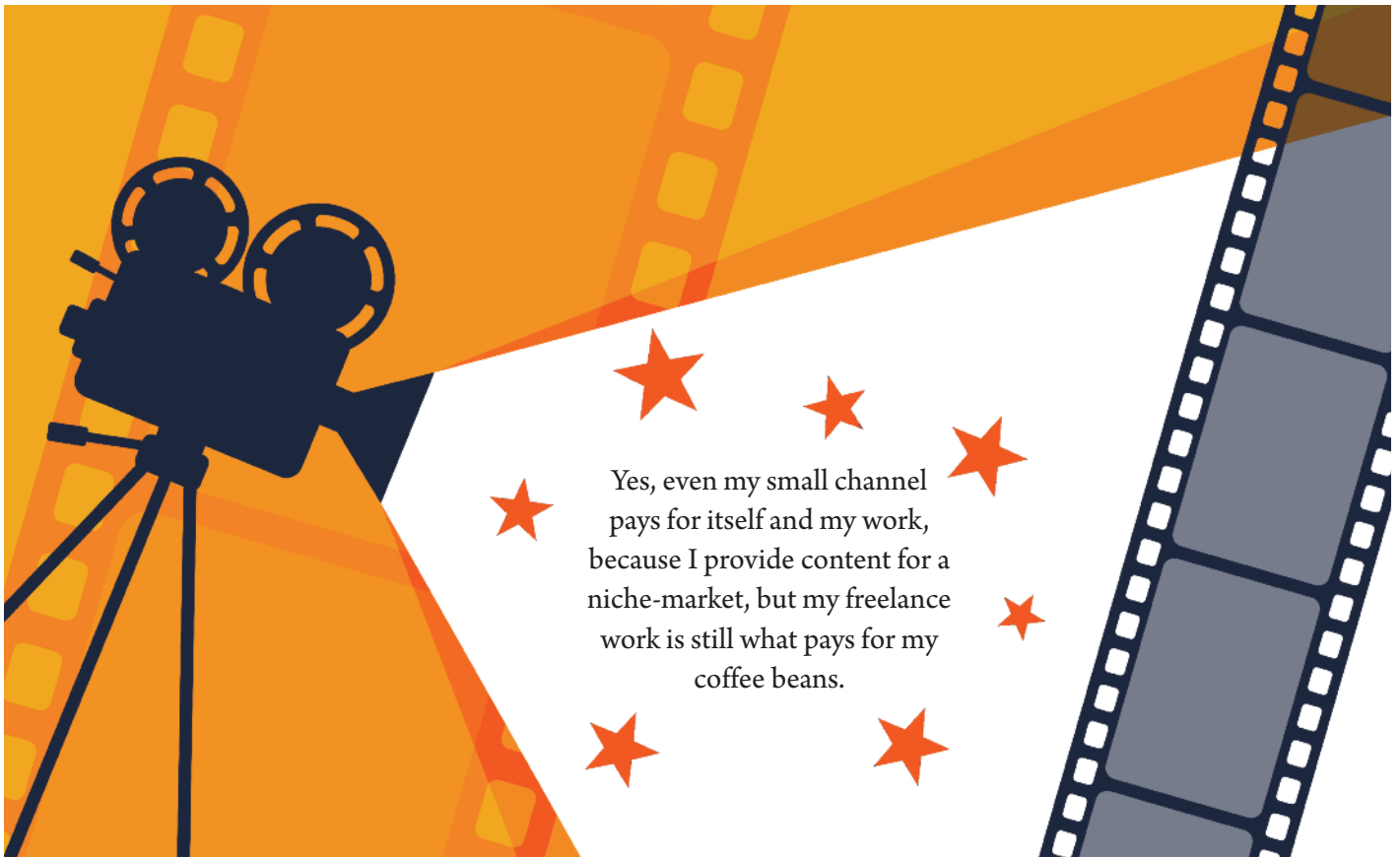
The German government not only pays for a few YouTube channels but just this year the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research released a policy paper underlining the importance of communicating

## What does it take?

Oh good, you are back. It's a very entertaining video, isn't it? To produce such content, we need a few things:

- A thorough understanding of videography
- Videography equipment
- An even better understanding of the topic of the paper
- A creative idea to bring the message across

I will not go into the first two points because I would run out of space quickly. Videography is



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hard. But it is also very fun. If you want to learn more about it you can find excellent tutorials on, you guessed it, YouTube.

The third and fourth point sound familiar though. This is what medical writers in MedCom do every day the whole day. I would argue that after we get a few videography tutorials under our belt, we are perfectly equipped to bring science to the people through video. We understand medicine, we can bring key messages across in an entertaining way without distorting the facts, all we need to do is swap a keyboard for a camera.

### So, how many medical writers do you need to film a video?

The answer to my initial question is: just one. It's you.

I started a channel in 2018 about evidence-based veterinary medicine called "Der Tierarzt"<sup>6</sup> and like most YouTubers, I am a one-man show. This means I do the research on a topic like "Does dry-food kill my cat?" (no, it doesn't), write a script, do lighting-, video- and audio-setup, film and edit the footage, upload it and stay in touch with my viewers in the comment section and on Instagram and Facebook. I do a veterinary podcast called "Breaking Vet"<sup>7</sup> and am a fully booked freelance medical writer as well. This is a

lot of work, but if you are as organised as I know most medical writers are, you can do it.

Why would you do that, you ask? Well, it's certainly not for the money. Yes, even my small channel pays for itself and my work, because I provide content for a niche-market, but my freelance work is still what pays for my coffee beans. There are two reasons to get into science videos right now. First, medical writers are not only capable of communicating science to a lay audience, but I would also argue we are obliged to, we are the link between science and the public and our planet needs us to quote a famous caped hero. The second reason is a more economic one: Video abstracts will be in high demand in the very near future. Having experience in the field will be an asset for any MedCom writer and something you can put onto your résumé.

Thanks for watching, if you are interested in finding out more about video abstracts or science on YouTube, click the like button, make sure to subscribe and write a comment ... or send me an email.

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