

Results of the 2016 EMWA member survey

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on behalf of the EMWA Executive Committee

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Abstract

In October 2016, EMWA's Executive Committee sent an on-line survey to all EMWA members. The purpose of the survey was to obtain more information about our members, what they do, and what they want from the organisation. 286 responses were received. Over 90% of respondents reported that they read *Medical Writing*, over 90% reported using the website, and over 70% reported attending the conference at least once every five years. About one-third attended live webinars or consulted the webinar archive. Membership discounts and the freelance directory were less frequently used. Overall, the respondents seemed to appreciate the services EMWA provides, although some areas can be developed further or could benefit from better publicity.

Introduction

In October 2016, as part of EMWA's commitment to representing, supporting, and training all our members, the Executive Committee initiated a short on-line survey via SurveyMonkey. The purpose of the survey was to obtain more information about our members, what they do, and what they want from the organisation.

Methods

The survey was produced using SurveyMonkey (<http://www.surveymonkey.com>) and included

26 questions. The survey was available online from October 13 to November 11, 2016. An email with a link to the survey was sent to all EMWA members, and a reminder was sent out 4 days before the survey closed. Results are presented using descriptive statistics only and only for selected questions.

Results and discussion

The survey was sent out to all EMWA members, which included just over 1000 members at the time it was conducted. 286 responses were received, although not all questions were answered by all respondents.

Demographic data

Many of the respondents (43.0%) had been medical writers for more than 8 years. The respondents also included a number of less experienced writers, with 15.0% who had been a medical writer for less than 1 year and 18.9% who had been a medical writer for 1–3 years (Figure 1).

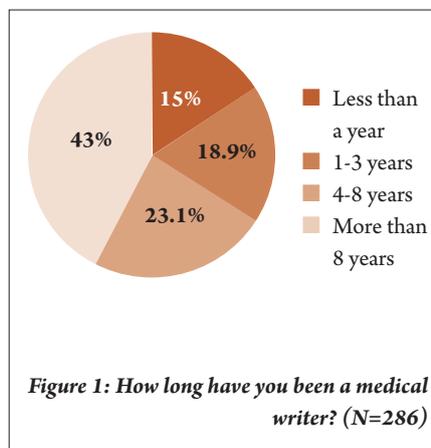


Figure 1: How long have you been a medical writer? (N=286)

Approximately one-quarter of the respondents had been an EMWA member for more than 8 years, one-quarter, for 4–8 years, one-quarter for 1–3 years, and one-quarter for less than 1 year. (Figure 2).

Over one-third of members (37.4%) were freelance and over one-quarter (26.4%) worked in the pharma industry (Figure 3). The rest of the respondents were working for a contract research organisation, in academia, for a communications

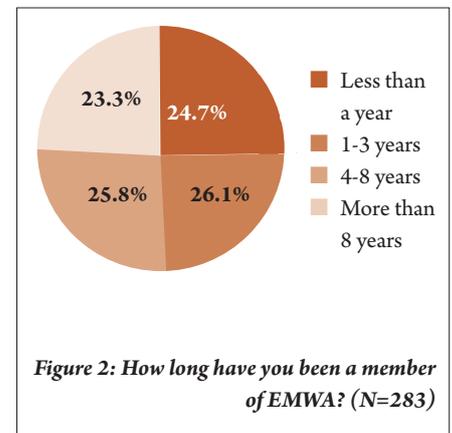


Figure 2: How long have you been a member of EMWA? (N=283)

agency, or were retired or semi-retired. Over 60% reported being members of other organisations. Of these, the American Medical Writers Association, International Society for Medical Publication Professionals, and Drug Information Association were the most common.

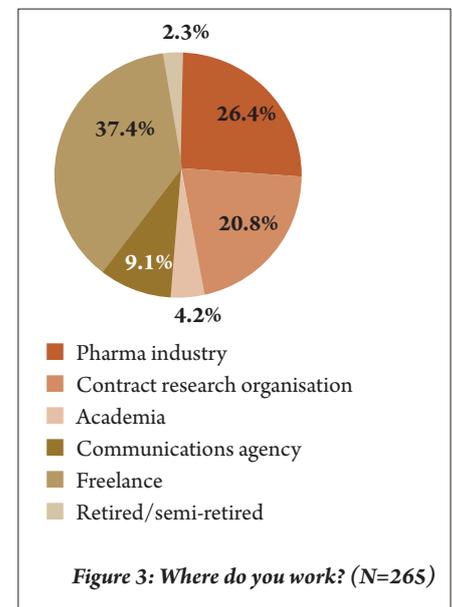


Figure 3: Where do you work? (N=265)

Use of EMWA services

Over 90% of respondents reported reading *Medical Writing*, EMWA's official publication, and nearly 80% reported using the EMWA website. Nearly 70% reported having attended a conference or symposia and over 50% reported having attended workshops. The Freelance Business

Forum, Special Interest Groups (SIGs), and Internship Forum were used less frequently, as expected for areas of specialist interest. Only 4.6% of members used the member discounts (Figure 4).

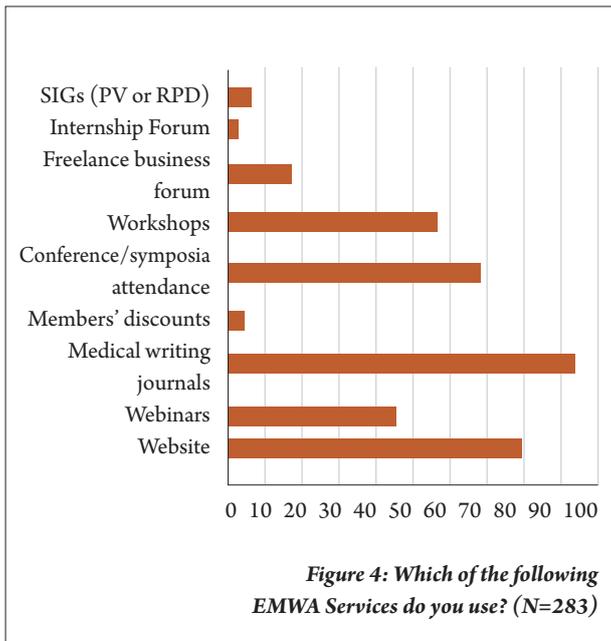


Figure 4: Which of the following EMWA Services do you use? (N=283)

Use of the Website

More than 40% of respondents reported using the website at least once a month, and just over 40% reported using it two to five times per year

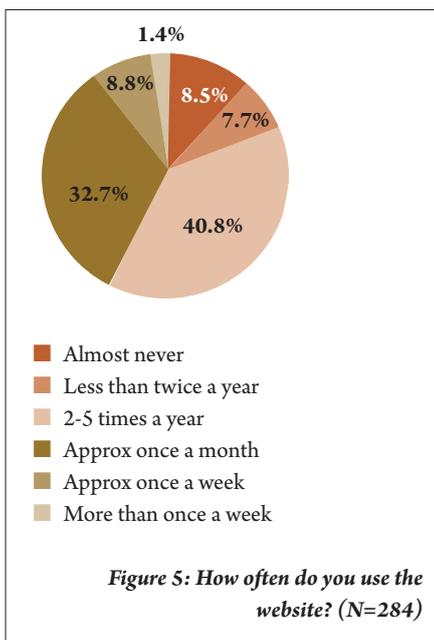


Figure 5: How often do you use the website? (N=284)

(Figure 5). When asked in an open question “What information do you find most useful on the website?”, respondents frequently responded that they appreciated access to information on conferences and webinars and general medical writing updates in the news section, as well as access to back issues of *Medical Writing*. In addition, several respondents mentioned features that they would like to see on the website, some of which the Executive Committee will be following up on. (Figure 5).

Webinars

Just over one-third of the respondents (37.0%) reported having attended live webinars. Slightly more reported having consulted the archive of webinars on the website (41.6%). Again, we received a number of suggestions for topics that members would like to see covered, and the Webinar committee will try and include some of these in the future programme. The Executive and Education Committees will be looking at how to increase awareness and involvement in the webinar programme.

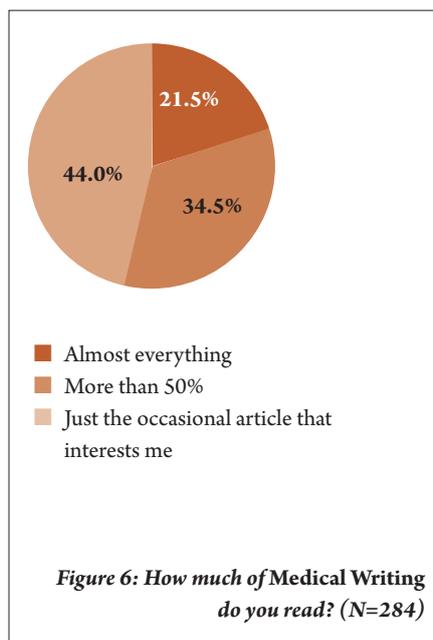


Figure 6: How much of Medical Writing do you read? (N=284)

The journal

Over 90% of respondents reported reading *Medical Writing*, EMWA’s official publication. More than half of the respondents (56.0%) reported reading at least half of the content, and 21.5% reported reading almost everything. (Figure 6).

Conferences and other meetings

Over one-third of respondents (37.5%) reported attending EMWA conferences at least once a year (Figure 7). Only 19.0% reported never attending. Conference location was one of the most important issues in the decision as to whether to attend conferences as well as cost and timing.

Currently, only 14.0% of respondents reported participating in local medical writing meetings, whether organised by EMWA or independently. A number of these local meeting groups are relatively new and it will be interesting to see if the number of members attending such groups increases over time.

Education programme

Most respondents (90.9%) rated the EMWA Professional Development Programme as good or excellent (Figure 8). 126 respondents reported having an EMWA certificate. Of these, 60.3% reported having at least one foundation certificate and 39.7% reported having at least one advanced certificate (Figure 9). The Education Committee will be reviewing suggestions

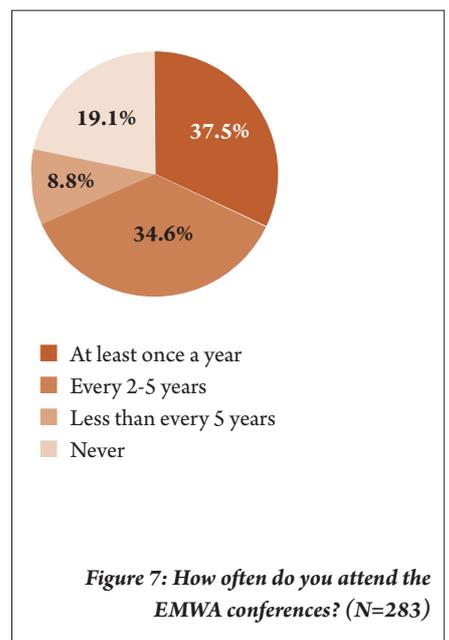


Figure 7: How often do you attend the EMWA conferences? (N=283)

provided for additions and changes to the programme.

Benefits and discounts

Only 37 members responded when asked about the use of discounts. The most frequently used benefit was the discount obtained on EndNote software (46.0%) (Figure 10). Discounts on books from CRC press and insurance for medical writers from PIA Commercial also being popular (29.7% each). We received suggestions for additional discounts that writers would like to see, mostly relating to membership in other societies, computer software, and publications.

Freelance services

Only 17.2% of respondents reported using the freelance directory to find medical writers, editors or translators. Of course, this does not reflect the use of the directory by non-members. On a positive note, of those using the Freelance Directory to advertise their services (n=59), close to half (n=27; 45.8%) reported being offered work as a result in the last 2 years, although the remainder said they had not received any offers of work through the Freelance Directory. The Executive Committee will be looking at updating the format of the freelance directory and will be exploring how it might be better publicised.

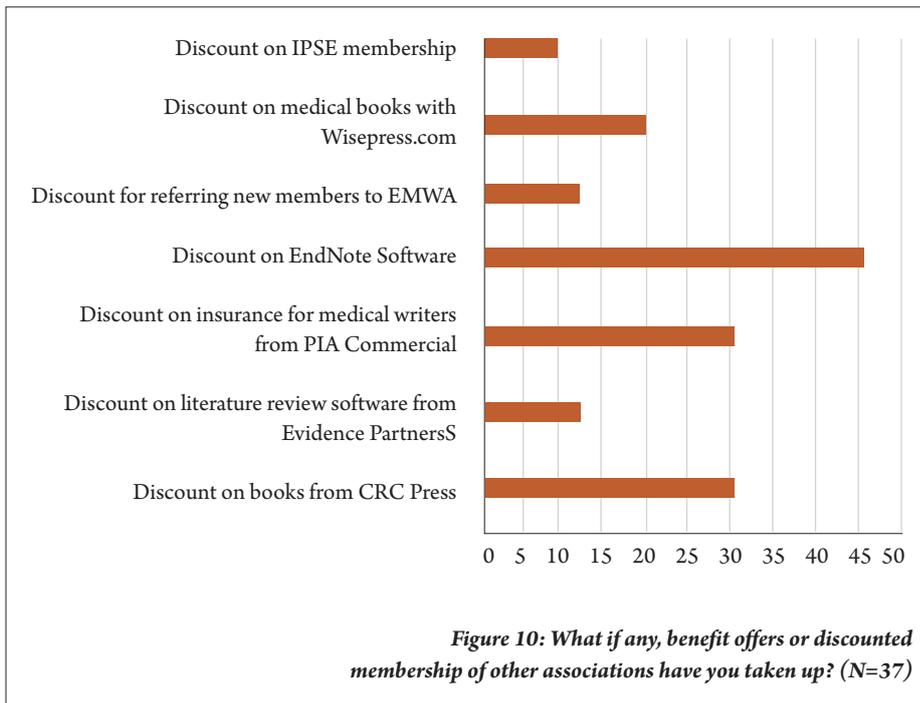


Figure 10: What if any, benefit offers or discounted membership of other associations have you taken up? (N=37)

Conclusion

The Executive Committee would like to thank those of you who took the time to complete this survey. Your responses will be taken into account and hopefully you will see some of your suggestions come to fruition in the near future.

Overall, the respondents reported that they appreciated the services EMWA provides. The vast majority of members take advantage of the

journal, website, and conferences. Also, most members consider the EMWA Professional Development Programme to be good or excellent. Some areas can be developed further, especially the webinars, member benefits, and freelance services.

We understand that the results may be biased by the profile of the members who were willing to respond—those that chose not to respond may have a less positive or at least different perspective. Regardless, the findings provide the Executive Committee with some information about how the association is perceived by members and some ideas about how the association and its services and benefits can be developed.

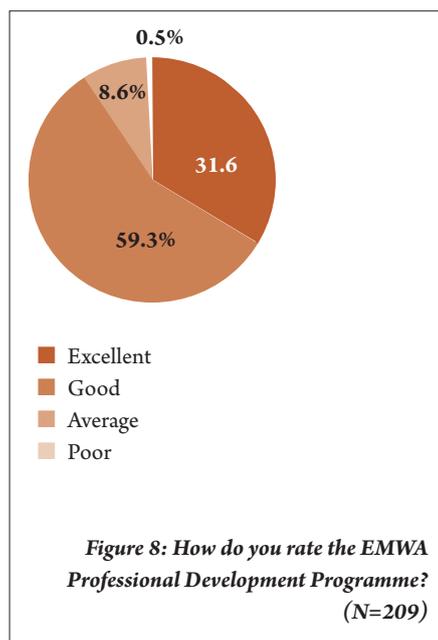


Figure 8: How do you rate the EMWA Professional Development Programme? (N=209)

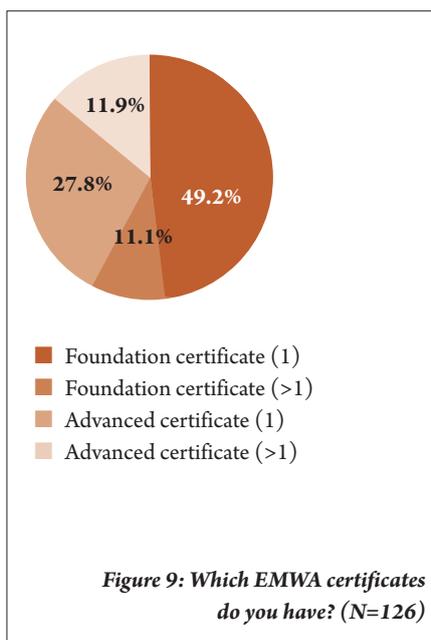


Figure 9: Which EMWA certificates do you have? (N=126)

Author information

Alison Rapley is currently President of EMWA. She worked as a medical writer in the contract research industry for over 20 years, and now provides freelance medical writing consultancy and training services.

Phillip Leventhal is the Editor-in-Chief of *Medical Writing* and is a scientific writer for 4Clinics where he specialises in publication writing and medical communications.