



OPEN SESSIONS OFFER LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN MILWAUKEE

Coordinated by Lori L. Alexander, MTPW, ELS; Lois J. Baker, MS; and Michele Vivirito

This year's conference includes 40 timely and information open sessions throughout the conference—all of which are included in your registration fee. A brief description of each open session is offered below.

Adult Learning Styles

For all medical communicators who are responsible for teaching others, this open session delves into the study of how adults learn and how understanding learning styles can help educators achieve maximum impact in their instruction. This session will focus on how to identify the 3 main learning styles and how to develop educational materials and presentation styles to meet the needs of different types of learners.

Approach to Writing Effective Standard Operating Procedures Documents

This session is designed for writers who want to extend their skill set by learning how to develop effective "SOPs" in both regulated and nonregulated environments. Through the use of examples and templates that help illustrate the entire process, the leader will demonstrate how to plan, source, write, deliver, and manage this document type.

Build Your Bottom Line: Marketing Tips and Tactics From Seasoned Pros

Learn how seasoned freelance medical writers successfully market their businesses, and how you can too. Find out what clients look for when they search AMWA's Freelance Directory and how to write your listing to attract clients. Discover why building a freelance business slowly can pay off and the best and worst marketing tactics for building the business. Learn how you can position yourself as an expert and make key contacts through social media, and which sites are most effective for freelance medical writers.

Case Studies in Medical Writing Ethics

In this lively session, panelists representing vendor, pharmaceutical company, freelance, and academics will weigh in on case questions received from AMWA members on ethics in medical writing. The session will focus on pragmatic suggestions for those "gray areas" in the current climate in which medical writers work.

Component-Based Regulatory Writing: What Is It and How Does It Affect the Regulatory Writer?

In this short session, the speaker will share her insights on "component-based" or "topic-based" authoring for pharmaceutical regulatory documents and how this authoring model will affect medical writers. In component-based authoring models, information is broken down into smaller components that can be re-used (verbatim) or repurposed (within context), thus allowing for the recombination of material in a variety of documents. Benefits, concerns, and process change implications will be presented in this session.

Creating Documents Patients Can Understand

This session focuses on novel concepts for effectively and consistently writing patient-oriented documents at an appropriate reading level (4th to 8th grade). The types of medical writing to be discussed include evidence-based patient information and informed consent documents for clinical research protocols.

Defining and Refining Medical Communication: Competencies, Research, and Theories

Professional disciplines typically have agreed-upon core competencies and values that are shared by practitioners. AMWA has been working towards establishing these, but disciplines also need research

that documents current practices and theories that can be tested to improve those practices. This session's panel will explore these themes from the perspectives of the pharmaceutical industry, technical communication, health communication, and rhetorical theory. These different lenses can help identify what it is we do, what we might be doing better, and how we can best share that knowledge with the next generation of medical communicators.

Effective Presentation Skills: From Audience Analysis Through Delivery

This interactive session covers how to become a more effective speaker. Participants will learn how to manage the task of developing and delivering a presentation. The session leader will include information on preparing for different purposes, audiences, and settings, as well as a discussion of organization, delivery, and managing anxiety. The session will also feature a slide show demonstrating how to design and edit slides to increase legibility and readability; how to choose appropriate typefaces and colors; and when to choose a table, chart, or graph.

Getting Organized for Greater Productivity

Three veteran medical writers with vast experience in all phases of medical communication and publication will present a lively discussion on organizing and implementing their workload for greater productivity. High- and low-tech solutions will be presented along with active audience participation.

High-Performance Freelancing: Negotiating

Negotiating well with clients is one of the most important (and intimidating) aspects of running a business. Come hear a trained, experienced negotiator review the basics of this skill set, and watch 2 other AMWA members role-play a client and a freelance who are trying to come to terms about a project. (The role players will have no advance knowledge or rehearsal of the exercise.) One of the panelists will debrief the negotiators' performance with input from the audience. This session is intended for people with at least 1 year of full-time freelancing experience.

How to Get the Job and Keep the Client: Insights From a Hiring Manager

You've sent out marketing materials, but you haven't gotten a response. You get the first job, but the client never offers you another. Attend this session, led by a managing editor from a continuing medical education company, and learn how to avoid these situations and make yourself invaluable to a freelance-hiring manager.

How to Improve Visual Displays of Medical Information

The speakers for this session will explore how to use the principles of visual design to effectively convey medical information, drawing upon diverse source material from the writings of Edward Tufte and Stephen Few in the fields of medical illustration and visual science. Several examples will be reviewed that illustrate, or fail to illustrate, how visual displays assist thinking about medical information. The goal of this session is to introduce participants to some of the analytical tools needed to design, critique, and enrich communication in the visual medium.

How to Work in the Overlapping Roles of Medical Writer and Regulatory Affairs Professional

Medical writers and regulatory affairs professionals oftentimes wear the same attire. Although colors may differ, the fashion is similar, preparing documentation that conforms to the content and format prescribed in regulatory guidelines. The speaker will describe the role of the regulatory affairs professional and its interplay with medical writer activities. Participants will be invited to share experiences in "giving guidance" when directing writing projects.

It's All About Style

There are often several correct ways express an idea or format a bibliography. Your choice may be a matter of style. Scientific journals specify published style guides for rules on everything from abbreviations to zeroes, and many organizations base their own "house styles" on major style guides.

Even when the use of style guides is not mandatory, these handy resources can help you sharpen your communication. In this session, you'll learn what the scientific style guides cover, where to find the information you need, when to use each guide, why you need these valuable tools in your library, and how style guides differ from each other.

Managerial Effectiveness: Setting Clear Expectations

Have you ever wondered why those you supervise don't always do what you've asked the way you want and on time? Communicating expectations clearly is crucial to implementing change while maintaining enthusiasm and morale. The presenter will share a proven 5-step process for communicating expectations that maximizes achieving desired outcomes.

Managing Medical Communication for Quality and Productivity: Report From the AMWA-CMR Survey

How are medical communication departments organized in major drug companies? How is the productivity of writers and editors measured? What impact does outsourcing have on document quality or on productivity? In this review of results of the landmark 2009 survey conducted by AMWA and CMR International, learn how medical communication departments work in leading US and European pharmaceutical companies. In this timely session, discover new approaches for reenergizing your own organization.

Marketing Bingo! Twenty-five Tactics for Freelance and Staff Writers

Do you hate marketing yourself within your company or marketing your business? The speaker, an editor-writer-teacher for 20 years, will present 25 marketing tactics that can increase your visibility as a valuable employee or as a valuable resource-vendor. Play Bingo and create your own marketing/publicity plan to increase business and visibility.

Marketing Your Career by Being Proactive

In good times and bad times it is always important to effectively market yourself as a medical communicator whether you are freelance or an employee. In this interactive session, the presenters will discuss proactive and creative strategies, tools, and tips for creating your portfolio, increasing your visibility/marketability, and maximizing your job search.

Meeting the Needs of Tomorrow's Medical Writers: AMWA's Expanded Professional Education Program

AMWA first adopted a workshop-based certificate education program in 1979. In the past 2 years, a new and more competency-focused certificate program has been developed and, starting this year, is being rolled out. Attendees at this session can hear details about the structure and content of the new educational program, designed to meet the needs of 21st-century medical communicators, as well as the workshops being developed for it and information for those who want to transition from the old to the new program.

Mining the Internet: Essential Sites for Medical Communicators

The presenters for this session will focus on 3 different categories of useful free-access Web sites: personal productivity tools; sites with statistics about health care costs, incidence, and prevalence of specific disease states; and sites with accurate science and research information. Via live demos, attendees will learn the advantages, special features, and relevance of each site. Plan to return to your office with new Internet resources that will make your job as a medical communicator easier and maybe even more fun.

More Than Aesthetics: Translating the Biology of Color Vision Into Design Principles

Color can do more than enliven a document or Web page. Used effectively, color can organize information, provide emphasis, and improve comprehension. The inappropriate use of color can hinder reading and understanding. In this session, we will review the biology of color vision and translate that knowledge into design principles.

Navigating the Current Medical Publications Environment

Neither ghostwriting nor medical publishing ethics will be covered in this presentation. This session

covers tools and guidelines for medical communicators to assist in navigating the vast current medical publishing environment ranging from health economics studies and patient-reported outcomes to subgroup analyses and clinical trial results posting.

Opportunities and Challenges in the New World of Continuing Medical Education

Continuing medical education (CME) continues to evolve because of changes in health care, physicians' needs, accreditation requirements, and regulatory oversight. Learn how these changes affect you as a medical writer. Participate in this session to identify opportunities and challenges and discuss scenarios that showcase current concerns about CME. The panelists, presenting perspectives from an accredited medical publishing company, an academic CME provider, and an experienced freelance medical writer, will offer tips for writing cutting-edge, effective CME content that integrates evolving regulations to address the educational needs of physicians.

Pharmaceutical Marketing: An Industry Perspective

In this open session, 3 pharmaceutical industry experts will give their perspective on the current trends in pharmaceutical marketing. Principles of pharmaceutical marketing will be introduced, along with the major changes that have occurred in the pharmaceutical environment will be provided. The importance of marketing platforms (creating databases, the regulatory aspects, the labeling, etc) in achieving successful sales will also be highlighted. Finally, the content of successful marketing campaigns will be analyzed and examples of misleading advertising discussed.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: Shedding Light on the Endless Tour of Duty

This panel discussion will provide information that medical writers need to know to effectively communicate about the psychologic effects of trauma. The panel will feature a Northwestern University professor with expertise in trauma, PTSD, and the media's relationship with medicine, and an Army psychiatrist just back from Iraq with a compelling personal story and expertise and life experience in this area.

Practical Application of the Medical Writing Competency Model

After an overview of the competency model, examples will be presented for how the model has been used in association with recruiting and hiring, bringing "on board" and training, alignment of writer to project, and employee performance evaluation and retention. Audience input will be encouraged.

Regulating Health and Medical Information on the Internet

Medical and scientific organizations, government agencies, and numerous information providers maintain Web sites containing information on health care public policy, ethics, and many other topics. For the health care consumer, reading the medical literature can be a daunting task. Oftentimes sites offer information that has not undergone scientific review, and a significant proportion contain inaccurate, misleading, or confusing information. Impaired judgment and emotional strain may mislead consumers, even when unintended. Various proposals for rating or accrediting Web sites to ensure quality have frequently encountered substantial criticism and resistance to implementation. To address quality concerns, the FDA recently has established partnerships with selected information providers to ensure timely content and better information on public health and safety topics. This session will include a discussion of the challenges of instituting "quality control" procedures and how writers are influenced by and contribute to the process.

Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategies 101

Risk evaluation and mitigation strategies (REMS) was another product of FDAAA 2007 that directly affects medical writers. The background on REMS and latest developments will be presented. Our panel will share their tips for working on REMS projects as well as highlighting opportunities for medical writers in this growing area.

Scope of Medical Communication

For those new to the field and those wanting to transfer to a new area of the profession, this panel presentation will provide an overview of medical communication from the perspectives of writers and editors working in different specialties and environments. Presenters will describe their work environment and discuss opportunities and projects in their specific fields, the necessary background and education, salary ranges, how to break in, and how to get ahead.

Snowballing an Idea From Abstract to Manuscript

Part of the joy of medical writing is helping transform raw data to readable formats. Findings reported as an abstract at a scientific gathering can expand into a poster displaying tables, graphs, and bulleted text, and then become a journal article.

Succinct Science: Tips for Writing Shorter Grant Proposals

In this example-driven session suitable for both writers and editors, we will discuss strategies for achieving clarity and brevity in grant proposals without sacrificing core content. Topics will include the importance of mapping core messages, deciding when to use detail, conveying information outside the paragraph, and end-stage editing. Come prepared to share your tips!

Tales From the Trenches: Best and Worst Freelance/Client Practices

Everyone has a horror story: the client from hell, the clueless freelance. Likewise, everyone has a feel-good story: the go-to freelance with the can-do attitude who makes your job easier, the client who “gets it” and for whom you love to go the extra mile. During this session we’ll explore the qualities that make freelance and client practices good, bad, and sometimes downright ugly. Seasoned professionals on both the client and the freelance side will share some of their most uplifting and most frightening tales from the trenches, and then analyze tales of best and worst practices from the audience.

Tips for Writing a Manuscript Discussion Section: For Writers, Teachers, and Editors Who Work With English as a Second Language

This session applies to nonnative English speakers and those who work together with them in scientific and medical writing. We will consider pedagogical methodologies to apply to the discussion section of a scientific paper including grammar, suitable sentence structure, source integration, and the “big picture and your research niche.”

Understanding Cancer Genetics

Cancer is a multifactorial disease involving a complex interplay between genetic and environmental factors that result in malignancy. As our knowledge about cancer genetics and cancer biology increases, scientists and clinicians are better elucidating the characteristics of the disease. New knowledge is helping to identify persons at risk for certain cancers and leading to the development of therapies tailored to the individual patient. This session will offer basic science and clinical information about hereditary cancers, how they differ from sporadic cancers, how cancer risk is assessed, and information about who will benefit from genetic counseling.

Using a Plain Language Database to Write Informed Consent Documents at a 6th- to 8th-Grade Level

This open session will cover the creation and use of a database of terminology that includes commonly recurring medical words, phrases, and procedures as well as procedural definitions and drug definitions. This database is used to help standardize informed consent documents (ICDs), written at an appropriate reading level, across an institution.

Using the Power of Social Networks to Build Professional Communities

Think of online social networks as the new town square or the new Chamber of Commerce meeting, where your colleagues congregate. In this session, you’ll learn how experienced medical communicators use blogs and LinkedIn to build professional online communities and how you can duplicate their success.

You'll discover how to use social media tools to engage and converse with colleagues, prospective employers, and existing or future clients; create a place where you can highlight your expertise; and establish useful and dynamic online professional networks. You'll also learn tips and strategies for managing your networks while tending to your personal life.

Walking the Work/Life Tightrope in the Medical Communication World

Whether you work at home as a freelance or in an office setting for a large pharmaceutical company, balancing the demands of the workplace with the demands of “real” life may feel impossible. It doesn't have to. Listen to 3 experts—a medical writer who has worked full time from home or in corporations since her oldest son was born 23 years ago (and who still has 2 teenagers at home); a human resources professional at a global pharmaceutical company; and a psychiatrist who specializes in stress-related issues—as they discuss strategies for successfully managing both your personal *and* your professional life.

We're Worth It: How Medical Writers/Editors Add Value in Peer-Reviewed Publishing

As medical writers and editors, we know we provide valuable services in medical publishing, but how can we make sure people with hiring authority are aware of our value? This panel will discuss research that has been done, research that needs to be done, and practical tips for individual writers and editors to document and enhance their contributions.

What to Consider When Writing for a Global Audience: A Translation Story

Whether you are running a clinical trial, submitting a dossier for regulatory approval, or providing marketing collateral to your international end users, it is crucial that your information is what we call “translation friendly” and that your intended readers can easily comprehend it. This session will touch on best practices for document development and the translation life cycle in the life sciences.

Writing About Bioethics: An Overview From A to Z and Medical “Ghostwriting”

What do you as a medical communicator need to know about bioethics, the philosophical approach to the ethical controversies brought about by advances in biology and medicine? And in what ways can medical communicators find themselves at the center of an ethical controversy? Find out at this panel discussion, one that will grab your attention and likely find its way into your evening dinner conversation.