

## AMWA resources

AMWA members enjoy the following benefits:

- Opportunities to network with more than 5,600 experienced medical communicators
- Access to members-only listserves
- Access to job listings for both full-time employment and freelance opportunities
- AMWA's latest Salary Survey results
- Access to MD Consult, a subscription-based, online service offering many full-text journals and a large collection of health and medical texts
- Discounts toward purchase of self-study workshops, which can be completed for credit toward AMWA's certificate program or can be used as valuable reference materials
- Additional member discounts on AMWA products and services, and discounts on other products such as the *AMA Manual of Style*, Reference Manager, EndNote, and GK Documents
- Discounted registration fee for AMWA's annual conference, which offers almost 200 educational events and face-to-face networking opportunities with about 1,000 medical communicators
- Chapter conferences with educational and local networking opportunities
- AMWA Web site and *AMWA Journal*—both of which provide information about current issues in medical communication.

*"The career opportunities in medical communication are as diverse as the individuals: medical writer, science writer, video scriptwriter, medical editor, author's editor, copyeditor, editorial assistant, managing editor, publications manager, and public relations specialist, among others."*  
—Deana G. Betterton-Lewis, BA, AMWA member

## ABOUT AMWA

Whatever the career path, the American Medical Writers Association (AMWA) offers the tools needed to break into and succeed in medical communication. Through an extensive educational program, various publications, and unparalleled opportunities for networking, AMWA encourages and enables medical communicators to extend their professional expertise.

- Annually—AMWA's annual conference typically offers more than 35 open sessions, which are included in the registration fee, and more than 85 workshops approved for credit toward an AMWA certificate. Noncredit workshops are also offered; these workshops are appropriate for all medical communicators seeking to increase their knowledge and refresh their skills.
- Throughout the year—Workshops are also offered at chapter conferences. The complete schedule and contact information are included on AMWA's Web site ([www.amwa.org](http://www.amwa.org)) under Conferences and under Chapters.

*"Medical communication is an incredibly diverse field with unending possibilities for gainful employment. If you can marry that with a passion for communicating medical issues to a range of audiences, you'll never regret your career choice."*  
—Lawrence Giraudi, MSc, AMWA member

***The mission of the American Medical Writers Association is to promote excellence in medical communication and to provide educational resources in support of that goal.***



*The Resource for Medical Communicators*

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*The Resource for Medical Communicators*

## CAREER PATH: Medical Communication



***How can I learn the skills needed for a career in medical communication?***

## Many different paths lead to a career in medical communication

### What is a medical communicator?

Professional medical communicators have communication expertise, awareness of ethical standards, and health care knowledge. Medical communicators write, edit, or develop materials about medicine and health. They do this by gathering, organizing, interpreting, and presenting information in a manner appropriate for the target audience.

Medical communicators may be writers, editors, proofreaders, supervisors, project managers, media relations specialists, educators, translators, and more! As part of their jobs, writers and editors may also do research, statistical analysis, publication layout and design, or fact-checking. Some people specialize in scientific writing and/or editing for medical professionals. Others work in medical marketing, advertising, or public relations, or in journalism, writing for a lay audience and/or medical professionals.

### What do medical communicators do?

Medical communicators collaborate with others or work independently to prepare many different types of materials, including the following:

- Journal articles and continuing education materials for health care professionals
- Regulatory documents for government agencies
- Patient education brochures, news articles, Web content, and books for the general public
- Sales training and marketing materials for the pharmaceutical industry
- Grant proposals for research scientists and institutions

### Where do medical communicators work?

Medical communicators work in many types of organizations, including the following:

- Home offices (freelance)
- Pharmaceutical companies
- Medical communication and education companies
- Clinical research organizations (CROs)
- Medical advertising agencies
- Academic institutions

- Hospitals and medical centers
- Health care associations
- Publishers

### What is the demand for medical communicators?

The demand for medical communication is increasing. The medical writing market has more than doubled during the last 5 years according to CenterWatch Monthly 2008.

### Are medical communicators satisfied with their work and pay?

Yes, medical communicators are satisfied according to a salary survey conducted by the American Medical Writers Association (AMWA) in 2007. Specifically, three-fourths of participants were very or mostly satisfied with work. Only 6% were unsatisfied.

In addition, 57% were mostly or very satisfied with their pay, and another 25% were satisfied. Like the salaries earned by other professionals, medical communicators' salaries depend on education, experience, place of work, job description, and other factors. The mean full-time salary for medical communicators was \$82,232 in the 2007 AMWA Salary Survey. The increase in annual salary has outpaced inflation every year since AMWA began conducting salary surveys.

### How do medical communicators prepare to enter the profession?

Medical communicators take different paths to careers in this field. Most medical communicators enter the field from other professions such as the following:

- Copywriting and design
- Education
- Medicine
- Pharmacy
- Publishing/Journalism
- Dentistry
- Medical research
- Nursing
- Public relations
- Veterinary medicine

*"Medical writing is a profession that makes a real contribution to society—we can feel good about the fact that our work matters."*

**—Michele Vivirito, BA, AMWA member**

About 50% of AMWA members have a science or health care degree, including biology, pharmacy, medicine, public health, or nursing. Approximately 30% earned their highest degree in liberal arts, including English, journalism, communication, or technical writing. These people may work in nontechnical communication positions (public relations, advertising, marketing, corporate communication, publishing, teaching, etc) before moving into medical communication.

Just 4% of AMWA members have an academic degree in medical or technical writing according to the 2007 AMWA Salary Survey. In the last decade, more educational institutions have begun offering degrees and certificates in medical communication, an increase that may have implications for future paths to careers in medical communication.

### Where is training available for a career in medical communication?

One of the best ways to learn the skills needed for a career in medical communication (in addition to taking college courses) is to join AMWA, which was founded in 1940 to promote excellence in medical communication. AMWA offers an extensive education program tailored to professional communicators in the medical and allied scientific fields. The number of offerings is continually expanded to broaden the selection of options for both novice and experienced medical communicators. Workshops can be taken toward a certificate in editing/writing, pharmaceutical writing, science fundamentals, or another specialty. The certificate is highly regarded and is required by some employers.

In addition to educational opportunities, members new to the profession have many opportunities to network with more experienced colleagues at AMWA's annual conference, at chapter events, and through AMWA's listserves. More than 95% of AMWA members have 5 or more years of experience in medical communication and are very willing to give advice to newcomers.