From academic to medical writer

A guide to

getting started in medical communications

Written by Dr Annick Moon
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Further copies are available to download directly if you visit www.FirstMedCommsJob.com
Printed copies of this guide are also available if you contact the publishers – support@nextpharmajob.com

From academic to medical writer: a guide to getting started in medical communications

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Foreword to 2020 edition

In the years since we first published this annual careers guide about medical writing in MedComms, the global business has evolved significantly – but the basics remain the same. MedComms agencies are looking for individuals with:

- a genuine enthusiasm for science and its application to the world of medicine
- the ability to work independently within a small-team environment.

MedComms can literally take you all over the world and provides attractive long-term career pathways.

Starting with the first edition of the guide in 2009, we’ve built up a comprehensive, free information service at www.FirstMedCommsJob.com where you can now find extensive insights into working life in MedComms along with information about our regular careers events and networking activities. We’ve been proud to play our part in supporting so many people in finding their entry-level position. We’ll continue to update the information provided here on an annual basis and we welcome your feedback.

Peter Llewellyn
For more information see: www.linkedin.com/in/networkpharma

About the author

Annick is a freelance medical communications consultant and writer, living and working in Oxford. After gaining a degree and doctorate in physiology from Newcastle, she undertook post-doctoral research at Oxford and Manchester. During her time as an academic, she was an editorial committee member for the Physiological Society’s magazine. Annick started her first job in medical communications in 2001 and worked at various agencies until she set up her freelance business in 2006 providing consultancy and writing services to the pharmaceutical and biotech industries. She provides medical writing training and has been a regular participant in careers events over the years, talking about the role of the medical writer in MedComms.

Annick Moon
For more information see: www.moon-medical.com

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Introduction

After years of hard work, you finally got your doctorate. Or maybe you’ve done a few post-docs. Lectureships are hard to come by and as one short-term contract begins it’s time to start looking about for the next. Sound familiar? Time to leave academia, but feel like you’ve occupied a narrow scientific niche for so long that you’ve specialised yourself out of the job market?

Leaving academia doesn’t mean turning your back on science. Your vast scientific knowledge, and your research and analytical skills are truly valuable – ever thought about a career in medical communications?

What is medical communications?

No…
- Journalism
- Academic publishing

Yes…
- Providing consultancy services to the pharmaceutical industry to help raise awareness of medicines

Medical communications provides consultancy services to the pharmaceutical industry to help raise awareness of medicines

About this guide

This guide focuses on medical writing careers in medical communications, in particular in MedComms agencies. The MedComms industry provides consultancy services to pharmaceutical companies, and the role of the medical writer is to use science and language to deliver these services successfully, while working to the highest ethical standards and adhering to industry regulations and guidelines.

The aim of this guide is to give you the information you need to decide if you are suited to the role of medical writer, and to provide the insider knowledge you need to excel at interview.

Please see the profiles provided by people working in MedComms later in this booklet for more insights into working in the industry.

For more information about starting out in MedComms and details of careers events, past and future, visit:

www.FirstMedCommsJob.com
The pharmaceutical industry

A medicine starts out as a new chemical entity which, after many years of basic research, has emerged as a potential treatment for a particular disease. To put this in context, consider that from 10,000 promising new chemical entities, if one makes it to the first stage of a clinical trial, the R&D department is doing well. The new chemical entity must then undergo many years of clinical development, and must fulfil many criteria before eventually being approved for use as a medicine.

Getting a drug from the laboratory through all of the necessary clinical trials and regulatory administration, and approved for release on the healthcare market represents a major triumph for a pharmaceutical company; indeed, developing a drug can take up to 15 years and the cost can run into the £billions – but the story doesn’t end there. To get doctors to prescribe the medicine, you have to tell them about it, which usually involves marketing and communications activities: ensuring that doctors are well informed about a new medicine is essential if it is to be used appropriately and ultimately improve the health of many thousands of people.

To appreciate the scale of the ‘from bench to bedside’ process, it is first necessary to consider the phases of clinical development.

Pre-clinical

Before a new drug can be tested in people, it must undergo rigorous pre-clinical testing, both in vitro and in suitable animal models; also known as non-clinical testing. During this phase, important pharmacological data are obtained about drug dosing, and potential hazards and risks are identified. This allows the regulatory authorities to make a risk assessment and consider the drug’s suitability for testing in humans.

Phase I

Once approved for testing in humans, Phase I can begin (sometimes known as ‘first-time-in-man’ studies). Phase I studies typically involve a small number of healthy human volunteers in whom the chemical toxicity and the clinical side-effects of the drug are investigated. Volunteers receive various doses of the drug, and the aim is to determine the drug’s pharmacokinetic and pharmacodynamic profile in humans.

Phase II

After the initial safety testing in human volunteers is complete, the drug can be tested in patients. The aim of a Phase II trial is to provide ‘proof of principle’ and to assess the clinical benefits of the drug, in addition to the side-effects, sometimes in comparison with placebo. The benefit/risk profile of the drug is then used to plan the next phase of development.

Developing a drug can take up to 15 years and the cost can run into the £billions
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase of clinical development</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-clinical</td>
<td>Testing in vitro and in suitable animal models</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase I</td>
<td>Testing in healthy human volunteers</td>
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<td>Phase II</td>
<td>Testing in patients</td>
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<td>Phase III</td>
<td>Testing in comparative trials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase IV</td>
<td>Post-marketing surveillance following the launch of the drug</td>
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</table>

**Phase III**

If the Phase II study shows the drug to provide a good clinical effect without producing unacceptable side-effects, then a larger Phase III study can begin. A Phase III trial must compare the new medicine with the current standard treatment for the disease or with placebo if there is no suitable active comparator. A Phase III trial is designed to show a statistical difference between the new drug and the comparator, and to establish its therapeutic benefit and side-effect profile.

If efficacy is established in Phase III trials, then all data are submitted to the regulatory agencies who will decide whether the drug can be marketed based on the strength of evidence.

**Phase IV**

Phase IV trials are often referred to as post-marketing surveillance studies – following a successful Phase III trial the drug will have been approved and marketed, so a Phase IV trial is used to gather information in large populations to assess the optimal use of the drug and any side-effects that may not have been identified in a clinical trial setting.

**Why does the pharmaceutical industry need external consultants?**

It makes financial sense for a pharmaceutical company to outsource certain activities to external partners. From running a clinical trial to manufacturing a box for the medicine, the pharmaceutical industry is supported by organisations and agencies, each with specialist expertise.
What is MedComms?

Agencies servicing the pharmaceutical industry provide expert consultancy on anything from producing regulatory documentation to fulfil legal requirements to devising campaigns to help market a drug. For most pharmaceutical products, a communications and publications programme will run alongside the clinical development process, and will then support the launch of the drug and ensure that the drug remains on the clinical radar for the duration of its patent (also known as its lifecycle).

Types of agency

There are many types of agencies offering a range of differing services to the pharmaceutical industry and it can be confusing trying to figure out which agency does what, especially as the terminology is often used inconsistently. Some agencies concentrate on publications and medical education (generally called MedComms or medical education agencies) – the focus of this booklet; others on legal and regulatory documentation or advertising. Some agencies offer a full range of consultancy such as medical education, public relations, market research and advertising, whereas others focus on a niche area.

Many of these agencies are part of a global group with sister-agencies covering the range of healthcare communications and marketing services, and there are also many small independent specialist agencies.

Whatever the service offered, the objective is always the same – to educate and inform stakeholders such as doctors, patients, nurses and hospital managers about innovations and perspectives in healthcare.

| Regulatory affairs:                          |
| Clinical trial documentation (Clinical Trial Applications and Investigational New Drug Applications); Marketing Authorisation Applications; New Drug Applications |
| Health economics:                           |
| Materials to support cost-effectiveness messages |
| Public relations:                           |
| Materials to communicate with the media; issues management |
| Medical education:                          |
| Support of publication activities, including: journal manuscripts and conference presentations; advisory boards |
| Advertising and branding:                   |
| Trade press; consumer adverts; sales aids; direct mail; exhibition stand materials |
MedComms agencies

MedComms agencies have their roots in medical education, and traditionally produce materials such as journal manuscripts for peer review, learning resources, slide kits, and posters and presentations for conferences. However, the boundaries are often blurred, and MedComms agencies may also touch on media materials at the public relations end of the spectrum, or more promotional materials at the commercial end of the spectrum (i.e. brochures, leaflets and animations). MedComms agencies also advise the pharmaceutical industry on how best to educate and inform their customers (i.e. doctors, nurses, hospital managers, pharmacists, patients) about the benefits and risks of the therapy using clinical and economic data. All materials should comply with best practice guidelines, as issued by bodies such as the European Medical Writers Association and the International Society for Medical Publications Professionals (further details are available on page 15).

Why join a MedComms agency?

When it comes to getting broad writing experience, a MedComms agency is a good place to start your career. One day you’ll be writing a highly technical document and using all of your scientific and research skills, and the next you’ll be using your creative powers to summarise the entire document in one diagram. Also, in a MedComms agency, it is possible to find a job that suits you: some people prefer the more scientific, educational element of the job and are happy to write nothing but technical manuscripts and may focus very specifically on narrow therapeutic fields, whereas others enjoy the challenge of a new therapy area every week. Other people prefer the more creative element of writing a range of materials, or prefer to be out of the office talking to clients.

Which job?

As well as medical writing, there are numerous different roles within a MedComms agency, many of which require a scientific background.

**Account Manager**
New media agency
You will manage a diverse range of projects including on-line disease awareness and patient education websites, interactive...

**Medical Editor**
Healthcare Communications Agency
Proofing copy to the highest standard for a full range of medical education and communications materials including scientific abstracts, papers, posters, oral presentations, print items, and multimedia; professional liaison with pharmaceutical industry key contacts; managing and co-ordinating materials through design.

**Editorial Project Manager**
Medical Education Agency
Are you an energetic, ambitious and passionate individual with the desire and potential to join one of the largest healthcare communications agencies in the UK?

**Medical Writer**
International MedComms
Suitable candidates will ideally have at least 18 months relevant writing experience with a background in Medical Communications, Clinical Research, Academic Research or Publishing. A life science degree is preferable. You will display excellent organisational skills and acute attention to detail.

Moon A. *From academic to medical writer*. March 2020.
For more information about careers in MedComms, see www.FirstMedCommsJob.com
Medical writing

A medical writer is part of a team of people who develop a communication strategy to help deliver an effective campaign – what are you going to say? Who are you going to say it to? When are you going to say it? As a medical writer your job is to write high-quality, scientific copy for the wide range of materials that a MedComms agency produces. Your role will also involve keeping an eye on developments in any given scientific field, recognising the big players in the therapeutic area, assessing the strategies used by your clients’ competitors by monitoring their activities, and identifying opportunities to communicate your client’s information.

Attending conferences, and advisory board and standalone meetings is a large part of agency life, so if you like travelling, this is a definite perk. Most medical writers have visited a few of the major conference venues of Europe, such as Prague, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Paris, Barcelona, Berlin, Munich, Nice, Rome and Milan, and also popular global venues such as Cancun, Toronto and Sydney. However, although you may find yourself staying at a nice hotel, you might not get much sleep.

Medical editing

Many agencies combine the role of writing and editing. In such agencies a medical writer is not only expected to produce original articles but also to be able to ‘edit’ other writer’s work – checking it for scientific accuracy, and grammatical and editorial errors. Some agencies split this role, employing both medical writers and editors. In such agencies, medical editors tend to have a wider function, adding proofreading and print production skills to their editing role. In terms of entering an agency as a trainee, agencies more commonly recruit writers than editors. Trainee editors are often known as editorial assistants.

Account/project management

For more information see our careers guide: The business of medical communications by Lindsey Heer, available from www.FirstMedCommsJob.com

An account/project management team is responsible for making sure that projects are delivered on time and on budget. This role includes tasks such as preparing cost estimates, tracking projects, liaising with internal team members and external suppliers, negotiating with clients and
preparing invoices. Usually, account managers progress to become account directors, a position that may additionally involve looking for new business opportunities and promoting the agency to potential clients (although some agencies employ dedicated sales staff). Account managers often have a scientific background, but it is not essential.

**Event management**

Attending conferences, and advisory boards and standalone meetings is a large part of agency life. Events managers are involved in all aspects of event management, including the production of materials to promote the events, sourcing venues, programme development, and booking flights and hotel rooms for attendees. A scientific background is not essential for this role, and many people come to the job from a background in hospitality or event management.

**Entry requirements**

A PhD in life-sciences is the usual entry requirement for a medical writer joining MedComms, and many applicants have post-doc experience, although candidates with any relevant post-graduate qualification may be considered. If you have a science degree or other health-related degree (e.g. nursing, physiotherapy), but no post-graduate qualification, work experience in the publishing or pharmaceutical sectors will probably be needed.

**Career progression**

A new medical writer will largely be trained ‘on the job’, your work being reviewed during this period by a more senior writer. Many agencies also have structured training programmes and you may get to attend external courses. For most new medical writers it will take about a year to lose the ‘trainee’ status (regardless of your job title when you start). After about 6 months of being a trainee, it starts to become frustrating (and sometimes horrible) having your work picked-apart; however, it takes a few years to gain experience and to learn how to plan and produce a range of materials, and it is worth being patient and establishing a good foundation.

Whatever position you choose as a starting point, once in the industry there is scope to change direction and to progress in various ways. The editorial route leads from medical writer to senior writer; beyond this, job specifications tend to vary between agencies, offering the opportunity to define and develop your career according to your strengths. Some writers choose to focus on writing in roles such as principal writer and editorial team leader; others do less writing, focusing more on managing and directing accounts.

**Earning potential**

Starting salaries vary between agencies, and depend upon your experience. Trainee writers leaving academia with a PhD or another higher degree, or with post-doc experience, can expect a ballpark of £25–30K. It is often a source of frustration to trainees with post-doc experience that they have started on a similar salary as someone straight out of their doctorate; don’t be disheartened. If you are a bit older, with more experience and knowledge, it is likely you will progress more quickly than someone younger. For older people with many years of academic experience or for professionals from other relevant backgrounds (e.g. healthcare or publishing), starting salaries may be higher than a trainee rate. However, starting salaries are no indication of career progression and earning potential, and the rate at which your salary increases depends on how you progress. Experienced MedComms professionals are in demand, particularly those with extensive writing skills – it is not unknown for a writer to go from being a trainee to running their own department, or even their own company, within a few years.
So you want to be a medical writer...

There's an equation to describe medical writers:

\[ \text{Likes science} \times \text{likes writing} = \text{medical writer} \]

Training to be a medical writer is hard work as, despite your scientific background and your extensive publication record, there's still a lot to learn.

Common characteristics of a medical writer in no particular order

**Established scientist**

A doctorate and post-doc experience will be advantageous when applying for a job as a writer. The basic entry requirement is a science degree.

**Enjoys writing**

You are the type of person who enjoyed writing your thesis rather than seeing it as a necessary evil.

**Good listener**

Whereas in academia your opinion about your research area was valued, in MedComms, although you'll be expected to have a good knowledge of numerous therapeutic areas, your opinion may not be asked for. You will be required to listen to the client and the medical experts, and to communicate their opinions.

**Excellent research skills**

You will be expected to learn numerous new clinical fields very quickly. Although it's always nice to get a project that is related to your research background, this doesn't happen very often. For example, your existing knowledge may be in microbiology, but you may be expected to become an expert in psychiatry. You will have to be able to research new areas and to discuss the diseases with confidence in a variety of situations. This may seem like a daunting task, but you'll be surprised at how far the research skills you developed during your doctorate can carry you.

**Pedantic**

If the use of an apostrophe in a plural word makes your blood boil, or if you have ever told someone that it is ‘10 items or fewer’ not ‘10 items or less’ then you are a true pedant. This type of pedantry is often called attention to detail.

Moon A. From academic to medical writer. March 2020.
For more information about careers in MedComms, see www.FirstMedCommsJob.com
Comfortable with statistics

You don’t have to be an expert in statistics, but presenting data and making them easy for doctors to understand will be part of your job. Medical statistics are a far cry from the odd t-test you had to do for your doctorate, and whereas you won’t be expected to number crunch, you will have to produce evidence-based arguments based on clinical data. A basic understanding of the analyses used in clinical trials will be essential, and you should find that you quickly learn various statistical concepts that are commonly used in clinical research.

Thick-skinned

It may seem like a step backwards going from being a respected scientist to being a trainee, and learning to be a writer will be tough to begin with. You will hand over a piece of work on which you have spent hours, only to have it covered in comments by a senior writer. Nevertheless, if you stick with it, you will gradually develop a set of much sought-after skills. Once you become an experienced writer, this still doesn’t mean that people will love every word you write – many a beautiful piece of work has been picked apart by a client – so you have to be able to deal with it, and re-write it numerous times if necessary.

Applying for your first medical writing job

Preparing a good CV is essential when applying for any job, but when applying to be a writer, editorial accuracy is extremely important. Unlike other sectors, your CV and covering letter will be assessed by a panel of editors who will spot grammatical errors, spelling mistakes and clumsy sentences, and these things will not be forgiven. Also be careful about posts on social media that are in the public domain. Joining forums relevant to the job may be viewed favourably, but your posts will be scrutinised. Even posts that have no relevance to medical writing may be used to see if you are a suitable candidate, and whereas offensive comments attributed to you in the public domain are obviously going to be disadvantageous, even seemingly harmless posts may reveal your inability to construct a sentence.

Writing experience outside of your academic work will help get you noticed

Additional experience

Writing experience outside of your academic work will help get you noticed and will show that you have a genuine interest in communications. Getting published is easier than you think. Many of the academic societies produce a publication for their members and the editor will be happy to consider your contribution. For example, the Physiological Society produces Physiology News, a quarterly magazine, and the Genetics Society produces Genetics Society News, a bi-annual newsletter. Or if you are feeling really ambitious, you could enter a science writers’ competition.
Transferable skills

When leaving academia it is very easy to understate your skills and experience. Something you may consider to be a mundane everyday task may represent a valuable skill to a potential employer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Doctoral thesis, peer-reviewed manuscripts, slide presentations, conference posters/abstracts, grant applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation skills</td>
<td>Transfer talk, conference presentations, journal club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project management</td>
<td>Designing experiments and scheduling resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project leading and mentoring</td>
<td>Mentoring project students, teaching/demonstrating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Liaising with colleagues and collaborating with other research groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussing science with experts</td>
<td>Confidently discussing complex issues with leading experts (e.g. in the pub on a Friday night)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The writing test

As part of the interview process, you will be asked to do a writing test. Sometimes this will be before you are invited to interview, and sometimes after your first interview. There is no industry standard for the test. Examples of what you may be asked to write include:

- an abstract for a poster or a manuscript
- a mini review based on a small number of papers that have been supplied
- a news article based on a conference report, manuscript or other background documents
- a conference report based on a slide presentation and abstract book.

Whatever the task, it is important that you prepare properly. Even if your writing skills are excellent, you are unlikely to be an expert in drafting clinical documents or on the rules of writing marketing copy for a medicine. Don’t worry though, because the reviewers will not expect you to be an expert, but they will be looking for:

- attention to detail – avoid spelling mistakes and grammatical errors
- structure and flow – provide a well-structured document with a logical flow of ideas
- simplicity – don’t overcomplicate the project by doing extensive background research about the disease; it is unlikely that a writing test will need this, and the test nearly always involves reporting the information you have been given.

The agency will probably give you a guide to how long the test should take. You may find that it takes quite a bit longer, but this is fine and is often the case. If you go over the suggested time by days, rather than hours, maybe consider other roles within the agency.
Using your initiative can make all the difference when it comes to getting through the writing test. For example, if you are asked to write a newsletter aimed at nurses, buy a copy of Nursing Times to get an idea of pitch and tone. Also, there are many guides to medical writing available, which are definitely worth a read before attempting the test. How to Publish in Biomedicine, by Jane Fraser, gives excellent advice and tips (further details are available on facing page).

However, sometimes using too much initiative can be an applicant’s downfall. If you already know someone who is a medical writer, it is fine to ask for advice, but do not ask them to do the test for you. The people reviewing your test will know what standard to expect based on the experience outlined on your CV. If you get offered the job based on dishonesty, you will be found out when the work you produce on your own falls below the standard of your test.

As well as a writing test, you may be asked to complete an editing test to assess your eye for detail. If you use standard editing marks, this will be viewed favourably, although this is not what is being tested so it is fine to mark-up the mistakes using whatever method suits you.

### Editing test

The following editing test contains 20 editorial errors – these include errors of spelling, punctuation, grammar, consistency or meaning. For fun, how many can you spot? (Answers on page 15.)

Over a median followup of 8.4 years, 64 patients (9.7%) experienced disease recurrence (median time to recurrence 5.6 years). The 5, 10- and 15-year recurrence-free probabilities were 0.93, 0.87, and 0.81, respectively. Using time-to-event estimates to adjust for differences in follow-up between groups, radiotherapy was found to reduce tumour recurrence in patients who received a sub-total resection ($p<0.001$) but not in those undergoing gross-total resection of the tumor ($p=0.63$). Multivariate analysis identified cavernous sinus invasion (hazard ratio 3.6, 95% CI 1.5–6.4, $p<0.001$) and STR without radiotherapy (HR 3.6, 95% CI 1.4–14, $p=.01$) predictive of an increase in disease recurrence. Median follow-up for overall survival was 14.0 year. The 5-, 10-, 15- and 20-year estimates for overall survival were 0.91, 0.81, 0.69 and 0.55, respectively. Mortality was higher in patients who underwent radiotherapy with or without SRT than would have been expected in the general USA population.

### The interview

Most agencies select candidates based on one short interview, or perhaps two. I’ve never heard of MedComms agencies running day-long interviews, or asking candidates to undergo tests not directly related to writing. By the time you have been invited to an interview, you should have passed the writing test, although some agencies may ask you to complete another short writing test when you attend the interview. If this is the case, they should let you know before what to expect. You may be asked to give a presentation, but again, you will be told what you need to prepare before the interview.
Answers

Further information

Useful books

Getting Research Published, An A-Z of Publication Strategy
Third Edition.
Available from www.crcpress.com
ISBN-13 9781785231384

David Moher (Editor), Douglas Altman (Editor), Kenneth Schulz (Editor), Iveta Simera (Editor), Elizabeth Wager (Editor), Wiley-Blackwell, 2014.
Available from www.wiley.com
ISBN-13 9780470670446

How to Publish in Biomedicine: 500 Tips for Success
Third Edition.
Available from www.crcpress.com
ISBN-13 9781785230103

Careers support

FirstMedCommsJob –
www.firstmedcommsjob.com

NextMedCommsJob –
www.nextmedcommsjob.com

Professional bodies

Chartered Institute of Editing and Proofreading – www.clep.uk
European Medical Writers Association – www.emwa.org
Healthcare Communications Association – www.hca-uk.org
International Society for Medical Publication Professionals – www.ismpp.org

Pharmaceutical industry news, views and information

MedComms Networking –
www.medcommsnetworking.com
PharmaFile – www.pharmafile.com
pharmaphorum – www.pharmaphorum.com
PharmaTimes – www.pharmatimes.com
Pharmaceutical Executive –
www.pharmexec.com
PMLiVE – www.pmlive.com
The Publication Plan –
www.thepublicationplan.com

Further information

Over a median follow-up of 8.4 years, 64 patients (9.7%) experienced disease recurrence (median time to recurrence 5.6 years). The 5-, 10- and 15-year recurrence-free probabilities were 0.99, 0.92 and 0.86, respectively. Using time-to-event estimates to adjust for differences in follow-up between groups, radiotherapy was found to reduce tumour recurrence in patients who received a sub-total resection (STR) (p < 0.001) but not in those undergoing gross-total resection of the tumour (p = 0.63). Multivariate analysis identified cavernous sinus invasion (hazard ratio [HR] 3.6, 95% confidence interval [CI] 1.5–6.4, p < 0.001) and STR without radiotherapy (HR 3.6, 95% CI 1.4–14, p = 0.01) as predictive of an increase in disease recurrence. Median follow-up for overall survival was 14.0 years. The 5-, 10-, 15- and 20-year estimates for overall survival were 0.91, 0.81, 0.69 and 0.55, respectively. Mortality was higher in patients who underwent radiotherapy with or without SRT than would have been expected in the general US population.
Devon Allen
Senior Medical Writer
Fishawack Communications

During the last year of my undergraduate degree in biomedical science, my university tutor was keen that I apply for the PhD position in his laboratory. While I was intrigued by the prospect of continuing my career within scientific research, I was very aware that the laboratory-based aspect of my degree had never been something I particularly enjoyed. I preferred researching the topic area and writing up the results afterwards. So I started a search for careers within medical science that weren’t based in the lab. I read about the MedComms industry and the role of the medical writer, and it sounded perfect!

After contacting a number of recruiters, I was repeatedly told entry-level medical writer roles typically required a PhD, and without prior experience in the industry or a postgraduate qualification it would be highly unlikely I would be successful in my applications. This only made me more determined to break into the industry! In a stroke of luck, I came across a junior medical writer role with Fishawack Communications that didn’t require a PhD. The rest is history.

I’ve worked as a medical writer for Fishawack Communications for almost 4 years now. The junior medical writer position at Fishawack was fantastic as I was able to get stuck into live projects from day one (this isn’t always the case, as some agencies require junior or associate writers to complete ‘dummy projects’ first). I started out providing editorial support for an educational website, but it wasn’t long before I was given the opportunity to work on and take responsibility for the editorial aspects of other types of projects. I was lucky to have extremely supportive managers, who encouraged my development and allowed me to take on more responsibility quickly. Most of my time at Fishawack has been spent working on an account that specialises in an inflammatory skin disease, which suits me perfectly as I get a great deal of satisfaction from having an in-depth understanding of a particular therapy area.

One of the best things about the medical writer role is the diversity of the work. To name a few, I’ve worked on scientific publications, animations, medical affairs training materials and consultancy reports. My role hasn’t been limited to the office – I have worked from home when I needed to and travelled to the USA, Europe and the Middle East as part of teams delivering scientific meetings. The learning curve has been steep, and aspects of the role have been challenging, but overall it has been extremely interesting, rewarding and great fun!

To anyone reading this who is interested in becoming a medical writer but doesn’t have a PhD or prior experience – you absolutely can! If you are enthusiastic and open to opportunities, you will soon progress to become a medical writer and beyond!
Lucy Cartwright
Medical Writer
Helios Medical Communications

After completing a master's degree in medicinal chemistry at the University of York, I was faced with the panic-inducing decision about which career to pursue. The only certainty was that I wanted to continue in a scientifically stimulating role where my work would have a positive impact on people living with chronic disorders. At that time, I was aware of only two pathways that would facilitate this: completing a PhD in medical research or working in industry. Having already completed a year-long industrial placement in drug development, I took the decision to accept a role as a synthetic chemist at a small biotechnology company specialising in the development of novel oncology treatments.

Despite the excitement of working on the front lines of pioneering drug discovery, I always found myself drawn to the report-writing side of the role and felt great satisfaction from transforming complex data into accessible and readable documents – far more so than the slog of conducting chemical reactions that more often than not failed! It was during my time in the lab that a colleague introduced me to the concept of MedComms and lit the spark that led me to where I am today.

My time in the lab ended when the company I was working for offered voluntary redundancies. I seized this opportunity to explore options in MedComms and was lucky enough to secure a job as an associate medical writer at Helios. From day one, I was thrown straight into exciting projects in an array of therapy areas. The learning curve was steep but extremely enjoyable, and I immediately felt a great sense of achievement in that I was helping to deliver projects that would directly impact the success of new medicines. Contrary to what I thought before I started my journey in MedComms, the role of a medical writer is not restricted to just writing. During my first year, I had the opportunity to travel to Helsinki, Barcelona, New Orleans, Hawaii and Madrid to deliver competitor intelligence projects, advisory board meetings and symposia. Being able to work directly with clients and experts from all over the world is something that challenges me and has greatly improved my confidence. No 2 days are ever the same, and I am never bored!

After a year as an associate medical writer, I was promoted to medical writer. My role now involves taking on more responsibility within the team and leading projects. I find it incredibly rewarding to be able to review the work of more junior members of the team and to watch their writing skills develop. At Helios, I am surrounded by an exceptionally experienced, talented and supportive team who teach me something new every day. The scope for development within Helios is something I really value, and there are always opportunities for training and exploring aspects of other roles, including project management.

I have had no second thoughts about my move into MedComms, and my only regret is that I didn't make the transition sooner!
Amy Farr

Medical Writer
Zoetic Science, an Ashfield Healthcare Communications agency

I first came across MedComms in my final year of my MSci biology degree at the University of Nottingham. Of all the areas that my degree encompassed, I was most passionate about medical science, and I particularly enjoyed writing a scientific blog for a lay audience in my spare time. The dilemma I faced was that continuing in academia didn't appeal to me and, like many others, I felt the ‘panic’ of not having a place on a graduate scheme or a job lined up upon graduating. In the final months of my degree, my career advisor suggested looking into MedComms as a solution for combining my love of science with writing. With no idea what MedComms involved, I did some further research and quickly decided that medical writing was something I wanted to pursue.

Whilst looking for associate medical writer vacancies, I found it difficult to find opportunities where I would be considered without a PhD, and I was disheartened that perhaps this career could not be achievable for me. However, I was fortunate enough to come across the allegro programme at Ashfield Healthcare Communications, which is a 12-month programme with a pre-requisite of a 2:1 bachelor’s degree. After a friendly (and surprisingly fun!) assessment day, I was offered a place on the programme, and I accepted without any hesitation.

I joined Intake 3 of allegro in October 2018. The programme consisted of 2 months of training, followed by two 5-month rotations in different Ashfield agencies. My year as an associate medical writer was challenging but highly rewarding, and it gave me all the experience I needed to become a confident and competent writer. I thrived on managing my time across many projects and having the experience of writing for a variety of therapy areas, including HIV, Ebola, oncology, respiratory disorders and multiple sclerosis. In October 2019, I was promoted to medical writer and joined Zoetic Science.

What I enjoy most about being a medical writer is the variety of tasks that are involved – no 2 days are the same! In addition to writing, I have many other responsibilities, such as project management and liaising with pharmaceutical clients about their latest developments. There are also many opportunities to go onsite; I will be going to Paris, Thailand and Thessaloniki later this year. The people I work with also contribute to my enjoyment of the job, having formed close friendships with those I was with in the allegro programme and those I am with in Zoetic Science now. When describing my job to others, I always consider myself very lucky to be in a job that I love.

If you are looking for a fulfilling career where you can expand your knowledge of medicine and are interested in a career with diversity and opportunities for development, then I could not recommend medical writing enough!
Elin Pyke
Mudskipper, an AMICULUM agency

The great escape from the lab post PhD is a very traditional ‘how I got into MedComms’ story. Personally, I realised early in my undergraduate degree that even though I loved learning about science, actually doing the research was a different matter. I found reading about other people’s discoveries far more interesting than doing experiments of my own. Deciphering complicated science and being able to describe it accurately and engagingly was something I really enjoyed (even more so when I could see the real-world relevance of results), and so the opportunity to creatively communicate cutting-edge medical research through a career in MedComms was very appealing.

Although not having a PhD is sometimes seen as a bit of a barrier to getting into medical writing, that wasn’t my experience, and I have been surprised by how many of my colleagues ‘only’ have an undergraduate or master’s degree. However, it does pay to be a bit flexible and my first MedComms role was as an editorial assistant, providing support with styling materials, compliance tracking and submitting publications. Although occasionally repetitive, this work gave me a well-rounded background in the many steps needed to get a project successfully from start to finish, and that experience has proved invaluable as my role has progressed – knowing your way confidently around a submission site is a definite advantage when managing last-minute changes at 9 pm on deadline day!

I was lucky that the Mudskipper team had my career development in mind from the start and I was quickly given opportunities to work on my own writing projects before moving to a full-time medical writing role. I work on a publications account, traditionally seen as a more structured, less creative area of MedComms, but in reality an area of increasing innovation to ensure significant results reach the necessary audiences. The variety of work is both impressive and surprising. Whether accurately summarising findings in a 2-minute animation or figuring out the best way to convey a novel study design to a congress audience of 40,000, attention to detail is key. But the bigger picture is also important and opportunities to help shape this are plentiful, from working with clients to develop scientific messages (allowing clinicians to understand how best to utilise new treatments) to reviewing materials to ensure strategic alignment, accuracy and a clear narrative as a drug makes its way through clinical trials to regulatory approval.

Most excitingly, working on publications allows you to be one of the first in the world to see new data and to work closely with the pharmaceutical client team and external authors as they discuss the results and interpretation, quickly becoming an expert yourself – it’s hard not to get wrapped up in the sense of enthusiasm and anticipation as part of a team preparing to present practice-changing results to the scientific community. Hearing first-hand from top clinicians the life-changing impact new drugs have on their patients is both a privilege and a welcome reminder of the huge importance of well-communicated research.
Natalie Rounding
Delta Kn, an AMICULUM agency

I realised early on in my PhD that academia wasn’t the right path for me. If I am honest, I felt uncomfortable with this realisation for a while. I had always had a clear career path in my mind and had never considered a life outside of academia. Faced with this new-found career panic I had a decision to make: where did I want my career to go next?

Throughout my PhD I had naturally been drawn to teaching and outreach opportunities at my university. I loved the challenge of communicating science to students and coming up with visual and practical ways to help them learn. I continued to build on my science communication experience during my thesis write up, taking on an internship with the research liaison and evaluation team at a national medical research charity. This gave me an opportunity to hone the skills I had developed during my PhD in a more professional setting.

Towards the end of my write up I started to think about my long-term career plan, wanting a job that combined my passion for science and learning, as well as the opportunity for career progression. After some research, MedComms seemed the perfect fit for me! I applied for a role at Delta Kn, a specialist learning agency within AMICULUM, as the ethos of the company really resonated with my own interests. Following a writing test and interview, I was delighted when I was offered a position at its office in Cheshire. After being told multiple times ‘no one will employ you whilst you’re writing up your PhD’, it was refreshing that the company was flexible and willing to take me on before I had undertaken my viva.

Two years on and I have no regrets about my transition from academia to MedComms. I am a medical instructional designer within Delta Kn. ‘What does a medical instructional designer do?’, I hear you ask – well, no 2 days are the same. One day I could be developing a training programme for the launch of a new drug, which might involve creating animations or videos, and the next I might be supporting a virtual medical education meeting for teams located across the globe. I love the fast-paced, varied environment I work in and I feel like I am learning something new every day.

If, like me, you have decided academia isn’t for you, my advice is not to feel stigmatised for wanting to change career. Be true to yourself; academia isn’t for everyone and that’s ok – there is a big wide world out there!

I would highly recommend a job in MedComms if you are passionate about science and you’re looking for a challenging career with great opportunities for progression.
People in the job – in their own words

**Sarah Sabir**  
Medical Writer  
Oxford PharmaGenesis

Just over 18 months now since the start of my adventures into the world of MedComms, I can honestly say that switching my pipette for a laptop was one of the best and most rewarding decisions of my career so far! Don’t get me wrong, I enjoyed working as a scientist – from designing experiments, discovering novel interactions and imaging cells in action, right through to sharing my data with fellow scientists at congresses – but while doing my postdoc at the University of Leeds, it became apparent that the path ahead was unclear. So after seeing many postdocs going from contract to contract and principal investigators struggling to secure funding, I started looking for other opportunities.

I wasn’t aware of MedComms until I attended the ‘Introduction to MedComms’ event organised by Peter Llewellyn, during which I realised that this was the opportunity I had been looking for. After a couple of interviews, I secured a position as an associate medical writer at Oxford PharmaGenesis. Leaving academia behind was daunting, but I was pleasantly overwhelmed by the support and friendliness of the people working at Oxford PharmaGenesis. From day one, I was involved in live projects, and during my second week, I started helping with the preparation of a pitch deck to win new business. You’ve probably heard that no 2 days are the same in MedComms, and they really aren’t! Since starting here, I have been working on a wide range of deliverables, including manuscripts, posters, abstracts and slide decks, but also advisory board reports, congress reports and even podcasts! Just today, I put the finishing touches on a slide deck for a pitch that we will be presenting tomorrow.

As well as developing scientific communications, I also work on the Open Pharma team. Open Pharma is a not-for-profit project run by Oxford PharmaGenesis; it brings together pharma, publishers, academics, regulators, patients and societies to advance the current scientific publishing model and to ensure that research is published in an accessible, transparent, timely and discoverable manner. Through Open Pharma, I have become more confident in my ability to talk with clients, have been able to conduct my own research and present it at a congress, and have even contributed to the development of a position statement that ended up being covered by *The Telegraph*.

Overall, working in MedComms has meant that my thirst for knowledge is continuously being satisfied – not only in the scientific sense but also now from a business perspective. I thrive on the challenges each day brings and particularly enjoy developing materials that convey the latest research knowing that, one day, they will benefit patients. Working at Oxford PharmaGenesis has been a fantastic experience – I have been provided with invaluable support and training, opportunities to develop in my role and a wide variety of work, and have also really felt that my opinion is highly valued.

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Moon A. *From academic to medical writer.* March 2020.  
For more information about careers in MedComms, see www.FirstMedCommsJob.com
People in the job – in their own words

Lizzie Sandham
Trainee Medical Writer
Highfield

As a recently hired trainee medical writer, my journey into MedComms has only just begun, but so far it has been extremely rewarding and I am very satisfied with my decision to pursue this career!

I fell into academia as it seemed like the inevitable next step after enjoying my undergraduate degree and lab projects in biological natural sciences. However, less than 2 years into my PhD in embryology at Oxford University, the monotony of daily lab life, frustration of failed experiments and career instability drove me to start searching for other opportunities.

I went to a science careers day and quickly began ruling out options. I didn’t want to remain in lab-based work, so that eliminated pharmaceutical research and development, and although the salary was tempting, I felt no excitement at the prospect of working in scientific consulting or patent law. Publishing held some interest, but upon hearing a presentation on MedComms I immediately knew that medical writing was the career path for me. The description of a medical writer as someone who enjoys science, writing and researching/learning about new clinical topics seemed to fit me perfectly.

I started seeking out opportunities to improve my writing and communication skills. I wrote articles on a variety of topics for scientific student magazines and attended FirstMedCommsJob careers events/workshops. What I really wanted, however, was a taste of working in the MedComms industry itself, and a little research led me to Highfield and its 6-month internship opportunity. This stood out as an ideal chance to explore working in MedComms in a flourishing and friendly agency.

After a successful interview, I joined Highfield as an intern in October 2019 and officially took my first few steps on the MedComms career path. I have received a huge amount of support from everyone at Highfield and have worked on live projects from day one. Even as an intern, my work has been incredibly varied and I’ve been fortunate enough to attend client meetings and an international advisory board, which were invaluable experiences.

So far, my projects have included publications, slide decks, training materials and educational platforms across a range of scientific topics. I receive training, guidance and feedback from a great team of medical writers, who have helped me navigate the steep learning curve, and build my skills and confidence. I love the fast-paced work and the rewarding challenge of assimilating new information quickly. Gaining specialised knowledge of therapy areas and treatment options, and applying this to deliver high-quality projects to clients, is extremely fulfilling. I feel I am at the cutting edge of science and making a meaningful difference by working with leading scientific experts and pharmaceutical companies to help improve patients’ lives.

I was offered a permanent position as a trainee medical writer at Highfield in February 2020 and readily accepted – I am excited to challenge myself, develop my skills further and continue down the medical writing career path in this friendly, supportive agency!
People in the job – in their own words

Katharina Schleicher
Medical Writer
Lucid Group

I love science! There is something beautiful in strategically designing experiments with clearly defined outcomes to test a new hypothesis. It’s exhilarating to look down a microscope and actually see cells dividing, or a cardiomyocyte beating. It’s like watching a narrative unfurl before your eyes. During my time as a postdoc at the University of Oxford, I realised this was really what I enjoyed the most: finding the scientific story and then telling it in a compelling and accessible manner. I knew that I wanted to move away from the bench, and when I first learned about MedComms during a networking event at Oxford, I was intrigued.

Two years into my postdoc, I hung up the lab coat, moved to London and joined the Lucid Futures graduate programme, a competitive 1-year training programme that combines new-to-industry coaching sessions with on-the-job training. I joined knowing I would get to do more of what I love – co-developing scientifically sound narratives around clinical data – while working within a team who share the ultimate vision of creating resources that lead to better outcomes for patients with life-limiting diseases. What I did not know was that giving up a well-known career path, and the knowledge and credibility that I had worked so hard for as a scientist, would give way to opportunities for career development and skills acquisition in both writing and project management that I wasn’t even aware existed.

At Lucid, we believe that good things will come from taking the road less travelled and stepping outside of your comfort zone. My experience as a scientist was not wasted here. In fact, it was taken to the next level. I discovered my appreciation for outcomes-driven projects and my love of working as part of a high-performing team. My ability to quickly understand new scientific content and comfortably present it to diverse audiences was an asset that propelled me to progress from graduate to associate medical writer and then medical writer within 2 years of joining the company. And I was learning new things every step of the way:

• How does a company work?
• How do you make sure a project is delivered on time and to budget?
• What kind of data should be communicated at each step of a medicine’s life cycle?
• What information are different stakeholders in the healthcare system going to be most interested in?
• How can you best add value to your clients, to healthcare professionals and to patients?

If you find these questions as interesting as I did, enjoy writing and science, and want to make a difference to patients’ lives, medical writing is a great place to start your MedComms career.

Moon A. From academic to medical writer. March 2020.
For more information about careers in MedComms, see www.FirstMedCommsJob.com
Chris Traylen

Associate Medical Writer
Envision Pharma Group

I completed a PhD in biochemistry from the University of Sussex in 2015, on Epstein–Barr virus biology. I thoroughly enjoyed my experience in research, working for my supervisor, and being given the opportunity to conduct my own work and travel to conferences to present my results.

I subsequently moved into postdoc research positions, but faced with limited career development opportunities in academia, I knew it was important for my own development to move away from year-to-year contract work in an unstable environment and start a more stable career.

I moved into a permanent research position working with the UK Department of Health, in which I contributed to a World Health Organisation project. This did tick many of the boxes that I was looking for in lab work. I had a great supervisor and colleagues, plus an opportunity to start my own gene therapy project. The document and report writing involved in both of my projects kept me up to date with – and helped me to understand – the science behind current medical research. During this time, I became aware that there were people with similar scientific backgrounds who presented and wrote this type of material as their job! So, I decided to secure my first role in MedComms.

As an associate medical writer, I am currently focused on writing up clinical trial data in the form of manuscripts for publication, and abstracts and posters for scientific meetings. This involves extracting the key information from clinical study reports and data tables, then communicating this information in a logical and well-presented format. The work also includes managing multiple projects and meeting numerous deadlines simultaneously. It is exciting to be aware of the potential for growth within this role.

I have found working in a MedComms company much more collaborative than research. Communication between team members is key to keeping multiple projects moving fluently, and working for an international company requires regular communication with my colleagues in North America. As a writer at Envision Pharma Group, I work closely with other team members who provide editorial and creative support, as well as project and account management.

MedComms is a fast-paced environment, with pharmaceutical companies requiring that their data are released to the public and healthcare audience promptly and to a high ethical standard. There is always something new to learn as the medical field is constantly evolving. You are at the forefront of biomedical research, and if you enjoy the combination of science and writing – then I would highly recommend a job in MedComms!
Let’s get you started

We’re here to help you learn about careers in MedComms and then, if you decide it’s of interest, to help you get your first job!

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I work in MedComms...

“I work in MedComms because it allows me to contribute to the development of new medicines for patients, and be up to date with the science, without having to do lab work anymore!”

Kerry Acheson, Editorial Director at Prime Global

“I work in MedComms because it provides challenges every day. Communicating complex ideas in a way that is engaging and innovative is often tough but, when it comes together, is always rewarding.”

Richard Anderson, Head of Creative Content at Synergy Vision

“I work in MedComms because it’s interesting and challenging to work at the forefront of clinical science, and to employ both scientific and creative mindsets in unison. No 2 days are the same, and the job definitely keeps you on your toes, but it’s really rewarding to see the results of the teams’ hard work and the positive impact it has on patients’ lives.”

Lizzy Andrew, Scientific Director at Ashfield Healthcare Communications

“I work in MedComms because it’s a challenging, fast-paced environment that allows you to get involved in a variety of therapy areas. It also provides great opportunities for career progression.”

Lisa Auker, Editorial Project Lead at Fishawack Health

“ar in MedComms because no 2 days are the same, and I get the chance to learn something new every day, talk to leading experts in key therapeutic areas and feel that I am doing my little to help patients’ lives.”

Ugo Battaglia, Senior Medical Writer at Lucid Group

“I work in MedComms because I am passionate about science, medicine and health, and wanted a career that could have a real impact on patients’ lives. Having the opportunity to work with intelligent and interesting people on cutting-edge research is both exciting and rewarding, and it means that I am continuously learning about new therapy areas and discoveries. Combine this with a dynamic and challenging working environment, a variety of project types and an excellent team spirit, and I have no doubt that this is the right career for me!”

Meghan Betts, Senior Medical Writer at Fishawack Health

“I work in MedComms because I enjoy the variety of challenges the job offers and because I get to work with incredibly talented and intelligent people every day!”

Dan Binks, Scientific Team Leader at CMC Connect

“I work in MedComms because I enjoy learning and writing about the latest medical innovations.”

Sharmin Bovill, Senior Medical Writer at Ashfield Healthcare Communications

“I work in MedComms because it provides me with the opportunity to work on projects in a wide variety of therapy areas, and to continue making a difference to patients without having to be at the ‘coalface’!”

Suzanne Brunt, Medical Writer at Porterhouse Medical

“I work in MedComms because I get to be at the forefront of the latest therapeutic innovations, while working in a fast-paced and dynamic environment with an amazing team!”

Sandra Callagy, Senior Medical Writer at Helios Medical Communications

“I work in MedComms because it allows me to apply my scientific background while still working with other people on a regular basis. One of the most surprising things has been how much of the world I’ve seen since I’ve started – I still can’t believe that I’ve been to Argentina! Plus, I haven’t had the disappointment of a failed experiment in years!”

Ben Castle, Medical Writer at Ashfield Healthcare Communications

“I work in MedComms because each day provides a new opportunity to have a positive impact on patients’ lives.”

Erica Cave, Senior Medical Writer at Porterhouse Medical

“I work in MedComms because of the challenging, fast-paced and varied nature of the job. It has already allowed me to get involved with multiple therapy areas and project types, from clinical trial manuscripts for oncology to onsite conference coverage for a rare disease. Working in MedComms, you never quite know what to expect when you walk into the office each morning – every day is different!”

Emma Conran, Senior Medical Writer at Porterhouse Medical

“I work in MedComms because it offers me so much variety with a different challenge every day! The scientific director role enables me to use many different skillsets: interpretation of data, planning for and running dynamic educational meetings, training up-and-coming writers and strategic consultancy are all in a day’s work. I feel privileged to be surrounded by fantastically motivated and talented teams who make coming to work a pleasure!”

Keri Davies, Scientific Director at Ashfield Healthcare Communications

For details of careers events, plus much more, visit: www.FirstMedCommsJob.com
People in the job – in their own words

“I work in MedComms because it gives me the opportunity to write materials that ultimately will be used to improve patients’ lives. I find it extremely stimulating to be in contact with eminent scientists who are at the forefront of medical research. Working in MedComms is an excellent opportunity to keep abreast of multiple therapy areas, ensuring a lot of variation daily.”

Thierry Deltheil, Senior Medical Writer at Prime Global

“I work in MedComms because I like to apply my creativity to developing novel solutions to my clients’ challenges.”

Richard Dobson, Scientific Director at Adelphi Communications

“I work in MedComms because I believe that the clear and accurate communication of science and clinical research has a real-world impact on the quality of life of patients. On top of that, I learn something new every day and have the privilege of working with a diverse, like-minded team!”

Ciara Duffy, Associate Medical Writer at Envision Pharma Group

“I work in MedComms because I wanted to carry on learning about many different subjects! The role of an academic is to be an absolute expert in a highly specific field, but I enjoy hearing about innovations from across the scientific world. One day I might be learning about breakthroughs in oncology and the next day helping to promote sexual health awareness. It’s nice to keep things fresh!”

Emma Eden, Medical Writer at Synergy Vision

“I work in MedComms because the services that our clients require demand a surprising amount of creativity. Having a background in the humanities, rather than the sciences, hasn’t held me back in my role as an editorial assistant. My expertise allows our busy medical writers to do what they do best – focus on the science – while I ensure that their writing is accurate, clear and consistent.”

Matthew Eland, Editorial Assistant at Alpharmax Healthcare Communications

“I work in MedComms because I work in the forefront of science and research across multiple therapy areas. I love the variety of work that we are involved in and that our clients consider us an extension of their own company, relying on our expertise and advice where relevant.”

Sarah El-Sheikh, Senior Medical Writer at Helios Medical Communications

“I work in MedComms because it provides me with the perfect opportunity to apply my knowledge of science with my passion for writing. Every day presents unique and interesting challenges, and I am always learning something new.”

Jake Evans, Associate Medical Writer at Envision Pharma Group

“I work in MedComms because I love staying on top of the current trends in medicine and enjoy helping others to communicate their scientific messages. I also find the combination between science and business highly rewarding and there are countless opportunities for professional development and career progression.”

Tony Ferrar, Medical Writer at Porterhouse Medical

“I work in MedComms because every day brings a new challenge! I get to apply my scientific knowledge across a variety of project types and it is very rewarding seeing a project through to completion. I get to work with some extremely talented people and really enjoy being part of such a fantastic team.”

Rebecca Furmston, Scientific Team Leader at CMC Affinity

“I work in MedComms because it allows me to travel the world, visiting exciting places and meeting interesting new people, all the while knowing the work I do makes a difference to the lives of patients everywhere. It challenges me and pushes me to be the best version of myself at all times.”

Alyssa Hargrove, Medical Writer at Ashfield Healthcare Communications

“I work in MedComms because it provides me with the perfect opportunity to do the things I enjoyed most about my PhD: writing and talking about science. Continuing in academia wasn’t for me, but this job provides me with exposure to new and interesting science without the many drawbacks of working in a lab environment.”

Joe Hodgson, Medical Writer at Adelphi Communications

“I work in MedComms because it provides the opportunity to continue making a difference to patients without being in the lab. Every day presents a new challenge and there is always something new to learn.”

Amy Horne, Medical Writer at Caudex

“I work in MedComms because I enjoy applying my scientific knowledge, learning new therapy areas and being part of a team who succeed in helping clients achieve their goals.”

Matthew Howes, Associate Medical Writer at Adelphi Communications

“I work in MedComms because I appreciate the diversity of content we are exposed to and the constant learning involved in my work.”

Victoria Huber, Medical Writer at Ashfield Healthcare Communications

For details of careers events, plus much more, visit: www.FirstMedCommsJob.com
I work in MedComms...

Edward Johnson, Medical Writer at Alpharmaxim Healthcare Communications

“I work in MedComms because I get to observe and learn about the very latest in medical innovation and commercial strategy for treatments that genuinely change lives. To be involved in so many different therapeutic areas is a luxury!”

Jane Juif, Medical Writer at Lucid Group

“I work in MedComms because it allows me to combine my love of science with a bit more creativity. I love knowing that the projects we deliver can have real, tangible results and improve outcomes for so many patients.”

Grant Kirkpatrick, Medical Writer at Helios Medical Communications

“I work in MedComms because it provides the perfect marriage between scientific research and creative content production. I have been fortunate enough to work on a number of exciting projects across a range of different therapy areas, and I relish the constant evolution within my job role. It is refreshing to work in a sector where no 2 days are ever the same!”

Martina Klinger-Sikora, Medical Writer at inScience Communications

“I work in MedComms because it allows me to apply my professional expertise as a pharmacist to a more creative, dynamic role, while still working to improve the lives of patients. I love the satisfaction of completing a project to an excellent standard, as part of an amazing team!”

Lucy Liveston, Associate Medical Writer at Porterhouse Medical

“I work in MedComms because it allows me to remain engaged with active research whilst working on a diverse range of projects. The collaborative atmosphere also makes it a great field to work in.”

Ella Lineham, Associate Medical Writer at Envision Pharma Group

“I work in MedComms because it allows me to combine my love of science with a bit more creativity. I love knowing that the projects we deliver can have real, tangible results and improve outcomes for so many patients.”

Chloe Malloy, Editorial Manager at Prime Global

“I work in MedComms because following a stint in academia, I wanted to find a role where I had greater engagement with people, could help communicate the latest scientific data and, most importantly, didn’t have to do the bench work myself!”

Sam Mason, Medical Writer at Helios Medical Communications

“I work in MedComms because I love to write and I have a passion for science. I became an associate medical writer after finishing my PhD and have never looked back. Every day is different and I have had the opportunity to work on a variety of therapy areas and projects, each with their own challenges. MedComms is a fast-paced environment and I get to work with a wide range of people, both clients and colleagues. There are also great opportunities for travel and career progression. I would highly recommend a career in MedComms.”

Gemma McGregor, Medical Writer at CMC Affinity

“I work in MedComms because I find it truly stimulating, I’m fascinated by science and all things medical, love creating a story for our clients and enjoy working with like-minded people – this is my ideal job!”

Catrina Milgate, Director, Editorial and Scientific Services at Alpharmaxim Healthcare Communications

“I work in MedComms because it is a fast-paced, exciting and challenging career that combines scientific expertise with creativity. It is really satisfying to collaborate with experts and work on translating the latest scientific innovations into deliverables for different audiences.”

Nicola Morgan, Senior Medical Writer at Caudex

“I work in MedComms because it’s the perfect combination of science and creativity! It allows me to learn, talk and think about science every day, and think creatively about how best to communicate scientific concepts.”

Bonnie Nicholson, Medical Writer at Ashfield Healthcare Communications

“I work in MedComms because I am constantly discovering new things – whether related to a disease, a drug or an innovative technique that encourages learning. The fact that I get to work alongside a fantastic and dedicated team while doing so is an added bonus!”

Rebecca Phillips, Medical Editor and Writer at Darwin Healthcare Communications

“I work in MedComms because I enjoy using my scientific background and working as part of team to deliver a range of interesting projects in different therapy areas.”

Rachael Powis, Associate Medical Writer at Adelphi Communications

For details of careers events, plus much more, visit: www.FirstMedCommsJob.com
People in the job – in their own words

Rachel Price, Senior Medical Writer at Darwin Healthcare Communications

“I work in MedComms because I love learning about complicated science and turning it into something creative and comprehensible. It is a privilege to work at the forefront of medical innovation alongside healthcare professionals and the pharmaceutical industry, and with every project I feel that I am impacting patients’ lives for the better.”

Lindsay Queen, Principal Medical Writer at Darwin Healthcare Communications

“I work in MedComms because every single day brings a new challenge and a new nugget of wisdom. I am constantly developing new skills, expanding my personal horizons, and learning from the wonderful people I work with. Inspired by words, driven by science, continuously rewarded.”

Emily Ruban-Fell, Medical Writer at Ashfield Healthcare Communications

“I work in MedComms because it exposes me to almost every aspect of numerous and ever-evolving therapeutic areas, thereby satisfying my scientific curiosity.”

Alistair Shearer, Associate Medical Editor at CMC Connect

“I work in MedComms because my job offers the opportunity to work in all kinds of new and exciting treatment areas. I enjoy learning about what really makes a difference to patients, and as a writer I can help to make a difference in the real world. My colleagues are awesome to work with, and no 2 days are the same!”

Hazel Shepherd, Medical Writer at Ogilvy Health

“I work in MedComms because effectively I’m getting paid for my natural tendency to be pernickety about tiny details.”

Elke Sims, Senior Editor at Prime Global

“I work in MedComms because I love science and hate lab work! It’s great to work across a range of therapy areas on all sorts of different projects – there’s always something new to learn!”

Frances Smith, Senior Medical Writer at 2TheNth

“I work in MedComms because it allows me to stay on the cutting edge of multiple therapy areas, whilst allowing me to get involved with the business development, account management and creative sides of scientific communication. It’s a great way for me to stay engaged in science and medicine without the lab work, and is a career that exposes me to a wide variety of skills, with good opportunities for progression.”

Alex Stainer, Medical Writer at Porterhouse Medical

“I work in MedComms because it is a fast-paced, intellectually stimulating and engaging environment. In my job, no 2 days are the same! I love working with my team to create a large variety of high-quality content aimed at different audiences. It is very rewarding to be able to use my creativity, scientific expertise and interpersonal skills to, ultimately, help improve the lives of patients around the world.”

Laura Vergoz, Medical Writer at Ashfield Healthcare Communications

“I work in MedComms because it is a challenging yet rewarding job where I am given the opportunity to constantly learn and be at the forefront of scientific development.”

Joseph Ward, Associate Medical Writer at inScience Communications

“I work in MedComms because it allows me to totally immerse myself in cutting-edge data and present them in a patient-relevant way. I know the work I do has a real impact!”

Sandra Whitelaw, Principal Medical Writer at Alpharmaxim Healthcare Communications

“I work in MedComms because it allows me to draw upon elements of my previous roles in the pharmaceutical industry and community pharmacy, whilst still learning an amazing amount every single day!”

Nana Whitlock, Medical Writer at Ashfield Healthcare Communications

“I work in MedComms because science is most useful and interesting when anyone can understand it.”

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“I work in MedComms because it has enabled me to use my years of clinical experience as a doctor to set up a medical advisory group that helps benefit clients by providing unique insights into what makes both healthcare professionals and patients tick from an ‘insider’s’ perspective.”

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