From academic to medical writer

A guide to getting started in medical communications

Written by Dr Annick Moon
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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 2019 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 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

Contents

• Introduction 4
• The pharmaceutical industry 5
• What is MedComms? 7
• MedComms agencies 8
• So you want to be a medical writer... 11
• Further information 15
• People in the job – in their own words 16
• Directory – MedComms 30
• Directory – Careers support 42
• Directory – Training 43

Moon A. From academic to medical writer. March 2019.
For more information about careers in MedComms, see www.FirstMedCommsJob.com
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
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.

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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 online 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.
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.

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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.

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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:

Likes science × likes writing = 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.
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.

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<th>Skill</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Doctoral thesis, peer-reviewed manuscripts, slide presentations, conference posters/abstracts, grant applications</td>
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<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>
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<tr>
<td>Project leading and mentoring</td>
<td>Mentoring project students, teaching/demonstrating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Liaising with colleagues and collaborating with other research groups</td>
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<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>
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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 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.
Further information

Useful books

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

Guidelines for Reporting Health Research:
David Moher (Editor), Douglas Altman (Editor),
Kenneth Schulz (Editor), Iveta Simera (Editor),
Available from www.wiley.com
ISBN-13 9780470670446

How to Publish in Biomedicine: 500 Tips for Success
Third Edition.
John Dixon, Louise Alder, Jane Fraser,
Available from www.crcpress.com
ISBN-13 9781785230103

Careers support

FirstMedCommsJob –
www.firstmedcommsjob.com

NextMedCommsJob –
www.nextmedcommsjob.com

Professional bodies

Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry –
www.abpi.org.uk

European Medical Writers
Association – www.emwa.org

Healthcare Communications
Association – www.hca-uk.org

International Society for Medical Publication Professionals –
www.ismpp.org

Society for Editors and Proofreaders –
www.sfep.org.uk

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

Answers

Over a median follow-up of 8.4 years, 64 patients (9.7%) experienced disease recurrence.

Moon A. From academic to medical writer. March 2019.
For more information about careers in MedComms, see www.FirstMedCommsJob.com
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 3 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! My advice would be to search for junior or associate medical writer positions, which often don’t require a PhD or prior experience. If you are enthusiastic and open to opportunities, you will soon progress to become a medical writer and beyond!
Katherine Badger
Senior Scientific Advisor
Highfield

A decade ago when finishing my PhD I’d not heard of MedComms, so how did I end up choosing it as a career?

Post-graduate life at the University of Cambridge was rewarding; beyond my PhD, I published two papers, was involved in a collaboration with a leading group in America and met some life-long friends. However, I also spent the inevitable time being frustrated when my experiments stopped working and at the end of 4 years I was in two minds – should I continue in academia or look towards a different career? At the time I decided to accept a clinical research fellowship, but within a year I knew it was time for a change.

After investigating the available options, I moved into journal publishing – first as an intern and then as an associate and senior editor for the Nature Research journals. I was surrounded by people with a strong interest in scientific research but could focus on writing research highlights, editing articles and meeting with leading academics at congresses.

Initially, I thought that I had found my ideal career, but over time I wanted a role that was more dynamic and fast paced. Then, a chance discussion over coffee resulted in my project managing the development of two posters, and I loved the change and freedom from traditional print articles. After reading an older version of this guide online, I focused on MedComms and wondered if it could offer the variety and challenge I was looking for. And, so far (6 years later), the answer is yes!

I’ve worked for three different agencies and have progressed from project manager, senior medical writer and scientific team leader to senior scientific advisor. At each agency I’ve been lucky enough to work with great teams and inspirational people who have shown me how rewarding this career can be. I’ve also got the variety I was looking for! I’ve developed the whole spectrum of medical materials (from abstracts to apps to scientific messaging…), delivered meetings from advisory boards to standalone meetings with hundreds of attendees, overseen extensive medical communication programmes as well as mentored new writers. All the time, I’m amassing expertise in particular therapy areas that is constantly being applied to new content, along with regularly meeting with clients and leading experts. Of course, it comes with its own demands of some tight deadlines and urgent requests – with a few late nights along the way – but it definitely feels like the right choice.

I’m only a couple of months into my new role at Highfield but I’ve received a great welcome and already feel part of the supportive and friendly team here. I was hands-on straightaway, jumping into content development for meetings and materials for the year ahead, with a view to becoming increasingly involved in the strategic planning for the account. Having the opportunity to work alongside people from all positions within the agency is a great benefit and I’m excited to see what the next 10 years have in store!
Anna Bakewell
Medical Writer
7.4, an AMICULUM agency

Sixteen months in, and I am very happy with my decision to pursue a career as a medical writer at 7.4. The diversity of project types, colleagues, clients and meeting locations makes my job interesting on a daily basis, and one that I am excited to tell other people about.

I remember approaching my A-level choices and experiencing career-decision panic for the first time. I enjoyed biology but didn’t want to be a doctor or a vet. In truth, my favourite classes were drama and textiles, but I had no intention of becoming an actor or fashion designer.

While browsing the internet for inspiration, I stumbled upon MedComms, described as ideal for individuals who are passionate about science and have creative flair. The more I read, the more MedComms seemed to be the perfect career for me, and my impressions were soon confirmed when I attended an ‘Introduction to MedComms’ day in Oxford. Meeting so many like-minded people who had found their niche in medical writing left me skipping back to Cardiff, determined to make it happen.

With 18 months until thesis submission, I sought any opportunity to develop my writing and communication skills. I took a great deal of pleasure in developing impactful presentations and thinking of visually interesting ways to present my data, so decided I was best suited to an agency that would encourage me to continue developing these skills.

I returned to Oxford the following year to attend a 7.4 Open Day. This gave me a fantastic insight into the ethos of the company, and what it might be like to work here. I was excited by the variety of work on offer and, most importantly, felt that I was the right fit for this agency. Luckily, the feeling was mutual, and I was offered a medical writing position, with flexibility to suggest a start date after the completion of my PhD.

I have had a very busy first year as a medical writer! The excellent training and support here have rapidly built up my confidence. I started working on client projects from day one, including advisory board meetings, symposia and training materials for both healthcare professionals and pharmaceutical teams. I have been surprised to find that a significant proportion of my work is not actual writing. As a ‘writer’, verbal communication is a large part of my job, including regular calls with clients, and hosting briefings with speakers, both in person and virtually.

I recently presented my journey into MedComms at the same event where I was first introduced to this career, 3 years ago. Medical writing offers me the perfect balance of scientific challenge and space to express my creativity, and I am excited to spread the word so that others may also find their niche in MedComms.
Rob Berkeley

Medical Writer
Envision Pharma Group

It can seem that the further you go down the academic path, doors to career opportunities become ever more limited. However, this doesn’t have to be so – it’s just a case of knowing where to look.

While doing a PhD is not essential to becoming a medical writer, I do not regret it for a second. A PhD not only provides a valuable footing for research and presentation skills, but also allows you time to discover the sector – something that only happened halfway into my PhD in oncology. Like many, I had embraced the arduous elements of medical research, so it came as a relief to discover an industry that offers both job security and an opportunity to help get the best therapies to the right patients.

The annual FirstMedCommsJob careers event in Manchester confirmed that my skill set could be recognised, as it led to writing tests and interviews with various agencies. I would suggest meeting as many as you can – agencies do differ in the projects they conduct and the roles they offer. For me, a writing role within medical affairs at Envision Pharma Group was an instant fit, so I took on the role as soon as I could. I was even given the chance to travel to an international congress in my first week on the job.

Now 18 months into my role at Envision, I work with pharmaceutical companies to develop their medical strategy, educate their teams, communicate with patients and physicians, and help bring therapies to market. Forget repeating that assay for the fifth time – medical affairs is an entirely different prospect. You will typically work within a highly collaborative team and have the opportunity to find your own niche – and often get involved in projects outside your usual therapy area (and comfort zone!).

Emerging from academia, the need to juggle a number of diverse projects can feel intimidating. In the right agency, this demand can be empowering – cultivating that hidden creative streak or editorial eye. Thus far, I have been fortunate enough to develop and attend meetings across Europe, often with timescales that might be described as ‘exciting’. Hosting a meeting of expert oncologists is the perfect antidote to any concerns about leaving medicine’s cutting edge. Even other projects, such as slide decks showcasing the latest practice-changing data for a specific disease, give medical affairs a dynamism that makes work motivating from day-to-day.

Like other medical writers I have spoken to, I have had no second thoughts about my transition. Many industry sectors promise to offer a rewarding and balanced career – with a great bunch of people – but I can’t think of another that achieves this as well as medical writing. If you are still wavering at the MedComms door, do not hesitate – it might be the best choice you’ll make.
Simran Grewal

Medical Writer
Helios Medical Communications

After completing my PhD in the field of magnetic resonance imaging of brain tumours in children, I started work as a post-doctoral research fellow at the University of Birmingham. I then got married and relocated from Birmingham to Manchester, but continued to work in Birmingham with a long daily commute! After working for 6 years as a researcher, I felt very comfortable in my career but decided that I wanted to challenge myself in a new environment and with a new job role. As well as aspiring to learn new skills, I was keen to maintain and further develop the valuable skills I had learnt as a researcher. In addition, I wanted a role where I could continue to use my in-depth understanding of oncology.

Following a discussion with my supervisor and other research team members, I explored alternative professions online, where I stumbled upon the MedComms industry. I soon learnt that Manchester and Cheshire (alongside London and Oxford) were hubs for MedComms agencies, but I had no idea what the industry entailed. It had never been mentioned at university or at the careers events I had attended. Despite some of the job descriptions sounding ideal for me, I was nervous about moving into a completely new industry. After further research, I made the decision to travel to London to attend a FirstMedCommsJob careers event. This gave me the opportunity to find out more about MedComms, meet representatives from a range of agencies and consider whether the industry would be the right fit for me. Having spoken with several agency staff across a range of job roles at this event, I decided to apply for associate medical writer positions.

After successfully completing a writing test and interview, I joined Helios Medical Communications as an associate medical writer in April 2016. I was soon involved in an array of different projects, with time being focused on developing new skills essential to MedComms and the job role. Having worked at Helios now for nearly 3 years, I can attest that no 2 days are ever the same! As a writer, I work across multiple therapy areas and different types of projects at the same time; for instance, I could be developing a question-and-answer document for an oncology product in the morning and a conference presentation for a neurology product in the afternoon. During my first year of working for Helios, I was lucky enough to support onsite projects in London, Brussels, Chicago and Barcelona, working alongside a highly experienced team.

I was promoted to medical writer in July 2017, where my role progressed from supporting my colleagues with content development to helping brief other writers and assisting with reviewing their work. I have since further broadened my experience by undertaking numerous projects such as advisory boards, symposia, conference coverage, training modules and meeting materials. One of the best parts of my job is that you are continually learning and acquiring new skills. I work alongside a tight-knit team who have many years of experience between them, so there is always so much to learn!

I may not have moved into this industry had I not moved to Manchester, but I have absolutely no regrets and would not change it for anything!
Amy Jackson
Editorial Director
Lucid Group

Growing up I wanted to be a cowgirl – that's the life for me, I thought. Never mind the inconvenient truth that there were few opportunities for cowgirls in Suffolk and I had never ridden a horse. The subsequent years saw the birth and death of many more dreams: the yearning for the open plains of New Mexico gave way to wanting to be an astronomer and then a diplomat (Ferrero Rocher? Why yes please!). Not once did it cross my mind that I wanted to be a medical writer.

And that's because I'd never heard of medical writing. Certainly not as a child, adolescent or student. After leaving university, all I knew was that I wanted to use my whole brain – to have a job that allowed me to combine the arts and the sciences, something that had driven the academic choices I made: an esoteric mix of A-levels, then archaeology and anthropology at Durham and biological anthropology at Cambridge. Nothing pure, nothing specialist, nothing particularly useful, but areas of learning that coalesced into a well-rounded mix of mental stimulation. So, I chose scientific publishing, which ticked the 'well-rounded' box (circle?), and then luckily happened across the allied industry of MedComms.

My first medical writing job was liberating. I was creating content from scratch, rather than copy-editing text supplied by authors. I enjoyed writing, a distinct advantage if you want to be a medical writer, and I didn't feel as uncomfortable as I had anticipated when writing about the previously unfamiliar. You will be amazed at how quickly you feel like an expert in a disease or therapy area: don't think that your studies will limit you. A few weeks of working on an account and you will amaze your friends and family with your knowledge of a particular disease; they are unlikely to be interested, but the point is that you will quickly assimilate new information and learn how to communicate effectively to a range of audiences. To work with experts at the vanguard of healthcare research is a privilege, and to work with clients to create magical programmes is hugely stimulating.

At Lucid, we never forget that our ultimate goal is to transform patients' lives; we usually do it indirectly through medical education, but occasionally we glimpse the real difference we make, through patient testimony. This brings with it a sense of enormous satisfaction – something I did not realise I valued before embarking on a career in MedComms but which I now place as a chief reason for continuing in the profession. That said, my job now is very different from that first medical writer role: you may realise you have a particular talent for people management, generating new business, or understanding and shaping your clients' strategy, each of which can open new avenues of professional development. But you have to start somewhere, and medical writing – if you enjoy writing and science, love learning and want to make a difference to patients' lives – is a great place to start.
Sarah Jackson
Senior Medical Writer
Ashfield Healthcare Communications

I was always one of those people who knew that I had a passion for medical science but never really knew what to do with it. I have had many career aspirations over the years but one career I had never considered was medical writing. My journey into MedComms started at university. At the end of my BSc in biomedical science, I was faced with the daunting task of choosing my next path. In a fortunate turn of events, my dissertation supervisor offered me a fully funded PhD in medical microbiology. During my PhD I thrived off attending congresses and networking, and I thoroughly enjoyed writing posters and delivering presentations. It was at this point that I realised that I didn’t really want to work in a lab.

I went on to become a clinical research scientist at a facility near Wythenshawe Hospital. I spent three rewarding years working with patients and gaining experience of clinical trial processes. However, by the end of my second year in clinical research I had begun to find the role a little monotonous. My sister-in-law had recently started working as a medical writer, and she spoke about her new job so passionately that I was inspired to investigate. At first, I wasn’t sure medical writing would suit me as I imagined being stuck behind a desk in an isolated pod. However, upon further investigation I realised writing seemed to be only one aspect of a very diverse and dynamic role.

My interview with Ashfield was like no other interview I have ever had. They ran a full-day assessment centre that included a writing test and a group activity, followed by formal interviews with multiple agencies. As scary as this sounds it was such a good experience, the people were extremely welcoming and I soon relaxed into the day. I was offered the job a few days later, and I have now worked with Ashfield for nearly 3 years.

So what is it like to work as a medical writer with Ashfield? Well I can honestly say that it is true that no 2 days are ever the same. In my time with Ashfield, I have worked on so many different projects, from standard publications, to educational materials, to expert meetings and symposia. With the fast-paced nature of the job, not only do I find every day interesting and challenging but I have also grown so quickly, gaining experience each day, and being promoted to medical writer, and more recently senior medical writer along the way.

For me, the best thing about working for Ashfield is the people. I have never worked with more hardworking, supportive and encouraging colleagues, many of whom I now call close friends. I have also found that as my career has developed my interests have led me in different directions and Ashfield has nurtured these interests, offering me development opportunities outside of just my daily role. These aspects and many more, such as the flexibility to work from home and work dynamically, make Ashfield a great place to work.

I would recommend a job in MedComms to anyone who is looking for a career that is challenging but highly rewarding.

Moon A. From academic to medical writer. March 2019. For more information about careers in MedComms, see www.FirstMedCommsJob.com
Joe Pickering  
**Medical Writer**  
Mudskipper, an AMICULUM agency

By the end of my PhD, I knew a lot about muscle formation in zebrafish embryos and that I no longer wanted to work as a research scientist in a laboratory. With a desire to work in a more commercially oriented role and with continuing enthusiasm for the biological sciences, I was fortunate enough to be offered the role of a scientific account manager for a small biotechnology company. Despite the many hours sitting on the M1 and M62 in my new company car, I enjoyed the interaction and discussions that I had with many top academics. I developed the ability to quickly grasp an understanding of new therapy areas, write daily meeting reports and manage my time successfully across multiple client accounts – all skills which would stand me in good stead for a career as a medical writer! But I get ahead of myself…

Missing intellectual ownership and teamwork in my role as a scientific account manager and forgetting my previous concerns about the life of a research scientist, I stepped back into the laboratory as a postdoctoral researcher. During 4 years of research, I honed my ability to analyse complex sets of data, and to simplify and explain these data through posters and slide decks as well as five peer-reviewed publications. In my final year in this role, the niggling worry that I had about job security and the reliance upon successful grant applications led me to begin exploring other challenging roles where I could use my scientific knowledge. I got in touch with a friend who had been a medical writer for a few years before becoming the global publications manager for a pharmaceutical company. Hearing about the world of MedComms was like a career awakening! My friend spoke very highly of the agency Mudskipper, having worked with them as a client, and after I had sent a speculative application and attended an interview, I was not disappointed! The Mudskipper team was extremely approachable and I was very impressed with the amount of time that they invested in getting to know me, and in explaining their role and function within the MedComms industry. I was delighted to be offered a position in their Cheshire office.

Writing this now exactly a year to the day since I first joined Mudskipper, I have never felt so secure and certain about my career. One of the key things that I have learnt is that the role of a medical writer is much more varied (and interesting!) than I could have imagined. On a typical day I could be summarizing the efficacy and safety of a novel therapeutic in an educational slide deck, writing a report based on discussions between world-leading oncologists that I was lucky enough to observe (in locations such as Paris, Vienna, Washington, DC and Shanghai), speaking to ‘big pharma’ senior leaders over Skype, editing video footage to highlight key messages, or drafting a primary or review article. I have gained valuable experience in haematology, oncology, dermatology and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and I am soon to initiate a long-term project in the field of endocrinology. It is worth noting that although it is very valuable to have a PhD, it is not a strict requirement to become a medical writer. If you are persistent and resilient in character, are driven by intellectual curiosity, have a good eye for detail, and can adapt and function within a fast-paced team, then this is the career for you!

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The role of a medical writer is much more varied (and interesting!) than I could have imagined

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Moon A. *From academic to medical writer.* March 2019.  
For more information about careers in MedComms, see [www.FirstMedCommsJob.com](http://www.FirstMedCommsJob.com)
Studying for a BSc in neuroscience confirmed my desire to be a scientist and to pursue a career of discovery and innovation. So, I followed the usual trajectory of an MSc (neurosciences in Utrecht, Netherlands), then a PhD (biomedical sciences at Aarhus University, Denmark, and the University of Oxford, UK) and finally a post-doc at the University of Oxford. Although I thoroughly enjoyed life as a researcher, I became increasingly concerned that the impact of the material that I generated was not what I had hoped. This, combined with the limited career development opportunities in academia, made me re-evaluate my goals and ambitions.

My search for a new role led me to medical writing, which, it seemed to me, would utilise my scientific training, satisfy my intellectual curiosity and enable me to fulfil my career aspirations.

I have now been an associate medical writer at Oxford PharmaGenesis for approximately 1 year and there has not been a single day that I have regretted my decision to leave academia and join the company.

I found the switch from an academic institution to Oxford PharmaGenesis to be a very positive experience. I immediately felt valued and respected for the work that I did and for the knowledge that I brought to the table. From the first day, I received real projects to work on, enabling me to develop my skills while working. I am happy to say that I receive all the support and training that I need, as well as the freedom to innovate and to bring my own ideas forward.

There are challenges to medical writing, not least the need to deliver a project to a high standard within a short time frame. It is, however, extremely rewarding to deliver high-quality projects to a happy client. I find it very fulfilling to work in different therapeutic areas on a variety of exciting projects, ranging from traditional scientific publications to training materials and digital communication tools. There is always something to learn, whether it is a new skill or specialised knowledge in a specific therapy area. As an associate medical writer, I feel that I am at the forefront of biomedical research and development, and that my work has an impact and reaches the right audiences.

Looking ahead, it is exciting to contemplate new skills and career development opportunities.
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...

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“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

“You work in MedComms because I enjoy being at 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 allows me to broaden my scientific knowledge across a variety of therapy areas, and it provides the opportunity to work across multiple different project types with some really talented scientific and creative colleagues.”

Michaela Fuchs, Medical Writer at Envision Pharma Group

“I work in MedComms because it allows me to combine my love of science with my passion for writing. The opportunity to work with pharmaceutical companies, healthcare professionals and patients on a daily basis offers a unique set of challenges and opportunities, and is highly rewarding. MedComms is fast-paced, varied and exciting. No 2 days are the same in this job – 4 years in and I am still learning something new every day!”

Hannah Finnigan, Senior Medical Writer at Envision Pharma Group

“I work in MedComms because I was lucky enough to meet the right people at a career expo when I decided to leave academia. They described the industry in a way that made me think ‘oh, that sounds like me’, and made me realise how my existing skill set was well suited to a career as a medical writer.”

Ottilie Gildea, Senior Medical Editor at CMC Affinity

“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!”

Grant Kirkpatrick, Medical Writer at Helios Medical Communication

“I work in MedComms because I enjoy being at the forefront of healthcare providers understanding the breakthroughs in medicine.”

Patrick Hoggard, Vice President of Medical and Scientific Services at Zoetic Science

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“I work in MedComms because I get to work at the cutting-edge of science in a challenging but flexible career that makes sure good science and potentially important discoveries are communicated clearly and accurately.”

Mhairi Macladyen, Associate Medical Writer at CMC Connect

“I work in MedComms because I always wanted to make a contribution to improving healthcare and, as my career went on, I realised this was the best suited role for me to be able to do that. As you become more senior in the industry, not only do you guarantee that you are always working at the cutting edge of healthcare, but you can also have quite a large influence in helping healthcare providers understand the breakthroughs in medicine.”

Sam Mason, Medical Writer at Helios Medical Communications

“I work in MedComms and in my 16 years in MedComms I have found all stages of my career to be extremely rewarding. Each role (from associate medical writer to my current role) has been interesting and has kept me engaged and challenged throughout. The first aspect that I have appreciated is that MedComms has allowed me to use my education and academic experience. I have, and continue to, enjoy working on products and projects at the cutting edge of clinical research that have the potential to alter patient management. Another rewarding aspect of my role is the ability to help others develop, both as a line manager, mentor and experienced scientist. I also really enjoy that I work with some extremely clever people – thoughtleaders, clients and colleagues – who inspire me. Finally, there is an excellent career pathway in MedComms, and excellent employment prospects within healthcare communications; none of which I had in academia.”

Phil Matthews, Portfolio Lead at Envision Pharma Group

“I work in MedComms because it combines my love of science with my love of written language. MedComms is the voice of medical science, and as an editor I help make this voice the best that it can be.”

David Lugmayer, Junior Editor at integrated medhealth communication (imc)

“People in the job – in their own words”

Faye Gould, Scientific Director at Helios Medical Communications

Cassie Hines, Medical Writer at ACUMED
I work in MedComms – in their own words

**Leigh McDonald**, Principal Medical Writer at Lucid Partners, a Lucid Group Company

“I work in MedComms because each day is different and challenging. I love the science, and I appreciate that I get to work with intelligent and driven people – whether that be healthcare professionals, colleagues or clients – on a daily basis.”

**Andrew McDonnell**, Senior Medical Writer at Vivid, a Lucid Group Company

“I work in MedComms because I am constantly educating myself in interesting therapy areas while also contributing towards bettering patients’ lives.”

**Kiran Nandra**, Senior Medical Writer at Leading Edge, a Lucid Group Company

“I work in MedComms because I love being able to learn new things every day – from the clinical data for a revolutionary treatment, to the science behind different disease states, to client strategy. There’s always a new challenge!”

**Zoe Noakes**, Junior Medical Writer at InterComm

“I work in MedComms because I get to apply the skills and knowledge I learnt as a scientist to a wide variety of therapy areas. I love working as part of a team on different types of materials, with the common goal of improving patients’ lives.”

**Lola Parfitt**, Trainee Medical Writer at Caudex

“I work in MedComms because I like the combination of writing and teamwork.”

**Jayna Patel**, Associate Medical Writer at Envision Pharma Group

“I work in MedComms because it is an engaging profession in which I can continue to learn. I enjoy the fast-paced environment and have the opportunity to work on a range of projects which suit my interests.”

**Laura Pearce**, Principal Medical Writer at Fishawack Communications

“I work in MedComms because I love taking data, making sense of it and then working out how best to communicate the results to different audiences, be it healthcare professionals or patients.”

**Rhiannon Roberts**, Associate Medical Writer at Real Science

“I work in MedComms because it’s exciting! After finishing my PhD I felt pigeon-holed and I was disenchanted with the academic system. A friend recommended MedComms and I haven’t looked back. I never thought I’d find a career that combined scientific rigour with creative design, and using the two every day to work on projects that benefit global healthcare is really satisfying.”

**Abigail Robertson**, Medical Writer at GCC

“I work in MedComms because it’s a challenging and rewarding career. Leaving academia was a tough decision, and I’ve never looked back! I get to work at the cutting edge of scientific and clinical research, without running a single western blot.”

**Gemma Shay**, Medical Writer at Envision Pharma Group

“I work in MedComms because communicating facts and findings in the most engaging way is the key to success in science and pharma. Plus, no day is the same as the field is constantly changing. It’s challenging but that’s what makes it rewarding and fun. The lab was just so re-pipette-tive.”

**Arti Sikka**, Associate Medical Writer at Publicis Resolute

“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**, Medical Writer at 2TheNth

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

**Hilary Wong**, Associate Medical Writer at Adelphi Communications

“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, which helps benefit clients by providing unique insights into what makes both healthcare professionals and patients tick from an insider’s perspective.”

**Beth Wynne-Evans**, Medical Writer and Medical Advisor at Porterhouse Medical

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Media Contacts, one of the most respected agencies in healthcare communications recruitment, has been placing medical writers and account handlers in MedComms, healthcare PR and advertising agencies for 20 years, all over the country.

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The European Medical Writers Association (EMWA) is an association committed to representing, supporting and training medical communication professionals. It has more than 1,000 members from over 40 countries in Europe and beyond, representing all sectors of medical writing. Members work in the pharmaceutical, biotech and medical device industries, medical communications agencies, journal publishing, medical translations, and elsewhere. Members are predominantly employed or freelance medical writers, editors or translators. EMWA is a not-for-profit organisation, run by its members for its members.

Why join EMWA?
For its members, EMWA offers
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- Career Day, to bring together prospective medical writers seeking experience with companies willing to offer internships
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EMWA’s main conference takes place in May each year; a shorter meeting is held in November. EMWA conferences provide extensive, cost-effective, professional training in the form of small group workshops, forums for networking and active discussions. During Spring conferences, a one-day Symposium is organised to address a ‘hot topic’. The Symposium blends podium presentations and panel discussions to ensure free flowing dialogue between speakers and panellists and allows ample opportunity for audience questions. In addition, EMWA conferences offer an excellent opportunity to benefit from the experiences of other medical communication professionals. The conferences have a relaxed, friendly atmosphere that is ideal for networking and that enables attendees to meet colleagues at all stages in their careers.

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