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

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Tel: +44 (0) 1865 784390
Web: www.networkpharma.com  email: support@networkpharma.com
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Further copies are available to download directly if you visit www.MedCommsNetworking.com/careersguide.pdf
Printed copies of this guide are also available if you contact the Publisher, Peter Llewellyn: peter@networkpharma.com

Altogether different

During 2017, AMICULUM will be launching its novel learning and development programme, the AMICULUM Curriculum. The initiative will comprise a graduate/postgraduate entry scheme, activities designed to support the training of existing entry-level staff in all of our agencies and promotion of continuing professional development opportunities for experienced employees.

Curriculum will help to maintain AMICULUM's position as the leading independent global medical communications, healthcare learning and consulting business. It will employ a mix of traditional methods and digital technologies and enable team members in the USA, Europe, UK, Middle East, Asia and New Zealand to learn and share new skills. Through enhancing the services that we deliver to our pharmaceutical industry clients and their customers we will help to improve the lives of patients and caregivers.

For more information on Curriculum or the career opportunities that AMICULUM offers to both established and budding healthcare communications professionals, please contact Richard Allcorn (richard.allcorn@amiculum.biz) for a confidential discussion.
Foreword to 2017 edition

Once again we have updated this introduction to medical writing to ensure that the information provided is as up-to-date as possible. We aim to continue this annual exercise and welcome feedback from our readers.

Foreword to 2016 edition

This introduction to medical writing, first published in 2009, provides a useful resource for anyone thinking of a career in medical communications and specifically in MedComms agencies in the UK. It provides excellent support for the careers events that now run regularly in Oxford and elsewhere.

The Medical Sciences Division of the University of Oxford has been collaborating with NetworkPharma since 2007 to run sessions aimed at showcasing career options within MedComms.

Each January, Oxford hosts a one-day introductory session which has proved very popular, not only with Oxford research students and staff, but also nationally with applicants from far afield participating. Intensive workshops held in May each year have been particularly successful in identifying those who would thrive and build a successful career in MedComms. These events include a ‘speed-dating session’, introducing attendees to prospective employers and giving delegates as much insight as possible into life in the range of agencies available.

Both events are run as part of the University of Oxford Medical Sciences Skills Training Programme and are now a firmly embedded feature. One factor that has contributed to the success of our portfolio of careers events has been the combination of enthusiasm and professionalism of the MedComms experts involved, and the Medical Sciences Division is very happy to continue to work in collaboration with NetworkPharma to provide interested individuals with the opportunity to explore this very popular career path.

Jane Rudman
Medical Sciences Skills Training Officer, University of Oxford

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 collaborated with NetworkPharma for several years on a series of careers events.

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

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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
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<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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<td>Phase I</td>
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<td>Phase III</td>
<td>Testing in comparative trials</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase IV</td>
<td>Post-marketing surveillance following the launch of the drug</td>
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**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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<th>Regulatory affairs:</th>
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<td>Materials to support cost-effectiveness messages</td>
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<td>Materials to communicate with the media; issues management</td>
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<th>Advertising and branding:</th>
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<td>Trade press; consumer adverts; sales aids; direct mail; exhibition stand materials</td>
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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 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.
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 management

An account manager/executive 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 age and 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.

For more information about careers in MedComms, see www.FirstMedCommsJob.com
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.
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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<tr>
<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>
</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>
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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 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 0.93, 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, $p = 0.01$) 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.
Further information

Useful books

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

David Moher (Editor), Douglas Altman (Editor),
Kenneth Schulz (Editor), Ivetta Simera (Editor),
Available from www.wiley.com

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

Careers support

FirstMedCommsJob –
www.firstmedcommsjob.com

NextMedCommsJob –
www.nextmedcommsjob.com

Professional bodies


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

PharTimes – www.pharamtimes.com

Pharmaceutical Executive –
www.pharmexec.com

PMLiVE – www.pmlive.com

The Publication Plan –
www.thepublicationplan.com

Answers

For more information about careers in MedComms, see www.FirstMedCommsJob.com
Catherine Bragg
Scientific Director,
Ashfield Healthcare Communications,
part of UDG Healthcare plc

I love my job – I couldn’t imagine doing anything else. No day is the same; I could be supporting authors with developing a paper on a clinical trial, or liaising with consultants to write a slide set to educate physicians on an important disease or I could be at an international conference taking notes on the latest therapeutic intervention. But how did I get here?

I certainly didn’t plan on being in the medical writing profession, but I am really glad that I am! Let me share with you my journey.

I have always loved learning. I initially studied a degree and a PhD in chemistry at Manchester University, and I was subsequently able to secure a fantastic 2-year post-doc in Switzerland in chemistry. Following that I worked in industry as a chemist for 2 years, and then, at the time of my now-husband’s relocation and move to a new job, I decided to look for a new challenge for my career. I wanted to learn new things in science and medicine, to satisfy my hunger for knowledge, and I was fortunate enough to see an article in a newspaper about medical writing and began to research what I would need to do to secure a position as a trainee medical writer.

I was able to get an interview at Ashfield Healthcare Communications and I was determined that I would show the company that I was passionate about science, that I could interpret data and that I was confident that I could articulate my understanding in writing to communicate science to others. I had success! I was determined to work hard and the first year as a trainee was certainly a steep learning curve. The hard work and determination paid off – over the years I was promoted to medical writer, then to senior medical writer and then again to my current role as scientific director.

Eleven years on and I haven’t looked back – except to say that I have had the pleasure to meet some of the most intelligent, driven, articulate and fun people along my journey – friends that I will have for life! The exposure to disease areas has been fascinating, and the variety of work so stimulating, and has included working on: publications, scientific posters, slides, training kits, newsletters, product monographs and sales aids.

Ashfield Healthcare Communications is a truly fantastic place to work – the teamwork, support, knowledge and dedication to the work is second-to-none. The social side is good too – we have just had ‘Pizza Tuesday’, there is bowling next week and ‘Cake Wednesday’, where people take it in turns to bake a cake for everyone to enjoy.

My advice would be that if you love science, medicine and learning, and if you feel that you can express your knowledge in a logical manner via different communication channels, and attention to detail is important to you, then this may also be the job for you!

As for me, I’ve relocated again (with my husband’s job), but this time my job has come with me and I am a home worker. Ashfield Healthcare Communications provided me with remote IT facilities so I get to stay with a company and job that I love! I am happy that I embarked on the journey into medical writing all those years ago.
My first proper job was as a high-school science teacher. I loved breaking down the complicated concepts, packaging the information in a clear and creative format, and then delivering it in a way that captured the children's interests and hearts. I wanted them to pass their exams, but also to love science. Many years later I am doing a similar job – with a different group of people. I still want my audiences to feel informed and, more importantly, to feel engaged. I want them to go out there and make a positive difference to patients.

We have all attended great training sessions and left feeling inspired to change how we operate – only for our good intentions to fade. But if we could truly understand what stops us from altering what we do, and have support and tools to overcome this, then the chances of us making a positive behaviour change would definitely increase. This is particularly important to me. And this is what draws me to Lucid. At Lucid, our vision is to advance medical education by changing clinical behaviour. We want our programmes not only to improve knowledge and skills, but also to address the barriers that prevent healthcare professionals from changing their clinical practice.

Since Lucid started 10 years ago, it has always pushed the boundaries of medical education. Lucid has developed a unique approach – Advance Outcomes (AO) – that is based on academic psychology research, collaboration with a range of experts and our broad experience in the industry. Our 5-step AO process allows us to better understand the clinical behaviour gap and what the barriers to changing healthcare professionals' behaviour are. We can then design and deliver programmes that facilitate this change and so ensure that we are helping to improve patients' care and quality of life.

Making medical education like this happen takes strong leadership and great teamwork, and a culture where people are driven to always do more and do better. I have been privileged to work in great businesses that have given me opportunities to accept new challenges and grow. I have held many different roles over the years, been exposed to a range of projects and numerous therapy areas, and seen the full turn of the product lifecycle. I have collaborated with brilliant people, seen the industry evolve and discovered new ways of working. I have thrived on the diversity and the challenges.

If you think that a career in medical education may be for you, you should find the right agency and give it a go. It is so rewarding. And (given the right audience) it's a great conversation starter at parties.
Catherine Henderson
Medical Writer, Mudskipper

10 things I like about my job:

1. **Experts.** It is exhilarating to be in a room of scientists at the top of their field. It is even better when you find you can keep pace with them, pinpoint what's important and summarise it, gracefully and fast. My own academic research would never have taken me to this level.

2. **Clients.** Our clients are usually in high-powered, demanding jobs and that often makes for interesting personalities: brilliant/cerebral/overbearing/argumentative/quick/funny. We ponder about them and want to impress them with our work; and like lovesick teenagers, we wonder how much they think about us.

3. **Teams.** We are under pressure, we have deadlines, we work with demanding clients on hard stuff. In a good company the positive side effects of this are strong team bonds – and fun.

4. **Being 'out there'.** We go to congresses and meet our clients; we run workshops and have intelligent conversations with experts; we are 'out there' – it is exciting and feels important.

5. **Calm days.** We are not always travelling to meetings; many days are spent immersed on a single, big fat absorbing project – delicious.

6. **Thinking.** I was worried before I became a medical writer that it might not be a very 'intellectual' job – might it just be regurgitating information and correcting spelling? Turns out that you do need to think a lot, and if you have good ideas they will be gobbled up and used fast; this industry is nimble and innovative.

7. **Creativity.** We work with our design team on sleek ‘leave pieces’, or with our e-learning team on cool interactive learning ‘modules’, but that’s just the obvious stuff. As a writer you can be the creative lynchpin for a project even in seemingly mundane places. Can you make a text-laden PowerPoint slide concise and beautiful? Can you transform a dull spreadsheet into a dashing interactive tool?

8. **Writing craft.** I am trying to entice you to read this piece with techniques that make it easier to read because I know you are busy and I am competing with the other people who have also written profiles – I want you to read mine. I am varying the rhythm, keeping the paragraphs short, adding little headings. Writing is a craft – it is elegant and interesting to learn, and highly valued in this industry.

9. **Flexibility.** I have a young child and work 4 days a week. Some colleagues work from home, some former colleagues freelance. These things are very possible when you have been in the job a few years.

10. **Pay.** This is a well-paid job by my reckoning.

As a writer you can be the creative lynchpin for a project even in seemingly mundane places

I have a biological sciences degree from Bristol and a DPhil in microbiology from Oxford. After my DPhil I started my first job in medical communications at Oxford PharmaGenesis. After 4 years, I moved to Mudskipper, where I have been for 7 years. Both of these companies have been super places to work.

Moon A. From academic to medical writer. March 2017. For more information about careers in MedComms, see www.FirstMedCommsJob.com
Adrienn Kis
Senior Medical Writer, highfield:communication

highfield:communication is an independent medical communications agency that has undergone strong and consistent growth over the past 5 years, cementing current client relationships and forging new ones. Resisting the large-agency culture and ensuring sustainable growth enables medical writers to establish strong personal relationships with clients, with whom we have a common goal in mind and can share our experience and knowledge. We have a small, strong editorial team of several medical writers and the editorial director, and work alongside dedicated account handlers and directors. Together we provide comprehensive support across different product teams and ensure that our clients receive excellent work that reflects our competence and high dedication.

Learning new therapy areas and the science behind medications is encouraged at highfield:communication. Working here has given me the opportunity to rapidly expand my knowledge of medical science to become an ‘expert’ in my field and to have a knowledge-base that is highly valued by my colleagues as well as our clients. Other key skills needed by medical writers are an eagerness to learn, good attention to detail, excellent project management and good organisational skills. These are crucial for carrying out day-to-day editorial work, which often involves juggling a wide variety of projects at any one time.

To me, being a medical writer is more rewarding than my previous 17-year career as a bench scientist and medical researcher. I look at my current role as a step forward in my ambition to get the best out of science and medical research, and to provide valued scientific expertise.

I enjoy developing materials – such as content for international symposia, manuscripts, websites and videos – on behalf of our clients, and external scientific and clinical experts, as these help drive discussion and build relationships, and aid communication across the wider scientific and clinical community. As a scientist, the dynamics of being a medical writer – learning and applying scientific and clinical information – are highly rewarding. Particularly when physicians/clinical experts, as well as our clients, acknowledge my support in making a project happen. One of my favourite aspects of being a medical writer is the opportunity to travel to meet clinical experts and attend congresses. Through highfield:communication I have been fortunate enough to travel extensively in Europe, Asia and Latin America. Although the jet-lag and the tiredness that accompanies long trips are tough, especially as you have to be able to function intelligently as soon as the plane has landed, at the end of the day the success of the activities is satisfaction in itself. Building strong relationships with clients and clinical experts through a mixture of projects and hard work is hugely rewarding in the long term and as an experienced medical writer I am part of the core client team.

I would wholly recommend the role of a medical writer for those who have a genuine interest in medical research, are open to learn about new therapy areas and are able to cope with daily re-shuffling of priorities.
Gary Male  
Senior Medical Writer, Oxford PharmaGenesis  

Reaching the end of a PhD can be daunting. I had spent the best part of 10 years studying biochemistry, purifying proteins and praying to the gods of crystallography. My enthusiasm for science had taken me across the world, learning from some of the most talented people in research. Leaving academia seemed an anticlimax after so much hard work, but deep down I knew that I needed a more stable career path and a job that rewarded diligence, creativity and completing projects to a high standard.

What could I possibly do next? As I contemplated this question, I was in the process of writing a manuscript on the results of my PhD. I had really enjoyed talking and writing about my research during my studies; from designing and presenting slides of my experiments to writing my PhD thesis. I knew I had a passion and a flair for communicating science. As I put the finishing touches to my manuscript I realised that I wasn’t missing the lab – not one bit. Moreover, I wanted to keep writing.

It almost seemed too good to be true when I stumbled upon the job description for a trainee medical writer with Oxford PharmaGenesis. To be honest, I didn’t even know what medical writing or medical communications were at the time! Yet the description of what the job would entail and the skills that the position required seemed to align perfectly with me. Here was a role that required a passion for science and a desire to communicate research; a role that required attention to detail and an ability to tailor a variety of communications to a range of audiences. The application process and interview confirmed that this was the role for me.

I have now been at Oxford PharmaGenesis for 18 months. The transition from lab bench to writing desk has been challenging; however, the support and training from my colleagues have been incredible. I have been given the opportunity to work on a very wide range of projects, including writing manuscripts and posters, producing reports on advisory board meetings and developing interactive e-learning modules. There have also been opportunities to travel and meet with clients, lead meetings and provide input on communications strategies, and to see training materials that I have developed being used in workshops.

I am looking forward to embracing the opportunities and challenges ahead; the future looks far less daunting!
Rachel Price
Associate Medical Writer,
Darwin Healthcare Communications

Throughout my school years, I either wanted to be a pop star or a news journalist. Both involved writing and both involved communicating stories to a wider, unforgiving audience. But then, thanks to a quirky chemistry teacher and the idea that one day I could formulate my own nail varnish, I found science. I dropped the idea of an English literature degree and pursued chemistry instead. I loved my degree, though I seemed to be the only person who actually enjoyed writing the lab reports more than the lab class itself. A successful year’s internship at Procter and Gamble gave me confidence that a career based in a lab, particularly with products I could see being used and sold in real life, could work for me, but research and experiment design were never things that enticed me out of bed each morning.

In my final year at university, I attended a careers event that included the usual suspects from the pharmaceutical, petrochemical and household products industries. The only thing to particularly resonate with me there was a lady who spoke about how the solution to enjoying both writing and science without the lab was to be a medical writer. It sounded perfect for me. However, after applying for a few junior-level jobs, it soon became evident that without any experience in working for a medical communications agency, a PhD was not far-off essential. Staying on at university to do a PhD didn’t sound too awful (how naïve), and it would afford me the qualification I needed to get the job I really wanted.

I was raring to start work after 4 years of research in a basement chemistry lab. In the midst of juggling thesis writing and interviewing for medical writing jobs, I was lucky enough to land an associate medical writer role at Darwin Healthcare Communications as my first job post PhD. Irrespective of its weekly free bar and central London location, Darwin soon became a place of work at which I felt excited to be each day.

Five months in, and on a steep learning curve, I’ve already had a plethora of opportunities to get stuck into real medical writing work. To name a few, I’ve helped to deliver multiple slide decks, arrange a congress symposium and win a pitch for new business. I am currently working on a huge range of therapy areas, including (but certainly not limited to) oncology, respiratory diseases, ophthalmology and women’s health – a far cry from my physical sciences research background.

My hugely supportive colleagues at Darwin have made me feel like a valued member of the team, and I couldn’t imagine a better place to kick start a career that finally fits my original brief.
People in the job – in their own words

“I work in MedComms because after graduating I knew I wanted to stay close to the scientific field, but get as far away from the lab as possible! Medical writing was my solution. It has allowed me to further expand my scientific knowledge and keep up to date with new and exciting treatments, all while communicating them in a unique and creative way.”

Maha Ayub, Junior Medical Writer at Havas Lynx

“I work in MedComms because after finishing my PhD I realised that my future in science lays outside the lab. Working as a medical writer has allowed me to move away from the bench but, at the same time, I can be at the forefront of medical science and enjoy a great variety of projects across different therapy areas. I’ve read somewhere that “Medical writing is both a science and an art as it requires an understanding in medical science and an aptitude for writing”. I couldn’t agree more and I feel so fortunate to live it every day.”

Georgia Bakirtzi, Medical Writer at Fishawack Communications

“I work in MedComms because I believe that by communicating sophisticated scientific concepts to medical and patient audiences we empower healthcare professionals to deliver clinical excellence to their patients, and patients to take control of their conditions and live their lives to the full. I have been working in MedComms for more than 10 years, and it never gets dull.”

Natalia Barkalina, Principal Medical Writer at integrated medhealth communication inc

“I work in MedComms so that I am always at the forefront of new therapeutic developments, fuelling my need to always learn and my passion for science. Although it isn’t without its challenges, I enjoy the creativity medical writing brings and that it allows me to combine aspects of my PhD, which I enjoyed the most, with the opportunity to work across a wide variety of different disease areas.”

Ailsa Bennett, Junior Medical Writer at Havas Lynx

“I work in MedComms because it is dynamic, fast-paced and provides endless new challenges!”

Jill Harrison, Director at Bioscript Group

“I work in MedComms because I get paid to continuously learn about subjects I am passionate about – what’s not to like?”

Stefanie Chuah, Editorial Lead (Asia) at AMICULUM

“I work in MedComms because no two days are the same! I love working on a variety of projects, within a fast-paced environment, where I need to use both my scientific expertise and interpersonal skills.”

Lisa Gallacher, Senior Medical Writer at Porterhouse Medical

“I work in MedComms as an intern across both the editorial and account management teams, which is great because it gives me experience of both project management and medical writing. At Porterhouse, they throw you straight into the deep end, but although things seem a little daunting at first, the support network here is amazing. I have already gained a great understanding of how an award-winning medical communications agency operates.”

Elliott Gray, Intern at Porterhouse Medical

“I work in MedComms because after finishing my PhD I realised that my future in science lays outside the lab. Working as a medical writer has allowed me to move away from the bench but, at the same time, I can be at the forefront of medical science and enjoy a great variety of projects across different therapy areas. I’ve read somewhere that “Medical writing is both a science and an art as it requires an understanding in medical science and an aptitude for writing”. I couldn’t agree more and I feel so fortunate to live it every day.”

Catherine Hall-Jones, Associate Writer at NexGen Healthcare Communications

“I work in MedComms because it allows me to use my creativity on a daily basis. Having come from a medical background, I found I can use my existing knowledge whilst I continue to develop new skills. The diversity of tasks means I am constantly learning!”

Neil Harrison, Scientific Projects Leader at Adelphi Communications

“I work in MedComms because I enjoy science and teamwork. Every day I get the opportunity to improve my scientific knowledge, across a broad spectrum of disease areas, and our team works (and plays) together to create a great environment in which to do this.”

Sophie Hill, Associate Medical Writer at Acumed, Ashfield Healthcare Communications

“I work in MedComms because I get to work across a variety of different project types and cutting edge therapies whilst experiencing first-hand the innovative ways that scientific research is presented. As my mother says “variety is the spice of life!”

Tom Hollingworth, Project Co-ordinator at Fishawack Communications

“I work in MedComms following an earlier career in Pharma R&D, because it provides a fulfilling role featuring continued scientific challenge coupled with exposure to an amazingly interesting broad range of disease treatments.”

Kevin Hudson, Associate Medical Writer at 2theNth, Adelphi Group

For details of careers events, plus much more, visit: www.FirstMedCommsJob.com
"I work in MedComms and... my brain hurts! If you want an easy life, don’t start a career in medical writing; if, by contrast, you’re motivated by diverse and interesting scientific, creative and strategic challenges, it might be right up your street. I’ve been in MedComms for over 12 years now and I love the fact that from Day 1 I’ve been learning new things. I can honestly say that my job has got more and more interesting every day as my career has progressed.”

Annette Keith, Scientific Director at Real Science Communications

"I work in MedComms because every day here gives us the opportunity to really challenge ourselves to go beyond what’s expected of us. We strive to deliver high quality work that combines science and creativity, and which will distinguish us while making a tangible difference. It can be an immensely rewarding field to work in.”

Fraser Macleod, Senior Medical Writer at Adelphi Communications

"I work in MedComms because I love learning about the new science and technology that is being developed all the time and because I enjoy working with our clients to come up with interesting ways of presenting and communicating their data and products.”

Catriona Marshall, Editorial Project Leader at Fishawack Communications

"I work in MedComms because I enjoy the variety of work and being able to apply science and creativity together in writing. It’s a very interesting career path to follow!”

Victoria McAneney, Programme Executive at AXON

"I work in MedComms because I value the importance of scientific communication. Relying innovative research in a way that is accessible to the wider healthcare community is something that can really drive peer-to-peer education and stimulate new schools of thinking. This is the aspect of this industry that excites me most.”

James McCary, Editorial Assistant/Junior Medical Writer at AXON

"I work in MedComms and I love that my job allows me to grow as a writer whilst continually developing my knowledge of science and healthcare. It’s amazing to see the projects we work on as a team develop and have a positive impact on the lives of patients.”

Morgan McKenzie, Associate Medical Writer at Zoetic Science, Ashfield Healthcare Communications

"I work in MedComms because it allows me to creatively combine my interest in science and language, meeting the challenge to communicate complex information via multiple channels in a clear and engaging manner. No two days are the same; from participating in face-to-face meetings with clients and experts, to bouncing ideas off colleagues, visualising a complex protocol as an appealing infographic, or decoding preclinical data and presenting them in a well-constructed narrative, the work environment is dynamic and motivating.”

Laura McMahon, Senior Medical Writer at Zoetic Science, Ashfield Healthcare Communications

"I work in MedComms and I love that I can combine my love of writing and science into one unique job; utilising my scientific knowledge in a more creative setting than the lab.”

Georgie McManus, Junior Medical Writer at Havas Lynx

"I work in MedComms as a medical writer, which gives me the opportunity to work on a variety of challenging projects in different therapy areas, meet interesting people, and travel to meetings in different parts of the world.”

David McMinn, Medical Writer at Acumed, Ashfield Healthcare Communications

"I work in MedComms as I am passionate about science; however, I always knew a career in research was not for me. Working as an associate medical writer allows me to continuously learn about cutting-edge science and work in an intellectually stimulating environment.”

Joseph Norvill, Associate Medical Writer at Bioscript Group

"I work in MedComms because I really enjoy using scientific knowledge in fresh and creative ways. Working on a variety of projects and therapy areas is intellectually stimulating and exciting. I particularly like that it is a fast paced environment with new challenges and ideas always keeping you busy!”

Lydia Oikonomides, Associate Medical Writer at integrated medhealth communication immc

"I work in MedComms because I love turning data into a story that’s engaging and accessible, but I had become frustrated by the daily grind of getting that data. I now use my talents outside of academia! I enjoy working in a fast-paced environment at the forefront of medical research, in which my DPhil is valued but the days of failed experiments are behind me.”

Madeleine Pope, Medical Writer at Porterhouse Medical

"I work in MedComms because I love science and it offers me the opportunity to work at the forefront of scientific research, keep learning about new developments in an array of therapy areas, and get to listen to some of the leaders in their field.”

Chrystelle Rasamison, Editorial Project Leader at Fishawack Communications

"I work in MedComms and this allows me to keep up with developments in science and medicine without being in the lab. After working on a single research project for 4 years, it is refreshing to now work across a wide range of therapy areas with lots of variety day to day. I also enjoy using my scientific knowledge in a more creative context.”

Kirsty Ratanji, Junior Medical Writer at Havas Lynx
I work in MedComms...

“"I work in MedComms, some days because it pays the bills and allows frequent tea breaks; but most of the time, I work in MedComms because I’m still a scientist at heart, and I love helping to communicate science that just might make a difference to people all over the world.”

Simon Rees, Editorial Project Leader at Fishawack Communications

“"I work in MedComms because I wanted a career that would be diverse, challenging, and allow me to remain at the cutting edge of medical science. In just a short period of time I have had the opportunity to write a range of materials, work in a variety of therapy areas and attend international conferences. I’m excited to be working in a field where I am always learning and there is real scope for career progression.”

Natalie Roberts, Associate Medical Writer at Adelphi Communications

“"I work in MedComms because the work is interesting and varied. There is a real mix of project types and you get to learn about a variety of therapy areas and work with leading physicians.”

Emma Robinson, Principal Writer at Comradis

“"I work in MedComms because I’m interested in biomedical science and like writing about it, it’s a great application for my science and business education, and I enjoy a good puzzle (such as figuring out the best way to word something, or hunting through data tables for an elusive piece of information).”

Sushma Soni, Scientific Director at AMICULUM

“"I work in MedComms because the continual advances in science and medicine mean that I am always learning – and the diversity in therapy areas means that no two days are ever the same!”

Rebecca Stearn, Medical Editor at Darwin Healthcare Communications

“"I work in MedComms because I get to combine my love of science with my passion for communication!”

Claire Stoker, Medical Writer at Oxford PharmaGenesis

“"I work in MedComms because it sits at the small overlap between science and creativity that is all-too-difficult to find, let alone get paid for.”

Ben Stutchbury, Junior Medical Writer at Havas Lynx

“"I work in MedComms because it feeds my passion for science, while offering a well-defined career path.”

Kim Wager, Senior Medical Writer at Oxford PharmaGenesis

“I work in MedComms because I love the opportunity to work with some of the finest medical minds, to help to educate about rare diseases and because it allows me to exercise my mind on a daily basis. Working in MedComms has also allowed me to see the world and to work where I choose. It is a fantastic career.”

Keri Wellington, Scientific Director at AMICULUM

“I work in MedComms because it is NOT what it says on the tin. While you can choose to focus on publications in this job, I rarely work on manuscripts at all. Although my role is still high science, I am far more involved in strategic planning for drugs in development and also digital outputs such as infographics, slide presentations. I also work a lot in planning scientific meetings, particularly advisory boards where we seek feedback from global experts in a therapy area on the latest key topics – not only is it fascinating to be involved in such state of the art discussions but it also means I get to travel on a fairly regular basis. No two days are the same with such a range of project types and therapy areas to work on in collaboration with so many types of people with completely different skillsets.”

Christopher Whittaker, Senior Medical Writer at Zoetic Science, Ashfield Healthcare Communications

“I work in MedComms because it is a privilege to collaborate with leaders in medicine, science and industry to help bring innovative medicines from the lab to the patients who need them.”

Chris Winchester, Managing Director at Oxford PharmaGenesis

“I work in MedComms because it is a great way to merge my clinical background as a nurse with my scientific background gained during my MSc and PhD. Being a medical writer allows me to do what I enjoy most (reading and writing science) while still using my research skills and clinical knowledge on a daily basis.”

Ciaran Wright, Medical Writer at Bioscript Group

“I work in MedComms having just finished my PhD, it was quite the change from academia to medical writing! Although I only started two weeks ago, I have already started preparing slide decks, interacting with clients, and I am currently writing my first primary manuscript! I like that I am still involved in medical research, but now I get to work on multiple therapy areas in a fast-paced, creative job with clear career progression.”

Muchaala Yeboah, Associate Medical Writer at Bioscript Group

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So, think outside the box – look at your skills and, if you think you can make a difference, then come and talk to us. We will show you how to grow your career with a fresh start at Ashfield Healthcare Communications!

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Quote from a former member of our team, now working for a medical communications agency:

“Working with Aspire alongside my academic role has been a fantastic experience. I have been involved in a range of oncology-based medical writing projects, which has given me a unique insight into the industry. I thoroughly enjoyed completing each assignment and really benefitted from the constructive feedback I received from Aspire. I am now leaving academia having been offered a position with a MedComms agency. My time with Aspire not only helped to confirm my career choice of medical writer, but I believe really helped with my interviews, allowing me to demonstrate a genuine interest in MedComms and my familiarity with the industry.”

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Elements Communications is an independent ‘boutique’ medical communications agency with offices in Westerham, Kent and Victoria, London.

Our experience in managing and delivering global medical education programmes spans 20+ years and is at the heart of Elements’ core offering.

We believe that the real difference is in the way we do business...

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Envision Pharma Group is a global leader in medical communications, with a heritage based on scientific excellence and exceptional client service. The company supports an international portfolio of pharmaceutical and biotechnology company clients from offices in the UK (Horsham, Wilmslow, Cheshire, and Hammersmith), US and Asia-Pacific region.

We are always searching for ambitious and talented individuals to be a part of our continued success. If you are looking for your first role in medical communications, please send your CV and cover letter to opportunities-uk@envisionpharmagroup.com or contact us to request an informal discussion about current entry-level opportunities.

Envision Pharma is committed to developing and supporting its team members, enabling them to excel in their roles. The opportunity to work alongside established experts in medical communications provides an ideal environment for progression. Our company maintains a culture that encourages development, and strives to recognise and reward achievement. We are a dynamic and rewarding company to work for, offering excellent benefits, a share ownership scheme and a friendly and supportive work environment. To find out more, please visit www.envisionpharmagroup.com.

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About Helios
Helios Medical Communications is a full-service independent global healthcare communications and strategic consultancy agency. We specialise in delivering bespoke solutions to meet our clients’ needs.

Our core values
People
Our people are our greatest asset. Our team is highly experienced, enthusiastic and committed to delivering the highest possible standards.

Passion
We are passionate about what we do. We bring energy to each project, and have a proactive, ‘can do’ attitude.

Perspective
We design and implement bespoke creative and intelligent solutions, drawn from our many years of experience, to help our clients reach their goals.

Partnership
To deliver the best results for our clients, we believe that developing long-term partnerships, built on a foundation of trust, respect and integrity, is key.

If you are passionate about science and medical communications, and would like to join our fantastic team, get in touch now!

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If you are interested in being part of inScience Communications, please email:

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Fulfil your potential with a career in medical communications
inVentiv Medical Communications is the med comms division of the wider inVentiv Health group. We do things a little differently from most agencies in that we don’t have job titles within the business and have a flat structure. This means that you will get the opportunity to develop your skillset at your own pace, and will be free to explore your interests in medical writing, account management, digital and more without having to have a defined job title or job role.

We regularly recruit people without prior industry experience, both as part of our annual graduate scheme and throughout the year. We offer a full year-long training scheme to new joiners, designed to give you a rounded skillset that will enable you to reach your full potential.

If you’re interested in joining a company with a global reach but a personal touch, please contact:

matt.mcginley@inventivhealth.com

http://inventivmedcomms.com/

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LucidLife

Ambitions are key
Role tailored to me
Gym pass that’s free

Meet Hannah
A medical writer who told us what she wanted and we did the rest.

Here is her #LucidLife:

At Lucid, promotions are not dictated by time frames. Roles are dynamic and tailored to ensure individuals can set their own targets to fulfil their ambitions.

Hannah likes to innovate and challenge the status quo by combining her passion for science and art. At Lucid, there is no set way of doing things. We provide Hannah with the resources she needs to be creative and inspire others through her writing.

An integral part of #LucidLife is having a good work–life balance. We ensure Hannah never has to sweat it out in the office, but instead always gets to unwind at the gym.

Are you a world-class medical writer?
Do you like the look of Hannah’s #LucidLife?
Get in touch and tell us what your #LucidLife package would look like.

www.lucid-group.co.uk/recruitment
Not all agencies are created equal. At NexGen, we pride ourselves on being a bit different.

We’re not afraid to ask questions, challenge current thinking and come up with fresh new ideas. Our bright individuals from diverse backgrounds are the foundation of an outstanding team that help us keep on top of the latest advances in healthcare, communication and technology to deliver the best possible service to our clients.

We must be doing something right. We’ve won awards to prove it!

If you consider yourself a bit different, our fabulous team could be just what you’re looking for. Head to our website at www.nexgenhc.com to find out more, or send your CV to Elif@nexgenhc.com.
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Newton asked why

Bernard Baruch

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Synergy Medical Communications is a global healthcare agency that always uses our scientific and medical knowledge to provide quality solutions to any challenge presented. We combine innovation, strategic thinking and pharmaceuticals insight to produce tailored medical education projects for our clients and the patients they help.

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Services include:

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- Assistance with CV preparation
- In-depth assessment of a practice writing test
- Support with job applications
- Interview preparation

For a preliminary discussion, please email or give me a call.

Karen Kent PhD

Tel: 01474 853 987 / 0778 626 1259
Email: karen@windhorseservices.co.uk
Web: www.windhorseservices.co.uk
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 all over 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
- Opportunity to attend bi-annual conferences held throughout Europe
- Wide-ranging certified training at foundation and advanced levels
- Introduction to emerging and developing areas through Annual Symposium Days
- Extended learning opportunities for experienced members through Special Interest Groups (SIGs) and the Expert Seminar Series (ESS)
- Annual Internship Forum
- Networking opportunities
- Quarterly free print issue of Medical Writing Journal
- Free webinars on topics of interest within medical communications
- Discounts on books, insurances, software, etc

**EMWA conferences**

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.

**How do I join EMWA?**

Go to www.emwa.org or email: info@emwa.org

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or email Dr Sam Illingworth at [s.ilingworth@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:s.ilingworth@mmu.ac.uk)
Sixteen years ago, we wrote a business plan for the creation of a global healthcare communications agency that was designed to be different. We set out to create an environment where talented individuals could work together in teams to deliver great work to good clients. We decided not to label our colleagues with fancy but ultimately meaningless titles. Rather, we encourage them to focus on what they are good at and find interesting, whether that is medical writing, project management, consulting, creative design or providing business support services. We adopted a long term, strategic approach to the development of new service areas and the challenges posed by emerging markets. We created AMICULUM®.

Now, thanks to the creativity and hard work of our teams at Mudskipper®, 7.4®, Delta Kn, Comradis®, Evida Medical and AMICULUM’s Consulting and Digital agencies we are entering our 17th year of impressive but carefully controlled growth. We are creating new opportunities in all of our specialist agencies in all of our locations.

If you’d like to try something different, please contact Richard Allcorn (richard.allcorn@amiculum.biz) for an informal discussion.

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