



Been there, done it, got the T-shirt. Life in Med Comms

Rick Flemming PhD, CMPP





What does a medical writer in Med Comms typically do?

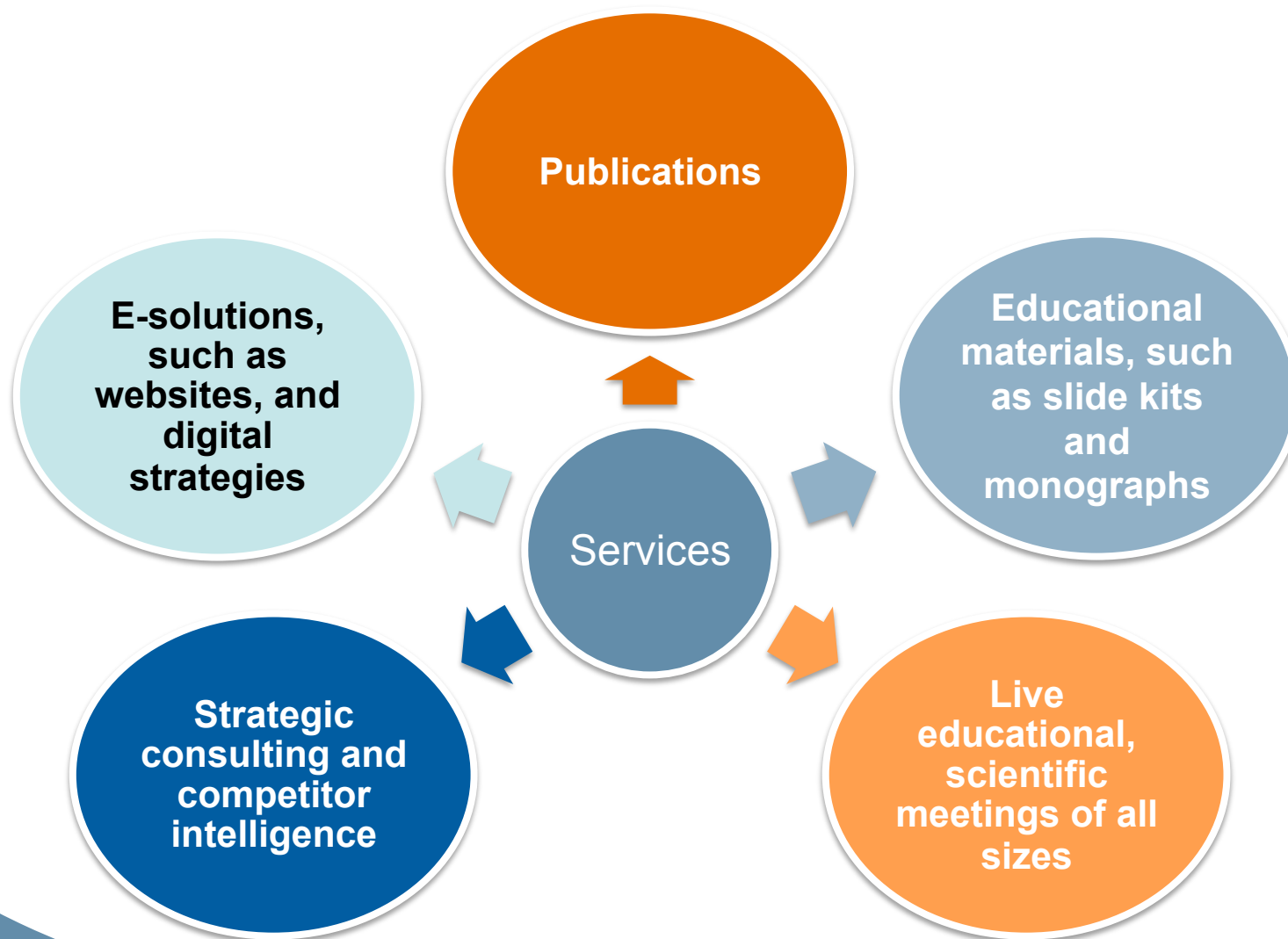
- **Helps pharmaceutical* companies to communicate about their drugs to healthcare professionals****
- **Writes high-quality, scientific copy**
 - in many different therapy areas
 - in many different formats



*Also biotech, diagnostics and device companies


**And other audiences!

Overview of some medical communication services



Publications



- Abstracts for congresses
 - Posters/slide presentations for congresses
 - Clinical study manuscripts
 - Review articles
 - Meta-analyses
- 

Clinical study manuscript

Tolerability and safety of perampanel: two randomized dose-escalation studies

Krauss GL, Bar M, Biton V, Klapper JA, Rektor I, Vaiciene-Magistris N, Squillacote D, Kumar D. Tolerability and safety of perampanel: two randomized dose-escalation studies. *Acta Neurol Scand*: DOI: 10.1111/j.1600-0404.2011.01588.x.
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Objectives – To evaluate, for the first time in patients with epilepsy, the tolerability and safety of escalating doses of oral perampanel, a novel, selective, non-competitive AMPA antagonist, as adjunctive therapy for refractory partial-onset seizures. *Materials and methods* – Two consecutive, randomized, double-blind, dose-escalation studies recruited adults (18–70 years) with uncontrolled partial-onset seizures receiving one to three concomitant antiepileptic drugs. In study 206,

**G. L. Krauss¹, M. Bar², V. Biton³,
J. A. Klapper⁴, I. Rektor⁵,
N. Vaiciene-Magistris⁶,
D. Squillacote⁷, D. Kumar⁷**

¹Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, MD, USA; ²Faculty of Medicine, University of Ostrava, Ostrava, Czech Republic; ³Arkansas Epilepsy Program, Little Rock, AR, USA; ⁴Mile High Research Center, Denver, CO, USA; ⁵Neurologica Klinika, Fakultni Nemocnice U sv. Anny, Brno, Czech Republic; ⁶Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, Kaunas, Lithuania; ⁷Eisai Neuroscience Product Creation Unit, Woodcliff Lake, NJ, USA

Acknowledgements

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Clinical study manuscript: how it works in practice



Review article

Factor Xa Inhibitors: Next-Generation Antithrombotic Agents

Donald J. P. Pinto, Joanne M. Smallheer, Daniel L. Cheney, Robert M. Knabb, and Ruth R. Wexler*

Research and Development, Bristol-Myers Squibb Company, P.O. Box 5400, Princeton, New Jersey, 08543

Received February 3, 2010

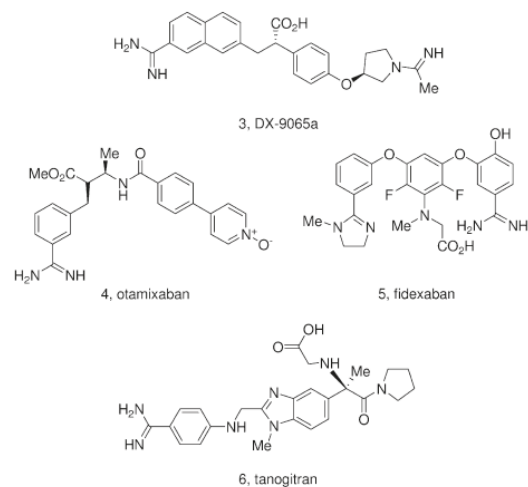


Figure 4. Parenteral direct FXa inhibitors 3, 4, and 5 and the dual FXa/thrombin inhibitor 6.

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Review article

EGFR mutation testing in lung cancer: a review of available methods and their use for analysis of tumour tissue and cytology samples


Gillian Ellison,¹ Guanshan Zhu,² Alexandros Moulis,³ Simon Dearden,¹
Georgina Speake,¹ Rose McCormack¹

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Meetings




- Satellite symposia
 - ‘Standalone’ meetings
 - Advisory board meetings
 - Pitches
 - Medical/scientific association congresses
- 

Medical congresses

- ASCO, Chicago
 - American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) Annual Meeting
 - >25,000 registered delegates + ca. 10,000 affiliated professionals
 - Cutting-edge science
 - Asked to produce a report for a biosimilar manufacturer





**How did I get into medical writing?
(and what can you learn from my
experience?)**



Before MedComms

- BSc in Physiological Sciences, Newcastle University ('93–96)
- MSc in Human and Applied Physiology, King's College, London ('96–97)
- Editorial Assistant, Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, London ('97–98)



Before MedComms

- PhD Physiology & Pharmacology, Leeds ('98–2002)

Journal of Physiology (2002), 543.2, pp. 455–464
© The Physiological Society 2002

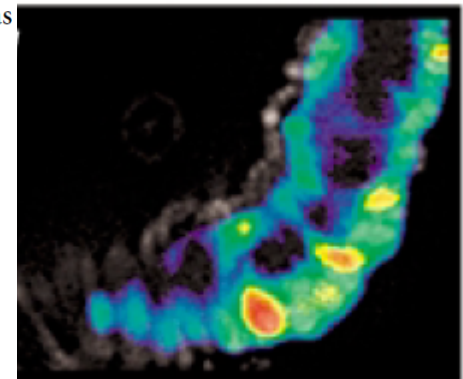
DOI: 10.1113/jphysiol.2002.023366
www.jphysiol.org

Discrete store-operated calcium influx into an intracellular compartment in rabbit arteriolar smooth muscle

R. Flemming, A. Cheong, A. M. Dedman and D. J. Beech

School of Biomedical Sciences, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT, UK

This study tested the hypothesis that store-operated channels (SOCs) exist as a discrete population of Ca^{2+} channels activated by depletion of intracellular Ca^{2+} stores in cerebral arteriolar smooth muscle cells and explored their direct contractile function. Using the Ca^{2+} indicator fura-PE3 it was



Leaving academia

- Narrow career path
- Short-term contracts
- Time for a change
- Knew my limitations



Why did I become a medical writer?

Wanted to stay
in science

Clear career
pathway

Good
mentorship and
training

Good financial
benefits

Variety of
projects and
therapy areas

Work in different
parts of the UK /
world

**... and fundamentally, I enjoy and am
good at writing...**

What did I learn in academia that is relevant to medical writing?

Research skills and not get side tracked by needless detail

Attention to detail and scientific accuracy

Confidence in learning new skills and facts

Ability to contribute to a team

Challenges of moving into Med Comms: culture shock

- Friday.....



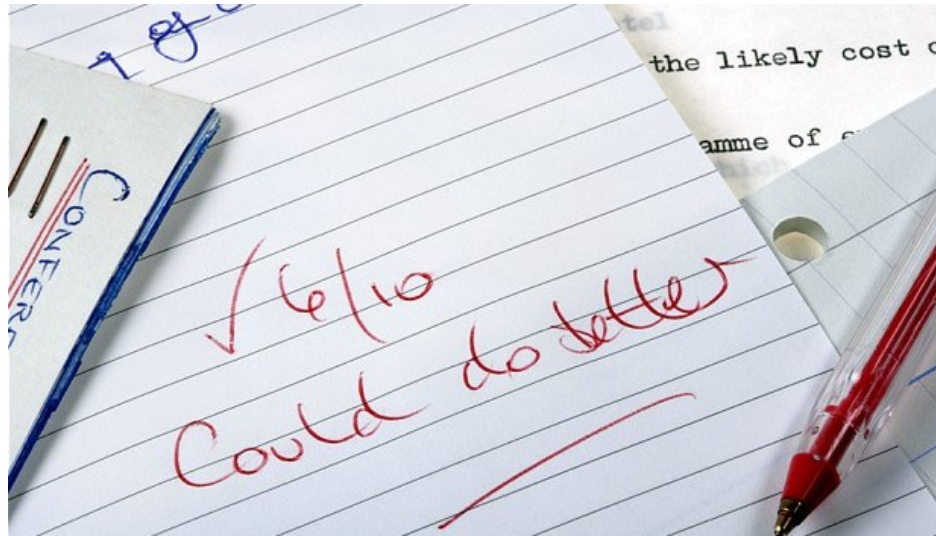
- Monday....



Challenges: deadlines



Challenges: criticism




Challenges: writing treadmill



Upsides: variety



- Epilepsy
 - Oncology
 - Spinal devices
 - Thrombosis
 - Men's health
 - Plus lots, lots more...
- 

Upsides: flexibility (sometimes...)



Upsides: teamwork

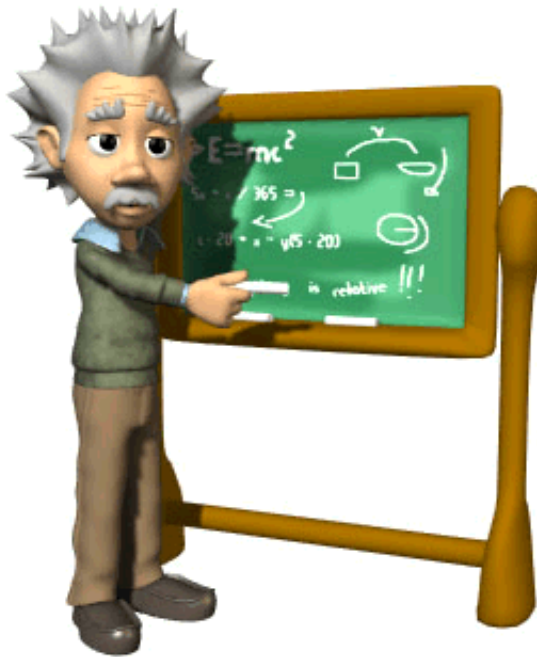


Upsides: travel

- New York
- Chicago
- San Francisco
- Stockholm
- Prague
- Paris
- Florence
- Munich



Upsides: working with the experts



Upsides: demand for your services

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[Publication Planning](#) (6)
[Academic](#) (4)
[Medical Devices](#) (4)
[Clinical Development](#) (3)
[Biology](#) (1)

Business Type
[Medical Communications Agency](#) (469)
[Medical Education Agency](#) (288)
[Public Relations Agency](#) (66)
[Advertising Agency](#) (39)
[Publishing Company](#) (1)

Location
[United Kingdom](#) (521)
[Switzerland](#) (7)
[Australia](#) (3)
[China](#) (2)
[France](#) (2)
[United States of America](#) (1)

Job Level
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[Experienced - Non Manager](#) (347)

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[Senior Medical Writer - Oxford](#)
UK - South East
Senior Medical Writer - OxfordUp to £52,000 P/A
Summary: Opportunity for a Senior Medical Writer in Oxford. Working in a close knit and talented team in Oxford you'll work across several accounts
[Recruiter: SEC Pharma | Posted: 12/01/2015 | Jobcode 125129 | [More...](#)]

[Account Director - Healthcare PR - SW London](#)
UK - London
Account Director - Healthcare PR - London
The Company: An award winning healthcare PR agency that lives on firsts and produces original and specific health campaigns for TV, Radio, Press etc. They are a
[Recruiter: i-Pharm Consulting | Posted: 12/01/2015 | Jobcode 125091 | [More...](#)]

[Mudskipper - Experienced medical writer supporting East Asia, based in London or Cheshire](#)
UK - London, UK - North West
None
Mudskipper is currently seeking a talented medical writer to join our industry-leading team. The successful candidate who can be based either in London or Cheshire will be an experienced professional
[Recruiter: AMICULUM Limited | Posted: 12/01/2015 | Jobcode 125082 | [More...](#)]

[Mudskipper - Experienced medical writer, London or Cheshire](#)
UK - London, UK - North West
None
We are looking to expand our team of talented medical writers and are keen to hear from applicants with a life science degree, preferably a PhD and at least 2 years' agency experience. Our successful
[Recruiter: AMICULUM Limited | Posted: 12/01/2015 | Jobcode 125081 | [More...](#)]



[Experienced Medical Writers - Oxfordshire and Cheshire](#)
United Kingdom
None
Are you an experienced medical writer looking for a new opportunity with a privately owned medical communications company with offices in Oxfordshire and Macclesfield? You will have a science
[Recruiter: Carys Mills Recruitment Limited | Posted: 12/01/2015 | Jobcode 125070 | [More...](#)]

Opportunities: clearly defined progression



Increasing opportunities with greater experience

Associate
Medical Writer

- Learn the job
- High proportion of job spent writing at desk

Medical Writer

- Build up experience
- Increase client contact & live meeting experience

Senior
Medical Writer

- Pass on experience and review the work of others
- Lead client teams and meetings without support

Editorial
Manager

- Line management and business development
- Provide clients with strategic advice

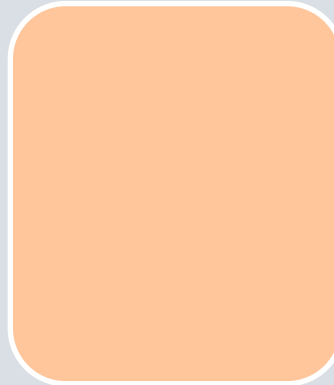
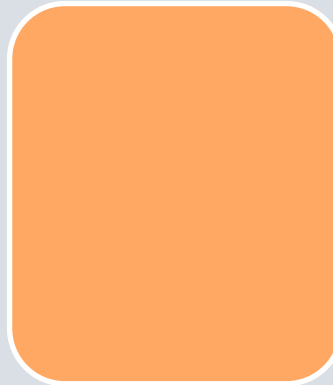
My career in MedComms

2003

- Medical Writer, MedComms Agency, Macclesfield

2005

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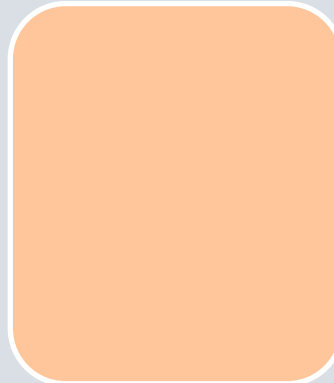
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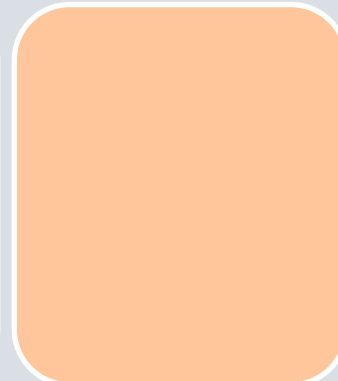
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- Freelance Medical Writer



Benefits of being a freelance medical writer



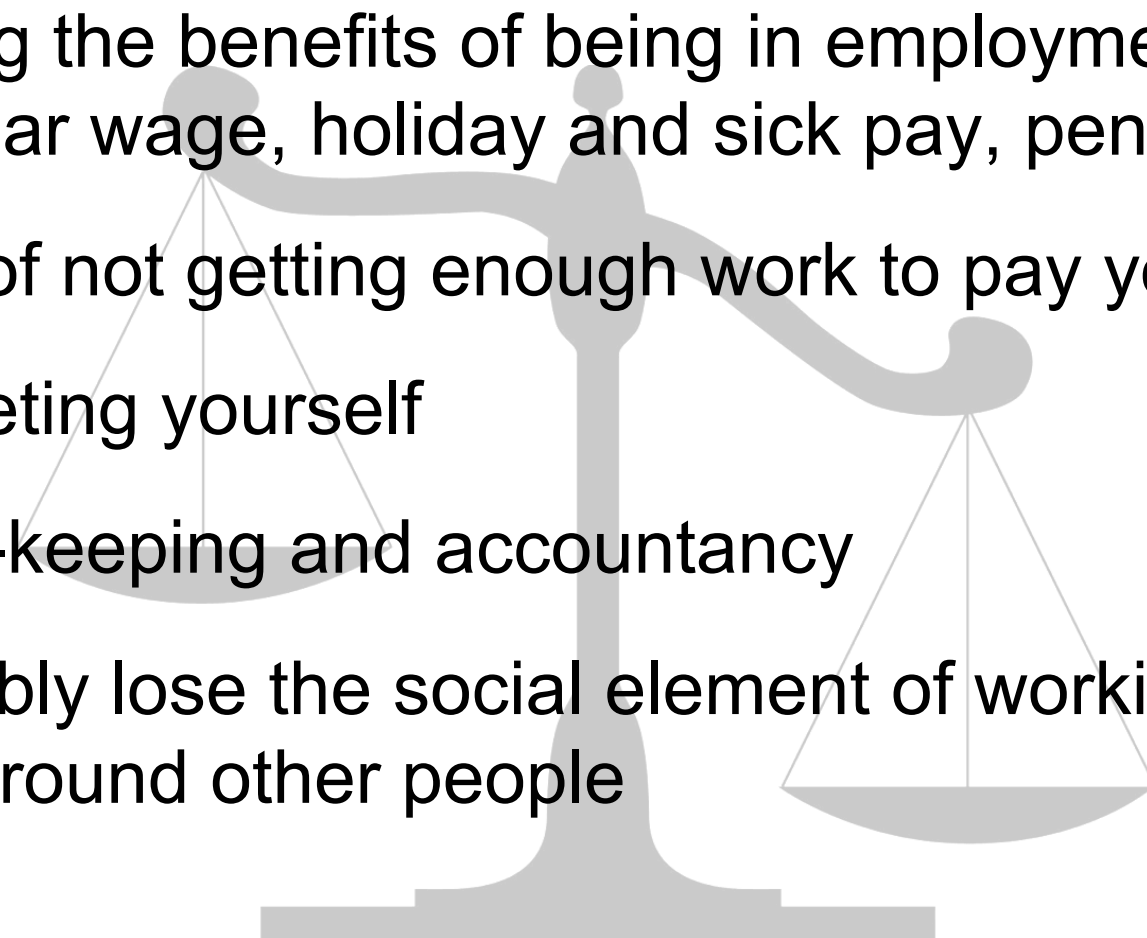
You are your own boss

Flexibility in when you work
and what work you do

Potential to earn more

Drawbacks of being a freelance medical writer

- Losing the benefits of being in employment (regular wage, holiday and sick pay, pension etc.)
- Risk of not getting enough work to pay your bills
- Marketing yourself
- Book-keeping and accountancy
- Possibly lose the social element of working with and around other people





Don't think about becoming a freelancer too soon!!

- I had several years of medical communications experience before I started working for myself
- This meant
 - I had a wide range of experience of working on different projects and therapy areas
 - I had considerable experience in providing strategic guidance and finding solutions to particular problems
- Most importantly – the longer you have stayed within agencies, the more people you know

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2006

- Editorial Manager, MedComms Agency, Knutsford

2008

- Freelance Medical Writer

2011

- Freelance Medical Writing Agency



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WHO WE ARE

WHAT WE DO

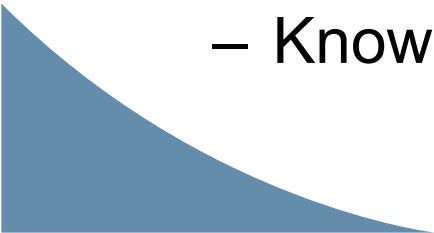
TESTIMONIALS

GET IN TOUCH

"Life is like riding a bicycle, in order to keep your balance, you must keep moving." Albert Einstein (1879–1955)



What can you learn from the pathway I took into medical writing?

- Your PhD and/or post-doc are valued!
 - But you have to be prepared to start again ‘at the bottom’ and prove your worth in a new, unfamiliar environment
 - Before applying for jobs, try to ensure you can demonstrate the following skills
 - Writing experience
 - Research skills
 - Scientific accuracy
 - Ability to work in a team
 - Knowledge of industry codes and guidelines
- 



Is medical writing for you?

Enjoy and excel at writing

Scientific background and love of science

Pedantic and accurate

Good communication skills

Excellent research skills

Don't mind or love travel


Ability to think on feet

Thick skinned!!



Tips for getting into Med Comms



- Write at every opportunity
 - Learn about medical writing, Med Comms and pharma
 - Perfect your CV, covering letter and emails!!!
 - Highlight any therapeutically relevant knowledge/experience (e.g. oncology, cardiovascular medicine, neurology)
 - Try and get relevant work experience
 - Contact freelance medical writers, Med Comms companies
 - Although not advertised, some may offer paid or unpaid experience
 - Contact relevant recruitment companies
 - They will do the hard work by sending your CV to relevant companies
 - They may also help you prepare for interviews
 - Try to identify those who truly understand Med Comms
- 

What's next for me?

- **The truth is I can't imagine being in a different role**
- **Each day I am writing or communicating about something different, and in doing so I am learning about something new**



Feel free to contact me



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aspire-scientific.com



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