



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

Ryan Woodrow





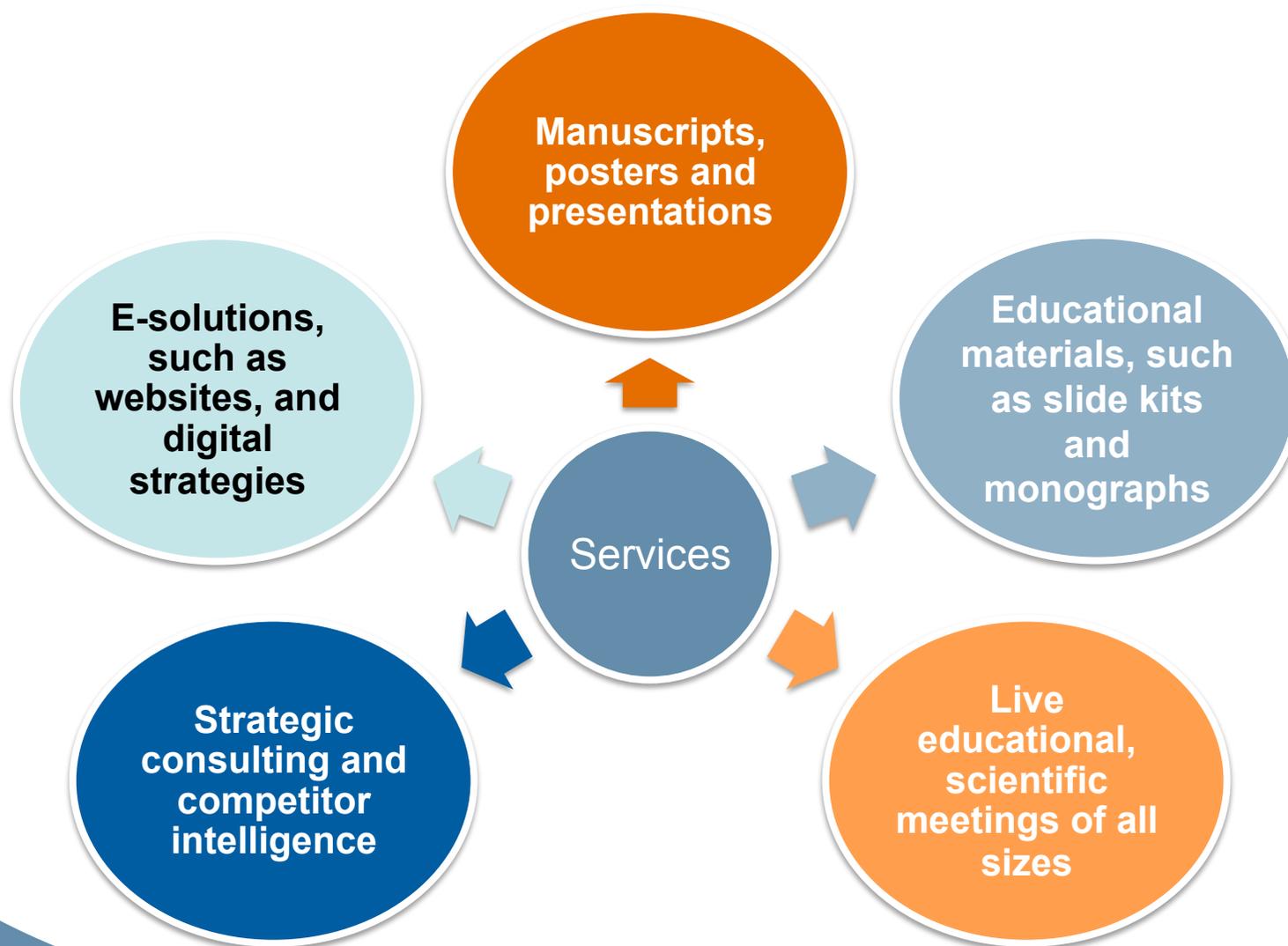
What does a medical writer in med comms typically do?

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

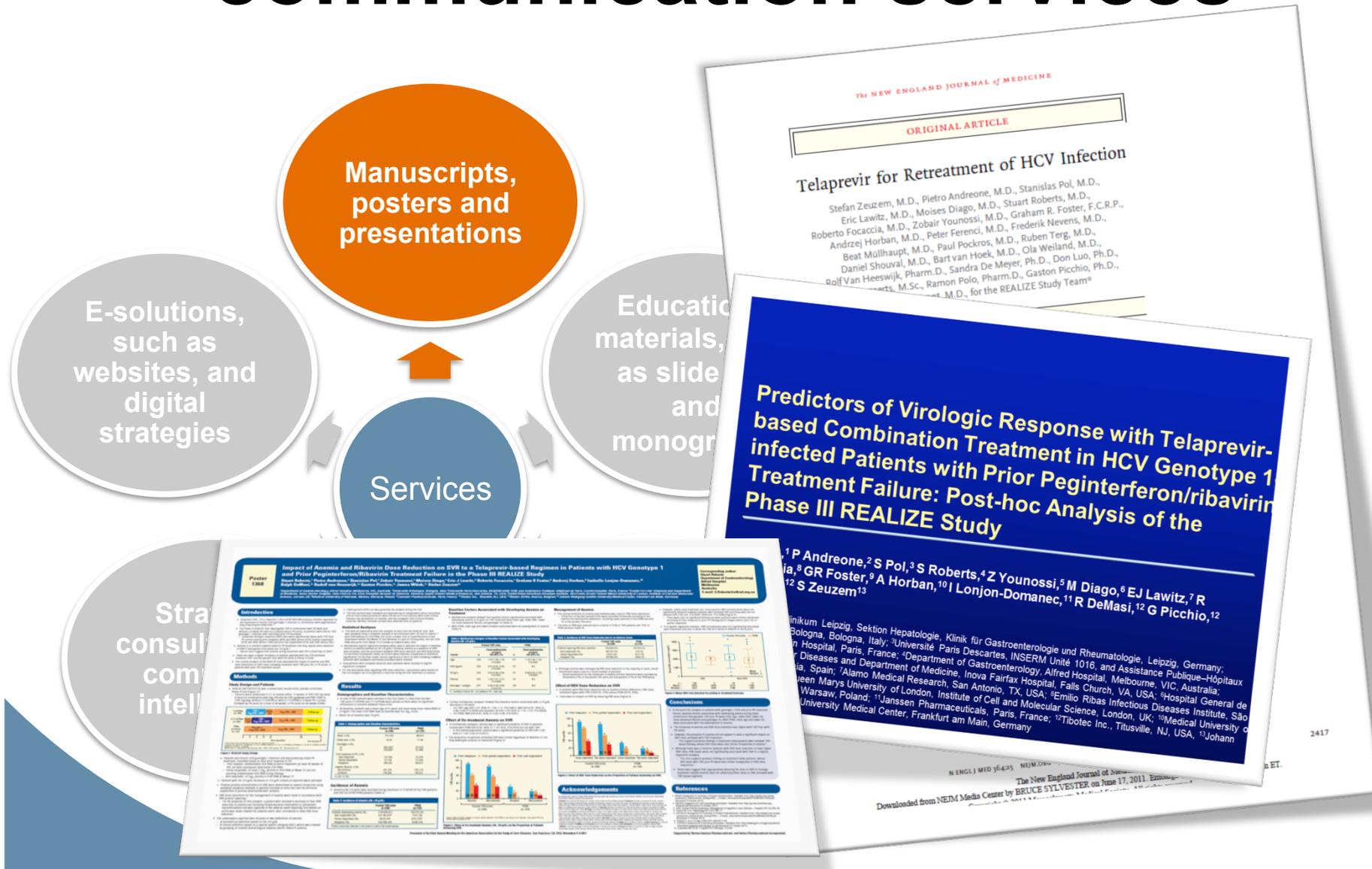


***Also biotech, diagnostics and device companies**

Overview of some medical communication services



Overview of some medical communication services



Overview of some medical communication services



Overview of some medical communication services





**BUT... there is so much
more...**



No two days are the same

Monday

- Incorporating minor author comments on a **poster** and send to client
- Call with an author regarding a planned **manuscript**
- Start to write a **manuscript outline** based on author comments in the call

Tuesday

- **Internal team meeting** to run through status of projects
- Continuation of writing **manuscript outline**
- Incorporating comments from client on the **agenda for an advisory board** and send to meeting Chair

Wednesday

- **Client call** to go through status of projects
- **Call with Chair of advisory board** to discuss agenda
- Completion of **manuscript outline**, which is given to Senior Writer for QC
- **Preparation for client meeting** in Belgium the following week

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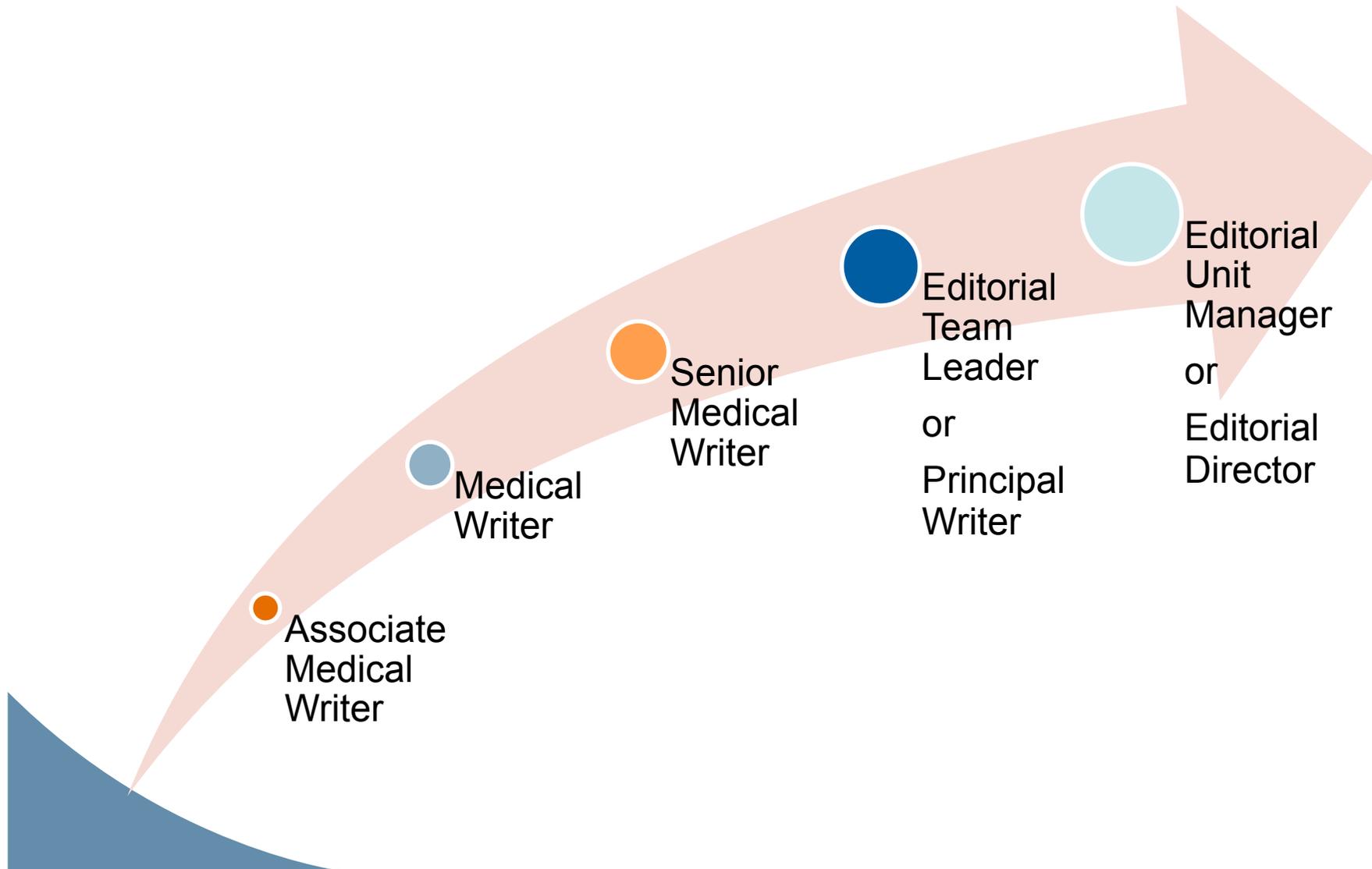
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Opportunities: typical pathway in med comms for a medical writer



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 Team
Leader

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

Why did I become a medical writer for a medical communications company?

Variety of projects and therapy areas

Clear career pathway

Good mentorship and training

Good financial benefits

Like-minded people

Work in different parts of the UK / world

... and fundamentally, I enjoy writing



Is medical writing for you?

Enjoy writing

Scientific background and love of science

Pedantic and accurate

Good communication skills

Excellent research skills

Don't mind or love travel

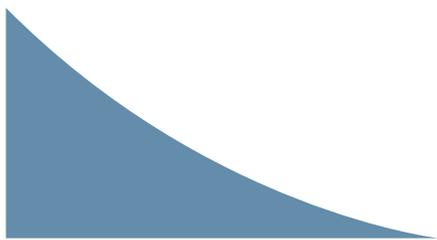
Ability to think on feet

Thick skinned!!





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



Qualifications



- I did a BSc (Hon) in Biological Sciences
- **BUT most medical writers have a MSc or PhD**
 - **And an advanced degree is now almost a requisite**
- Most, but not all medical writers have a life sciences degree

Work experience



- I worked at AstraZeneca in their communication dept. during Summer holidays while I was at University

Benefits of gaining work experience

- Shows you are self-motivated
- Demonstrates your interest
- Enables you to provide references
- Helps you to get on your feet faster when you begin medical writing

Tips to gaining relevant work experience

- Contact freelance medical writers, med comms companies
- Although not advertised, some may offer paid or unpaid experience
- **I can offer paid (£25/hr) experience for suitable individuals**
 - Contact me at ryan.woodrow@aspire-scientific.com

Some other examples of relevant experience

1

- **WRITE REGULARLY**, preferably on a relevant topic
- **Doctoral thesis, publications and grant applications**
- **Otherwise: blogs, newspapers, university newsletters, etc**

2

- Demonstrate **PRESENTATION SKILLS**
- **Lecturing and giving presentations at conferences**
- **Otherwise: journal clubs, dept talks and other Uni clubs**

3

- **ATTEND RELEVANT COURSES** in medical writing or related to pharmaceutical communications
- **Continue to attend relevant events**

My first jobs were not directly in medical writing...

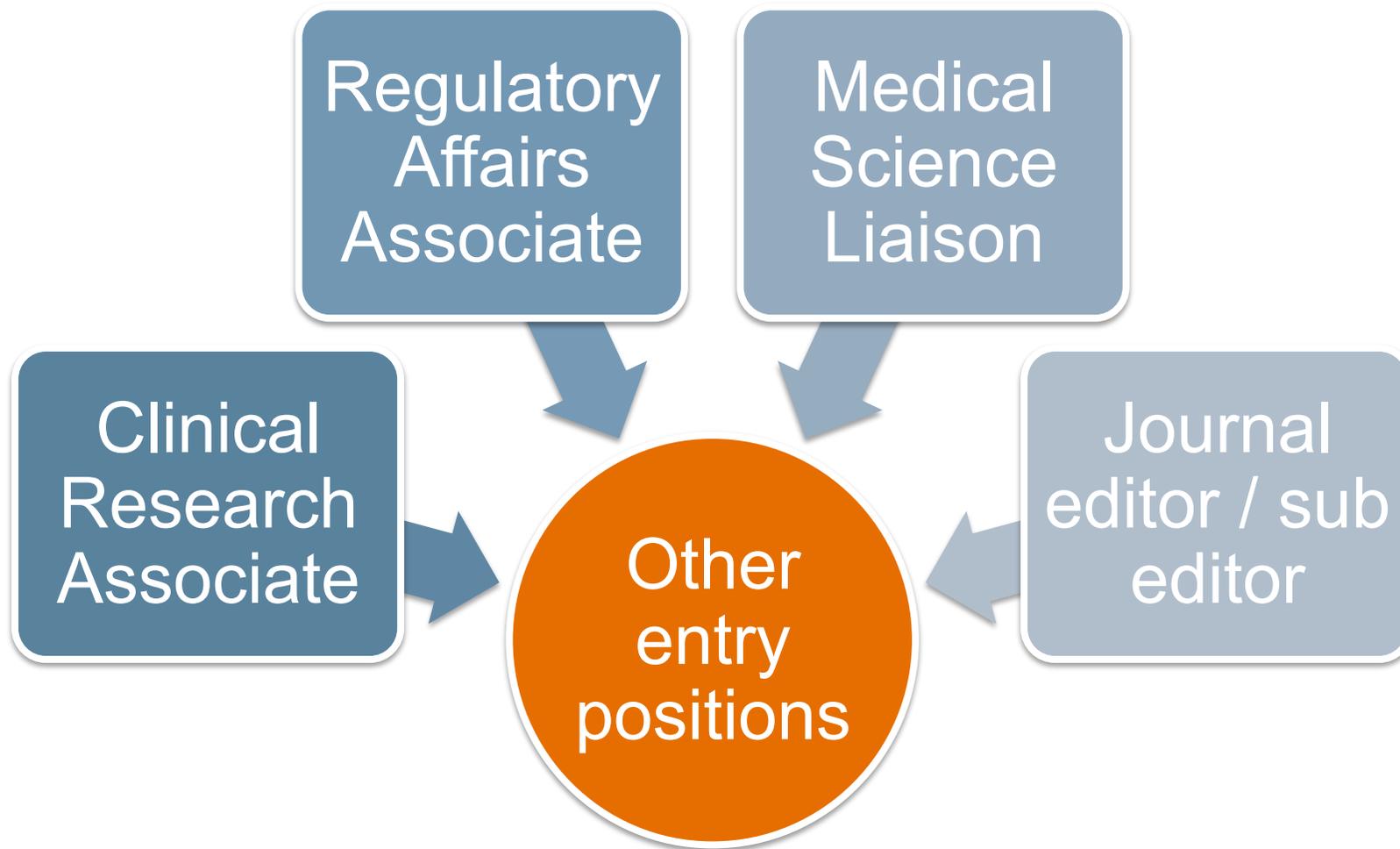
...but were very relevant

- I worked in medical information



- Provided information to internal teams and healthcare professionals on a number of drugs in written and oral format

Other non-med comms entry positions to consider



What did I learn from medical information that is relevant to medical writing?

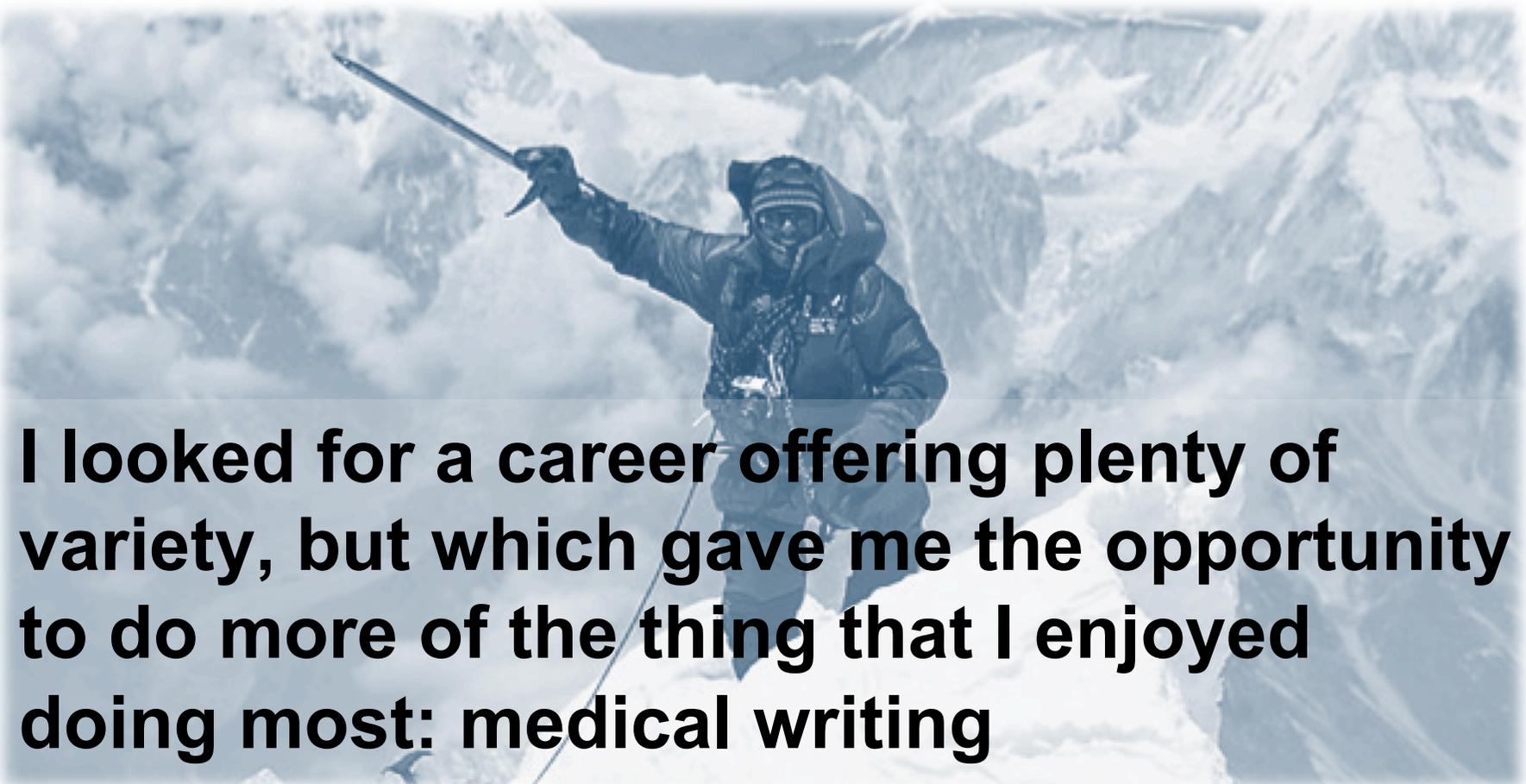
Research skills and not get side tracked by needless detail

Attention to detail and scientific accuracy

Ability to contribute to a team

Guidelines and codes

Twelve years ago, I felt it was time for a new adventure

A person in winter gear is climbing a snowy mountain peak, holding an ice axe. The scene is set against a backdrop of rugged, snow-covered mountains.

**I looked for a career offering plenty of
variety, but which gave me the opportunity
to do more of the thing that I enjoyed
doing most: medical writing**

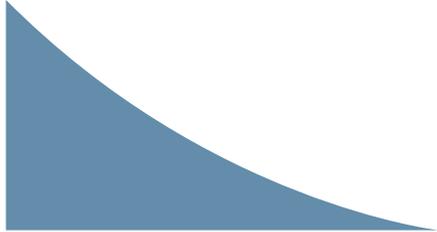


What can you learn from the pathway I took into medical writing?

- **Gaining relevant experience** will help you get your first job in medical writing
 - Your first job may not be in med comms
 - 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
- 



**How about freelance
medical writing?**



Benefits of being a freelance medical writer



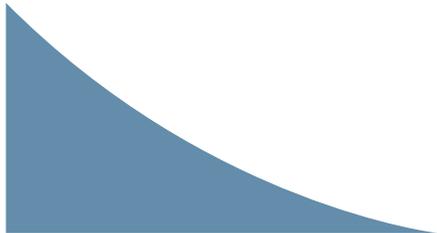
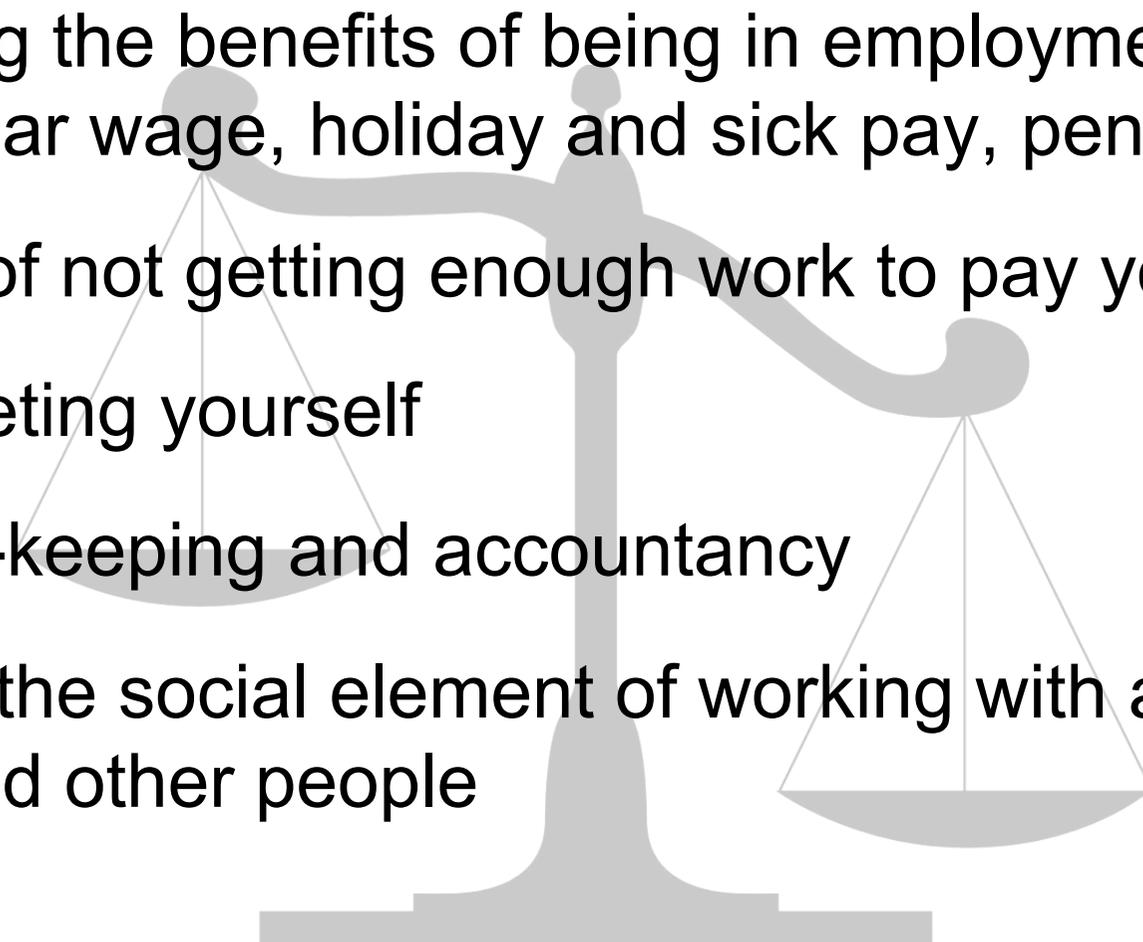
You are your own boss

Flexibility of 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
- Lose the social element of working with and around other people





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

- I had over 10 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



Quick tips for your job application process





Contact relevant recruitment companies

- They will do the hard work by sending your CV to relevant companies (and they are FREE for you to use!!)
 - They may also help you prepare for interviews
- 

Social network



- Join LinkedIn, connect with people in med comms and participate in groups
- Follow the conversation, companies and experts on Twitter (e.g. #medcomms)
- **BUT think carefully about the way you are perceived**



Research the job!!



- Make sure you know
 - About the pharmaceutical and med comms industries
 - About regulations and guidelines
 - About what a medical writer actually does

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



Who needs more than that?

Feel free to contact me

twitter



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Search for Ryan Woodrow