June 2022

Evidence generation and communication

A guide to

getting started in HEOR/*market access medical writing*

Written by Linda Harrison

From 2 to 330 in 21 years

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LOUISE
Upton

Learning and development specialist at AMICULUM

I’m part of the dedicated, in-house team at Curriculum, which ensures we offer employees easy access to both insights from colleagues and curated external resources. We are constantly building our content library and are always open to new ideas for creating learning resources and ways to deliver these to help everyone thrive at work. I believe that AMICULUM’s approach to learning and development is world class and a real differentiator for us as a business

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Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the numerous members of the MedCommsNetworking.com Community and, in particular, to the sponsors of FirstMedCommsJob.com, who have contributed their thoughts and comments during the development of this publication. If you have any feedback please let us know.

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Printed copies of this guide are also available if you contact the publishers – **support@networkpharma.com**

Evidence generation and communication: a guide to getting started in HEOR/market access medical writing

New edition published June 2022 by NetworkPharma Ltd
First published June 2018
The Magdalen Centre, Oxford Science Park, Oxford, OX4 4GA, UK

Tel: +44 (0) 1865 784390

Publisher: Peter Llewellyn; Production/editorial: Gill Gummer, Proactive Editorial Services Ltd – **proactive@cusbuster.co.uk**; Designer: Julie Stevenson – **julie.creative@btinternet.com**; Printed by: Holywell Press Ltd – **www.holywellpress.com**

Harrison L. *Evidence generation and communication*. June 2022.
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Foreword to 2022 edition

I've been running MedComms Networking activities for more than 15 years and along the way collected together a wide range of free resources at **www.FirstMedCommsJob.com** to provide insights into MedComms and related businesses, and into working life in the agencies. Agencies constantly evolve to deliver more specialist services that match the specific needs of their clients and the marketplace, such as supporting HEOR and market access activities. Whilst some agencies offer a broad range of communications services, others focus in on those individual specialist areas and inevitably they vary in their approaches and in the ways they describe their services. This is the third in a series of careers guides, first published in 2018, that aims to help you navigate your way through to your ideal first job. We welcome your feedback.

Peter Llewellyn

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

About the author

Linda is a freelance HEOR/market access consultant and writer providing a wide range of consultancy support to pharmaceutical/medical device companies and HEOR/market access agencies. Linda gained a postgraduate certificate in health economics from Aberdeen University in 2007, and has over 18 years of experience in the HEOR/market access arena. Prior to setting up her freelance business in 2014, she spent 14 years working for a large HEOR/market access agency, latterly as Director of the HTA business unit.

Linda Harrison

*For more information see: www.linkedin.com/in/linda-harrison-a*5089019

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Introduction

Health economics and outcomes research (HEOR) and market access agencies provide specialist consultancy support to pharmaceutical and medical device companies throughout the lifecycle (early phase, pre-launch, launch and post-launch) of a technology (pharmaceutical drug or medical device).

The types of agencies that offer HEOR and market access consultancy support vary widely. They include medical communications (MedComms) agencies that offer these specialist services, and other companies that are dedicated exclusively to either HEOR or market access work (some provide integrated support across both disciplines).

In any of these agency types, as a medical writer working alongside team members with a wide range of skills, you will be involved in the generation and communication of evidence to demonstrate the added value of a technology, and its potential in clinical practice, to healthcare decision makers.

HEOR and market access agencies provide specialist consultancy support to pharmaceutical and medical device companies throughout the lifecycle of a technology

About this guide

This guide focuses on medical writing roles in the HEOR/market access arenas, but will be of interest to anyone who wants to understand more about the business of ensuring access to new medicines and devices for patients. If you have an interest in the commercial aspects of healthcare delivery and in helping deliver value to patients, a passion for writing and enjoy working in a fast-paced environment, then working in HEOR/market access might be for you. This guide will provide you with an in-depth introduction to this specialist area.

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

www.FirstMedCommsJob.com

What is HEOR/market access?

As a consequence of global healthcare system cost constraints and the increasing number of new and often expensive technologies coming to market, additional evidence, beyond clinical trial data, is required to demonstrate the value of a technology and its potential in clinical practice. To ensure successful reimbursement (i.e. funding) and subsequent uptake of a technology, it is critical to generate and communicate evidence that demonstrates the added value of a technology compared with available alternatives to relevant stakeholders, such as payers (e.g. government, insurance companies) and healthcare professionals. HEOR and market access, though two separate functions, work in partnership towards this goal.

Examples of evidence generation include health economic evaluations and systematic literature reviews (SLRs); ways in which this evidence can be communicated include global value dossiers (GVDs), health technology assessments (HTAs), reimbursement dossiers and market access tools (all described further on pages 10–11).

HEOR and market access are functions that work in partnership to generate and communicate evidence to demonstrate the value of a technology

HEOR

HEOR is a function that focuses on evidence generation in terms of clinical, economic and humanistic outcomes.

The 'HE' element primarily refers to health economic evaluation whilst the 'OR' element primarily relates to research and the tools required to evaluate the real-world effectiveness of a technology in terms of clinical and humanistic outcomes (e.g. patient registries and the development or validation of patient-reported outcome measures to assess aspects such as health-related quality of life and patient-reported symptoms).

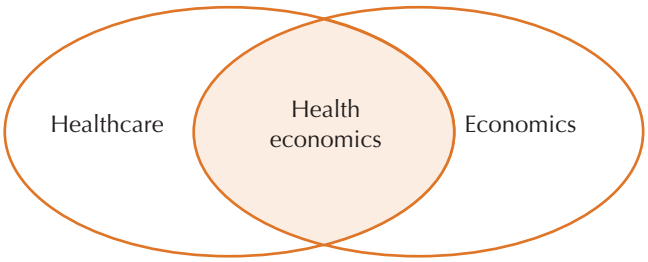
Market access

Even if a technology receives reimbursement, this does not necessarily mean that all eligible patients will get access to it. Market access activities are aimed at ensuring that patients who are eligible for treatment receive rapid and continuous access to effective technologies at an acceptable cost (in line with the added value of the technology). Market access specialists within pharmaceutical and medical device companies are tasked with communicating the value of technologies to relevant stakeholders to avoid barriers to uptake.

So what does HEOR and market access involve?

Health economics and health economic evaluation

Health economics applies economic theory to healthcare. In the current economic climate, healthcare systems have limited budgets (scarcity of resources) making it impossible to meet all patient demands for healthcare. Therefore, a choice must be made as to which healthcare needs will be met and who will consume them (i.e. which new technologies will be reimbursed, and which patients will be eligible for treatment). In making these choices, healthcare decision makers have to trade-off one healthcare good (e.g. a technology or a service) for another (opportunity cost).



Health economics applies economic theory to healthcare (e.g. pharmaceutical drugs/medical devices or healthcare services)

Health economic evaluation is a comparative analysis of all the costs and outcomes of two or more competing goods (e.g. a new technology versus existing technologies) to inform decision making, introducing the concept of 'cost effectiveness' or 'value for money'.

In HEOR/market access agencies health economists develop mathematical health economic models (typically in programmes such as Microsoft Excel®). These models synthesise all the costs (e.g. treatment costs, adverse event costs) and all the outcomes (e.g. benefits or adverse events) associated with two or more technologies over a specific timeframe (e.g. lifetime of a patient) to derive an estimate of cost effectiveness. The most common types of health economic models are decision trees and Markov models. Uncertainty surrounding the cost effectiveness (results of the model) can be tested using sensitivity analyses (varying model inputs such as a specific cost) to determine the impact on the result.

There are five main types of economic evaluation.

Type of analysis	Cost measurement	Outcome measurement	Result
Cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA)	Monetary	Single natural unit (e.g. life-year)	Cost per unit (e.g. cost per life-year gained)
Cost-utility analysis (CUA)	Monetary	Quality adjusted life-year (QALY)	Cost per QALY
Cost-minimisation analysis (CMA)	Monetary	None; outcomes are considered equivalent	Least cost alternative
Cost-consequence analysis (CCA)	Monetary	Multiple	Range of outcomes separated from costs
Cost-benefit analysis (CBA)	Monetary	Monetary	Net cost:benefit ratio

HEOR/market access agencies predominantly report on the methods and results of cost-utility analyses (CUAs). Many global HTA bodies use CUAs to inform decision making. An advantage of a CUA is that it allows comparisons of results across technologies and disease areas providing a wider context in which to make decisions about 'value for money'.

In a CUA the effectiveness of a technology is measured in terms of the impact it has on quantity (length) and quality of life, combined into a single unit – the quality-adjusted life-year (QALY). QALYs are calculated (**Box 1**) by weighting each year (or part year) of life with a quality-of-life (or utility) score, where death has a utility score of '0' and perfect health has a utility score of '1'. One year of life lived in perfect health equals one full QALY.

Box 1: QALY calculation

Current treatment results in an additional 5 years of life per patient and the quality of life during that time is 50% (utility score 0.5) of that of a healthy person (quality of life 100%; utility score 1)

Treatment A produces (5 x 0.5): 2.5 QALYs

New treatment results in an additional 6 years of life per patient and the quality of life during that time is 60% (utility score 0.6) of that of a healthy person (quality of life 100%; utility score 1)

Treatment B produces (6 x 0.6): 3.6 QALYs

New treatment results in 1.1 additional QALYs compared with current treatment

The result of a CUA is expressed as an incremental cost-effectiveness ratio (ICER) – the ratio of the difference in costs to the difference in effects (QALYs) (i.e. cost per QALY). The ICER is calculated by dividing the difference in costs by the difference in QALYs (**Box 2**). Using the QALY calculation in Box 1, and assuming the current treatment costs £14,000 and the new treatment costs £20,000, the ICER for the new treatment relative to the current treatment is £5,455 per QALY (i.e. an additional £5,455 would need to be spent on the new treatment to gain one additional QALY compared with the current treatment).

Box 2: ICER calculation

$$\text{ICER} = \frac{\text{Difference in costs}}{\text{Difference in QALYs}} \qquad \frac{£6{,}000}{1.1} = £5{,}455 \text{ per QALY}$$

Value communication and the 'payer value story'

A key underlying principle of market access is the communication of value. Many new technologies come with higher costs than available alternatives. Therefore, it is important for payers and decision makers to understand the added value that this extra cost will deliver to patients, healthcare systems and society as a whole, so as to assess if the new technology offers true 'value for money' versus current technologies.

Health economic evaluation is critical to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of a new technology. However, it is also important to communicate other associated benefits (e.g. the clinical value). The added value in terms of cost and benefits is communicated to relevant stakeholders as a 'value story'. The value story is usually in slide format comprising value messages and supporting evidence (typically information on the disease, and the patient and economic burden associated with it, its current treatment, any unmet needs, clinical and safety data for the new technology, and cost-effectiveness and budget impact analyses). These will help to establish an understanding of the disease, but also provide a foundation for presenting the value of the new technology and how it addresses current needs. The technology is therefore described in terms of:

- clinical value – through efficacy and safety endpoints
- patient value – through patient-reported outcomes, etc.
- economic value – through cost-effectiveness and budget-impact analyses.

This important market access tool may be used to inform formulary packs as well as specific payer discussions and advanced planning notifications (APNs). The 'value story' slide deck is usually supported by a GVD (see page 10).

The 'value story' for a new technology aims to communicate its added value in terms of cost/benefits to relevant stakeholders

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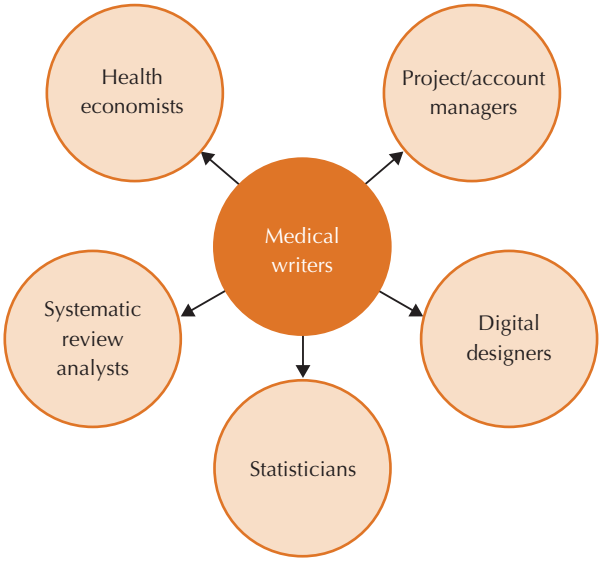
What will my role be?

As a medical writer in a HEOR/market access agency you will usually be assigned to several projects simultaneously and will need to multitask. In addition, you will also be expected to quality check the work of other medical writers. You will probably have a client-facing role and will be expected to travel to meetings (in locally or globally based offices) and participate in conference calls. You will form part of a project team, and as you progress, opportunities will arise to take the lead on specific projects.

Who will I work with?

A medical writer in a HEOR/market access agency is a core member of a cross-functional project team, the precise make-up of which will depend on the size of the agency and the types of services it offers. Depending on the project/agency in question, as a medical writer you may work with health economists, systematic review analysts, digital designers and other medical writers. Each project will be overseen by a project/account manager.



Your clients will be a mix of globally or locally based personnel from pharmaceutical and medical device companies who are responsible for HEOR and market access activities (e.g. sales and marketing, health economics, and pricing and reimbursement professionals).

As a medical writer you will be a core member of a cross-functional project team

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What types of materials will I develop?

You will primarily be involved in projects that generate evidence to support and communicate the added value of new technologies across a wide range of therapeutic areas. In a small HEOR agency the deliverables will primarily focus on health economic evaluation. In a medium-to-large HEOR/market access agency work will be more varied. The time spent on producing materials will vary, with a combination of short- and long-term projects. Although the variety of deliverables is too large to list here, some examples are provided below.

Health technology assessments

Every healthcare system must make decisions about which technologies should be made available to patients. HTA is a process used to inform this decision making. HTA processes differ in each country; however, in general the efficacy, safety, clinical effectiveness and cost of a technology (typically, a new technology) is systematically evaluated and compared with other, currently available technologies.

In some countries HTA bodies rely on the manufacturer to submit the evidence required to evaluate the technology (referred to as the evidence submission) and typically provide a template for completion (e.g. the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence [NICE]).

Medical writer's role: Preparation of country-specific HTA submissions for a technology, and completing the clinical and economic sections of a submission on behalf of the pharmaceutical or medical device company.

Global value dossiers and reimbursement dossiers

GVDs, also referred to as core value dossiers, are detailed, internal documents developed for a new technology to support reimbursement. A GVD incorporates all the evidence and supporting key value messages required to internally align company affiliates and externally communicate (to payers and healthcare professionals) the added value of a technology.

Reimbursement dossiers are a central, internal resource to support company affiliates at a national level in developing HTA submissions or reimbursement applications. Key value messages are included as appropriate for this type of dossier. The focus is primarily clinical and economic information developed in a format that makes it easy to copy and paste into individual country templates for HTA submission/reimbursement applications.

Medical writer's role: Developing evidence-based value messages and writing the content of GVDs/reimbursement dossiers.

Systematic literature reviews

SLRs are undertaken to answer a specific research question by identifying all published and unpublished evidence using prespecified inclusion/exclusion criteria. Many HTA bodies stipulate that SLRs should be conducted to identify evidence (e.g. clinical, quality-of-life and economic data) to inform HTA submissions.

Medical writer's role: Succinctly and accurately describing the methods and results of SLRs, typically as standalone reports or as manuscripts/posters, or for incorporation into HTA submissions.

Health economic evaluations

Health economic evaluations are incorporated into HTA submissions or reimbursement applications and are often published as manuscripts or presented as abstracts/posters at conferences.

Medical writer's role: Describing the methods and results, predominantly of CUAs, as standalone reports or as manuscripts/posters, or for incorporation into HTA submissions.

Market access tools

Tools to support local market access discussions with clinicians and payers include APNs, formulary packs and business cases.

Advanced planning notifications notify payers about the budgetary implications of a new technology if it is likely to make a significant impact on expenditure (higher or lower cost than current alternatives) prior to marketing authorisation.

Formulary packs contain information to support the inclusion of a new technology in local formularies (e.g. at hospital level) and are supplied by pharmaceutical companies to healthcare professionals who complete the formulary applications. Content includes details of the technology (e.g. formulation, indication); evidence of efficacy, safety and cost effectiveness; and local patient population and place in therapy compared with existing technologies.

Business cases are developed and typically attached to digital budget impact models (developed by the agency) and are used by field representatives in discussions with payers. Generally, developed for use via an iPad, these models allow the user to customise inputs to make them relevant to the local situation (e.g. patient population size). The business case is prewritten and dynamically attached to the model, feeding through local inputs and generating results. The tailored business cases can then be printed and left with payers.

Medical writer's role: Developing the content of APNs, formulary packs and business cases.

A variety of deliverables can be used to generate and communicate evidence

How do I apply for a medical writing role in HEOR/market access?

If you have an interest in the commercial aspects of healthcare delivery and a genuine desire to work in the HEOR/market access arena, have a passion for writing and enjoy working in a fast-paced and challenging environment, then becoming a medical writer in a HEOR/market access agency will appeal to you.

Success criteria

To be successful in this arena you:

- are a team player, yet confident to work on your own
- are able to write clear, succinct and compelling content for a range of documents and presentations, delivering consistently high-quality deliverables within budget and on time
- can interpret and simplify complex data
- can offer your own solutions to problems
- are happy to accept constructive feedback.

Entry requirements

The ability to display an understanding of health economics and health economic evaluation will give you some bonus points; however, this is not a prerequisite. Most agencies offer in-house and/or external training in health economics. The usual entry requirements are a relevant biomedical or life-science degree (some agencies prefer a PhD graduate), confidence dealing with mathematical/statistical data and previous academic or pharmaceutical writing experience, although the latter is not essential.

What do HEOR/market access agencies look for in a medical writer?

The agency will be looking for your ability to demonstrate numerous core skills throughout the recruitment process.

Attention to detail

The prices charged by agencies are based on an estimation of the amount of time required for each team member to complete an assignment. Therefore, it is necessary for agencies to deliver high-quality deliverables on time and within budget to generate profit. Attention to detail is very important to avoid unplanned, additional drafts of material, which not only delay timelines but also incur additional costs that potentially can't be charged on to the client. Although you may tell a potential employer that you pay great attention to detail you will have a much better chance of success by demonstrating it (e.g. by avoiding obvious errors on your cover letter and/or CV). In addition, you could create an opportunity to refer back to points made earlier in an interview to demonstrate that you are paying attention.

Teamwork

As you will be primarily working within cross-functional teams, it is important that you work effectively as a team member. The agency will be looking to employ medical writers who are able to express ideas, ask questions when unsure about something, effectively manage conflict and develop solutions with others. Think about ways you can demonstrate your ability to work as an effective team member in your application or interview (e.g. your experience in a sports or quiz team).

Communication

Medical writers liaise with clients and colleagues via face-to-face meetings, conference/telephone calls and emails. Your verbal and written communication should be clear and succinct. Listening to others and being able to clarify your understanding of what you have heard are essential when providing accurate reporting and adapting your writing style to different audiences. Potential employers will evaluate your communication skills throughout the recruitment process starting with a review of your application.

Organisation

As you will be working on multiple projects simultaneously it is essential that you are able to manage your own time and prioritise your workload effectively (this requires you to micro-manage your own time, to the hour or even quarter-hour in some instances!). Throughout the recruitment process, you should use examples to demonstrate that you are flexible and can deal with new situations as they arise.

The recruitment process

Application

Entry-level medical writers typically apply directly to an agency advert by sending in a CV or completing an application form. As you are applying for a writing role, reviewers of your CV/application will be highly critical. It is therefore essential to ensure there are no grammatical errors or spelling mistakes. A short cover letter alongside a CV is recommended and provides an opportunity to succinctly express your understanding of, and interest in, the role.

Alternatively, you can look out for annual graduate recruitment programmes.

Interview process

The interview process differs across agencies and may or may not include an initial, short interview by telephone and/or a written test. The reviewers will gain a good understanding of your medical writing capabilities from your CV, so whilst it may be tempting to seek help do not ask someone else to do the test for you. You may also be required to undertake a further test during the interview; you will normally be given a time and word limit. Some examples include:

- writing an abstract for a poster or a manuscript
- comparing/contrasting clinical trials and summarising under specified headings
- writing a disease background summary, including epidemiological estimates (using web-based resources).

The total number of interviewers will vary depending on the size of the agency (expect at least two) and may include a mix of agency personnel.

Some agencies may require you to deliver a presentation in the interview about yourself or on a specific topic (prepared by you in advance). The interviewers will ask you questions about yourself and your experience, and you will also have an opportunity to ask them questions about the role and the agency.

The time scale for an offer or rejection is generally short. Notification of an offer or rejection is normally via telephone followed by written confirmation by post/email. In the event you are not selected for the role, most agencies will be happy to supply you with feedback, which you can apply to future applications.

What is my earning potential?

Initial salaries vary across agencies and will depend on your experience, skills and qualifications. New graduates can expect a starting salary of ~£20K. Starting salaries for trainee writers with a PhD range from ~£25 to 30K. The rate at which your salary will increase is dependent on how well you progress as a medical writer.

What are my future prospects?

You will usually receive in-house training on medical writing and health economics; some agencies may, in addition, send you on short external training courses. Your writing as you progress will be assessed by more senior medical writers, and feedback on other aspects of your work will be sought from project/account managers. You should expect to be a trainee for a minimum of 12 months. The trainee writer role typically moves to medical writer and then senior medical writer. There is the potential to manage a team of writers and lead on specific projects as you progress. Working in an agency that offers many services provides an opportunity to cross train in other areas of the business (e.g. conducting SLRs).

Working in an agency that offers many services provides an opportunity to cross train in other areas of the business

Further information

Useful books

Decision Modelling For Health Economic Evaluation. Briggs A et al., Oxford University Press, 2006.

Health Economics: An Introduction to Economic Evaluation. 3rd Edition. Kobelt G, Office of Health Economics, 2013.

Health Economics for Non-Economists: An Introduction to the Concepts, Methods and Pitfalls of Health Economic Evaluations. Annemans L, Academia Press, 2008.

Professional bodies

- Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry – **www.abpi.org.uk**
- European Medical Writers Association – **www.emwa.org**
- Health Technology Assessment international – **www.htai.org**
- International Health Economics Association – **www.healtheconomics.org**
- International Society for Medical Publication Professionals – **www.ismpp.org**
- International Society for Pharmacoeconomics and Outcomes Research – **https://www.ispor.org**

Pharmaceutical industry news, views and information

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

Careers support

- FirstMedCommsJob.com – **www.firstmedcommsjob.com**
- PharmiWeb Jobs – **www.pharmiweb.jobs**

Other

- National Information Center on Health Services Research and Health Care Technology (NICHSR). Self-study courses with glossaries
  - HTA – **www.nlm.nih.gov/nichsr/edu/healthecon/01_he_intro.html**
  - Health Economics Information Resources – **www.nlm.nih.gov/nichsr/edu/healthecon/00_he_intro.html**
- Single Technology Appraisal submission template (NICE) – **www.nice.org.uk/about/what-we-do/our-programmes/nice-guidance/nice-technology-appraisal-guidance**
- The 'What-is' series – a set of short and clear explanations on several important topics. It contains a range of titles covering not only health economics, but also statistics, evidence-based medicine and HTA – **www.bandolier.org.uk/extra.html**

David Bode

Senior Consultant Writer
OPEN Health, Evidence & Access

After navigating the world of academia, I have come to realise that market access writing is one of the best-kept secrets among the expansive landscape of scientific careers.

At the end of my biochemistry PhD, I decided that the trials and tribulations of the academic lifestyle were not for me. I found myself less interested in the nitty gritty detail of a molecular structure and more interested in potential real-world medical applications of my research. Unfortunately, even the finest academic work may not have a real-world application for many years – or worse – never!

This is where 'market access' comes in; a place for scientific, pharmaceutical and medical minds to come together at the leading edge of medical innovation. At OPEN Health, I work as part of a close-knit team of project managers, associate consultants, senior consultants, medical writers and health economists. Together, we provide solutions that enable pharmaceutical and medical device companies to bring a medical product to the market. All of the above means exposure to a wide spectrum of diseases, therapeutic pathways and novel treatments.

A fundamental pillar of market access writing is to always ask myself "How will this therapy help patients in ways that other therapies do not?"

As a consultant writer, I am responsible for developing written materials that communicate the key benefits and value of an upcoming treatment to a variety of stakeholders, including patients, clinicians, formulary managers, regulatory institutions and reimbursement bodies. These materials include value dossiers, health technology assessments/reimbursement submission dossiers and visually impactful PowerPoint presentations. Beyond writing, some projects also give me the chance to get creative – especially when translating text-heavy supporting evidence into an array of colourful infographics and figures, or when developing interactive virtual workshops. A fundamental pillar of market access writing is to always ask myself "How will this therapy help patients in ways that other therapies do not?".

It is also important to remain in close contact with clients and all project team members. Clients are typically reliant on your familiarity with the data and supporting evidence, as you are often closer to it than any other member of the team. A writer may expect to attend client meetings to provide an update on progress, discuss content or even listen in to take notes.

Having worked in market access for 3.5 years, I can confidently say that it has been a life-changing experience with ample opportunity to learn and grow as an expert in healthcare. I feel extremely grateful to work in a supportive team of market access, real-world evidence and HEOR specialists with a positive 'can-do' attitude at OPEN Health. People really go out of their way to help each other, and senior management make efforts to place us on projects that suit both our interests and strengths. On a personal level, I take great pride in ensuring that patients gain access to much-needed treatments that can significantly improve their day-to-day life, and even prolong survival. If you're looking to play a key role in giving patients access to medical therapies, market access writing could be for you.

Maria Heuser

Senior Value Analyst
Adelphi Values | PROVE

From very early on in my educational development, I knew I wanted to work in science. This led me to take advanced biology classes at high school and college, and later on to pursue a BSc in biology with a focus on molecular biology and industrial applications. Moving from Germany to the UK for my MSc in biotechnology, I quickly realised that the focus of my course was not just on scientific research involving a lot of laboratory and experimental work, but also on how to adapt the knowledge and skills I had gained for my future career. I learned how to communicate scientific information to a range of audiences, using different writing styles. Additionally, I was able to participate in a literature review project, the aim of which was to locate and present information around a set research question. As part of this module, I gained an understanding of how to critically appraise scientific articles and use different primary research techniques, such as questionnaires, to gain information from key opinion leaders.

After graduating from my MSc, I joined Adelphi Values | PROVE and quickly realised that my new role reflected the interests I had developed during my degree. I learned that MedComms, including market access and HEOR, is a major field in the science world. From there, I was keen to learn more about the commercial side of science, involving working with pharmaceutical companies, while also learning more about disease areas and novel treatments, which is something I really enjoy.

As part of my role as a Senior Value Analyst at Adelphi Values | PROVE I am involved in systematic literature reviews on a much larger scale to those I have experienced before. The information we gather and data gaps we identify help us to inform documents such as global value dossiers. These impactful dossiers present the value story of a treatment by positioning it into global markets on a clinical, humanistic and economic level to support the market access decisions of our clients, and help to support the reimbursement of therapies around the globe. As part of this, I was able to gain insight into new fields, such as health economics, which helped me to understand more about the commercial side of this industry. In addition, my role involves a lot of creative aspects, such as presenting key information on 'catchy' slide decks and posters, as well as primary research techniques, involving questionnaires and interviews with experts in their fields.

My role gives me the opportunity to learn more about business aspects, including client relations and project management…

What fulfils me the most in my role in HEOR/market access is that it allows me to utilise and deepen knowledge from my degrees, while continuously developing new skills. Every project is unique in this constantly evolving industry and no day seems the same. To be working on a range of project types at one time, which requires a variety of working techniques and knowledge, while learning new things about science is exactly what I hoped to pursue. On top of that, my role gives me the opportunity to learn more about business aspects, including client relations and project management, and to grow professionally.

Harrison L. *Evidence generation and communication*. June 2022.
For more information about careers in MedComms, see www.FirstMedCommsJob.com

Nick Leach

Founder
redthread market access

Mine's probably a familiar story. Reflecting during my DPhil on what I wanted to do, I knew I wouldn't find a career in academia fulfilling. What I really enjoyed was *writing* about science. And although academia offered opportunities to learn and tackle challenging problems – both of which I enjoyed – it didn't appeal as a career. But what to do instead?

Oxford was – and still is – a great place to start in medical writing. And after serendipitously discovering it existed at all, I spoke to some agencies, completed my writing test, and was set for a career in MedComms. Or so I thought.

At the time, finding myself starting my first day in the market access team was something of a surprise. I can still remember thinking "What's market access?" and "Who on earth thought all these acronyms were a good idea?" But after more than 10 years in market access, I'm extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to work in this field.

Because while I started in market access by accident, I've stayed because I believe it's a truly great place to work. I'm lucky to be able to work with passionate, brilliant people, both clients and my own team. To provide consulting and writing support on health technology assessment submissions means that we genuinely help patients access potentially life-changing treatments. To work in partnership with the NHS to improve service provision. And to spend my time untangling complicated evidence to tell compelling and visually impactful stories around the value of a therapy. It's an immensely rewarding area to work in.

So even if you have your heart set on a more traditional MedComms role, keep an open mind about market access and value communication

I've worked in a few agencies across my career. Some enormous, multi-billion-dollar behemoths, and others with a more personable vibe. My preference is certainly for the latter, though I believe there's an agency to suit most personalities. For me, though, I never quite found an agency that fully aligned with my values. One that really believed people and purpose were as important – if not more so – than profit. So, in 2020, I decided to create it myself, and founded redthread market access.

Over the past 3 years it's been amazing to see our team grow, and our clients trust us to deliver our signature blend of brilliant writing and market access insights. As an independent company, we have the autonomy to run the business how we want, and everyone in the team has a voice. This gives us the opportunity to do things like donating at least 1% of all our revenue to causes we care about. Forever. Because we think it's the right thing to do.

Every day is different. And yes, every day has its challenges. But ultimately that's what we enjoy. Solving problems to help our clients, and patients. And I wouldn't have it any other way.

So even if you have your heart set on a more traditional MedComms role, keep an open mind about market access and value communication. You never know where it might lead you.

Ruth Lewis

Senior Medical Writer
HEOR

I am a senior medical writer at HEOR, and a native Welsh speaker with a background in applied biological sciences and two 14-year-old twin girls, but how did I get here?

During my degree I worked in the USA as part of a placement year carrying out research in a cardiovascular electrophysiology laboratory at Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond. It was here that an interest in science became the passion that would draw me into academia for the next 16 years.

My early days were spent teaching pharmacology students at Bath University, but this quickly led to me diving headlong into research roles, first at Bristol University and then closer to home, at Cardiff University. It was the focused nature of research that resulted in my decision to embark on a PhD, studying the role of the innate immune system in cardiovascular disease.

The next few years were a blur of laboratory experiments, scientific discovery and collaborations with both public and private sector institutions. I was in my element, right up to the moment when my twin girls tumbled into my life. If the first 2 years were challenging, the final year of my PhD would be almost impossible. Nevertheless, despite this challenge I not only successfully completed my PhD, but also secured a prestigious fellowship with the Welcome Trust.

The work is varied, fast paced and challenging, offering a wide range of services to market access on a global scale

I think having a family has really helped me decide on what I now want from my career. I loved the frenetic pace of academia, but I now have other responsibilities. I still want to make a difference and be able to use the experience I've gained, and it was this desire that led me to HEOR and medical writing.

It was the perfect career move for me. The work is varied, fast paced and challenging, offering a wide range of services to market access on a global scale. Projects involve the production of systematic literature reviews, health technology assessments, global value dossiers and publications across a broad range of disease areas.

It's the people who make an organisation and I've really enjoyed having the opportunity to work alongside and learn from a multidisciplinary team made up of scientists, health economists, analysts, statisticians and developers. I also get to network, collaborating with clinicians and leading scientists from across the world, but most importantly I'm able to make a difference, by helping to bring life-changing therapies to market.

As I approach my fourth year with HEOR I look forward with excitement to the new opportunities and experiences that will come from being part of this rapidly expanding organisation.

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Paula Martin

Senior Consultant – Value Communications and Market Access Valid Insight (part of the Bioscript group)

My journey into value communications and market access consulting is everything but a straight line! I am a boarded veterinary neurologist who practiced veterinary medicine for 10 years. I completed a PhD in veterinary and comparative medicine, and combined my work as a clinician with research and teaching. I also published close to 20 original manuscripts in peer-reviewed journals, and I developed a strong passion for scientific communication and writing.

Eventually, I sought a career change but was unsure about the path forward since I had been a 'vet' most of my life. I was very comfortable with 'all things medicine and writing', so it is only natural I became a medical writer. I dedicated the following 5 years to working as a senior medical writer at two different MedComms agencies and also as a freelancer. I developed promotional materials, slide decks and reports, and covered a wide variety of drugs and therapy areas (e.g. biologics in psoriasis, paediatric vaccines).

We work closely with our clients to ensure the value their products bring to patients is clearly articulated in a way that is meaningful to decision makers…

During my medical writing career, I had brief encounters with market access; however, I did not fully understand all the implications of value communications and market access.

Fast forward a few years, I am now a senior consultant at Valid Insight (part of the Bioscript group). Valid Insight is an award-winning global market access consultancy firm specialising in value insight generation, market access strategy, value communications and evidence development.

The journey from medical writing to consulting has been a challenging one as they present some key differences (but I do love a challenge!). For example, MedComms typically focuses on communicating science to healthcare professionals, whereas value communications and market access activities are most often targeted at developing evidence-based value messages for payers. Payers are the people responsible for making decisions about which medicines/medical devices will be reimbursed and/or purchased by a country, region or hospital. In addition, value communications and market access work covers all stages of the product lifecycle (i.e. when a drug/device is in the early stages of development, when it is pursuing marketing authorisation, or when it has already launched and is facing new access barriers).

I fully enjoy my consultant role in value communications and market access; consulting is all about finding solutions to help others. By communicating value to payers, we help clients, we help companies, but most importantly, we help patients. We help patients by finding solutions to situations in which the access of a medicine or medical device to the market, and hence to patients, may be compromised or facing difficulties. We work closely with our clients to ensure the value their products bring to patients is clearly articulated in a way that is meaningful to decision makers (i.e. payers), with the ultimate goal of ensuring a given medicine or medical device reaches the right patient at the right time with the right price.

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Jessica Richardson

AMICULUM Access

During my PhD, I found that I preferred writing about my research rather than actually doing the experiments in the lab! I soon realised that a career in academia just wasn't for me and began to investigate other potential options.

I discovered market access through a 'Careers Beyond Academia' event organised for postgraduate students at my university. From talking to people working in the field, it seemed that a medical writing career in market access could be a perfect fit. This event inspired me to seek additional opportunities to further develop my writing skills as I completed my PhD. I prepared manuscripts and presentations, and wrote articles for a student science magazine. I was also happy to successfully apply for an internship with BioNews, in which I researched and wrote weekly articles for publication online. As well as an opportunity to develop my skills, this allowed me to make sure that a step away from the lab and into medical writing would be the right move for me.

After a brief postdoc position, I started my first role as a medical writer in a market access consultancy firm around 5 years ago. Straight away I was able to use and build on the skills that I had developed during my time at university. However, I found that as I became more experienced, I was beginning to spend less time on writing and more time on project management.

I joined AMICULUM Access 1 year ago in a role that allows me to focus on the research and writing side of projects, and develop my career path based on my own skills and interests. One of the things that I like the most about working as a medical writer in market access is the variability and the fact that you are always learning. I particularly enjoy developing value stories and global value dossiers, which involve communicating the unique value of new treatments in an effective and impactful way. I have worked on projects supporting novel treatments in several therapy areas, and although I have worked on a broad range of projects, including literature reviews, advisory boards and publications, there are still project types that I have not yet worked on. Project deliverables range from Word reports to PowerPoint presentations and infographics. At AMICULUM Access there are also opportunities to work with other healthcare communication agencies within AMICULUM.

I would recommend considering a career in market access writing to anyone with a similar experience who enjoys communicating science but is unsure about academia

Overall, this is a rewarding career as the projects that you contribute to are ultimately helping treatments get to patients. I would recommend considering a career in market access writing to anyone with a similar experience who enjoys communicating science but is unsure about academia.

Cecilia Silva

Market Access Writer
Prime Access
(a Prime Global consultancy)

In my childhood, I had many philosophical questions about the world. I wanted to learn about life as we know it, the science of death and how cells work, so I studied for a biochemistry and genetics undergraduate degree at the University of Nottingham. There, I developed a fundamental knowledge of molecular biology and medicine, and I was able to gain essential skills for HEOR and market access such as scientific writing and problem solving.

During my university years, I was adamant that I needed to find a career where I could apply and develop my scientific knowledge, so I did a year of industrial experience with a global pharmaceutical company. I worked within the regulatory strategy department and gained a well-rounded understanding of the pharmaceutical industry, and regulatory and healthcare authorities, and the importance of medicines to patients. I also acquired a good awareness of the business models and social structures that determine patient access to medicinal products.

I started my career in HEOR and market access as an associate market access writer, here at Prime Access. Through IGNITE, a training programme for all entry-level starters at Prime Global, I was quickly introduced to the world of MedComms and, as part of the programme, I received work-relevant training to develop my scientific writing, presentation and communication skills. I was also introduced to editorial review processes, publication processes and the wide array of MedComms deliverables offered by Prime Global.

I feel grateful to work in an intellectually stimulating job where I can combine my passion for science with strategic insight and analytical prowess

My first project at Prime Access was working on the development of a global value dossier for an oncological product, so I dived right into understanding the fundamental principles of value communication that include burden of disease, unmet need, and clinical and economic value. I enjoyed using complex data to inform the big picture and presenting data in clear visual formats.

Since then, I've worked on a range of projects including slide decks, literature reviews, client affiliate workshops and payer research. Each project has been unique and offered a new perspective, whether it be from a different therapy area, a new client or a different target audience. I also had the opportunity to attend the World Evidence, Pricing and Access (EPA) Congress with others from the team in Amsterdam this year – the first post-lockdown, in-person congress we attended! It was great to promote Prime Access, network with industry leaders, and learn about the current trends and challenges affecting our pharmaceutical clients.

Everyone at Prime Access is friendly, collaborative and creative. The team has grown a lot in the past year, yet we're still a tight-knit group and we all share our ideas, challenges and successes freely. As I approach my 2-year anniversary, I feel grateful to work in an intellectually stimulating job where I can combine my passion for science with strategic insight and analytical prowess. I am motivated to help my clients communicate the value of their medicinal products and ultimately help patients access the medicines they need.

Pip White

Principal Medical Writer
Source Health Economics

Although I first heard about medical writing during my PhD, I didn't give it much thought as I was sure that I was destined for a lifelong career in academia. When the time eventually came for me to consider my next career steps, the decision was not as easy as I thought it would be; I had discovered that I enjoyed writing manuscripts just as much as the benchtop work, and by this point I also had a greater appreciation for the challenges in academia.

Having explored my options, I quickly discovered that medical writing is a very broad field, encompassing market access, regulatory, academia and education, just to name a few. After deciding to pursue market access, I was delighted to be offered a trainee/associate medical writing role at a large agency, and stayed for several years. Currently, I work at Source Health Economics and am a principal medical writer in the market access and value communication team. Our close-knit writing team works alongside health economists, systematic review analysts and statisticians to provide solutions for our clients – pharmaceutical and medical device companies – with the shared goal of bringing therapies to the market.

I am responsible for developing written materials for a variety of stakeholders and audiences, such as manuscripts and conference materials (e.g. for academics), value dossiers and PowerPoint presentations (e.g. for payers), workshops/meetings (e.g. with clinical experts) and health technology assessments to reimbursement bodies (e.g. for the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence [NICE]). All written materials are scientifically accurate and evidence based, and I'm also able to harness some of the skills I developed during my PhD, such as interpreting data and using referencing software. No 2 days are the same and I work across multiple projects to ensure the delivery of high-quality written materials within agreed timelines.

I feel fortunate to have found a role with so much variety and continued learning

I feel fortunate to have found a role with so much variety and continued learning; I especially enjoy becoming knowledgeable in different disease areas and keeping abreast of therapeutic developments. At Source Health Economics there is a continued commitment to everyone's development and training, and collaboration between teams is highly encouraged. As a medical writer, the exposure to health economics and literature review training is enriching and, likewise, I enjoy providing training in my own areas of expertise.

As a small independent agency that is growing, it is a really exciting time to be at Source; the work environment is welcoming and supportive, and we are always interested to hear from anyone who would like to know more about medical writing.

Sophie Wicken

Consultant
Oxford PharmaGenesis

I graduated with an MBiochem and, after a year spent working on a research project for my final dissertation, I decided that labs certainly were not for me! Fuelled by a final year panic, where everyone was starting to get a job, I accepted a role as an audit associate at an accountancy and finance firm. After 18 months, it was clear that a day filled mostly with Excel spreadsheets was not motivating me and I missed science. Furthermore, I wanted a career where I could make a meaningful contribution, where I would be constantly learning and challenged, and where I could have a good work–life balance.

After a catch-up with a friend from university who worked in MedComms, it seemed that a job that ticked all the boxes did exist after all! I applied to Oxford PharmaGenesis and, after completing the writing test and interview process, was delighted to accept a position as an associate consultant in Value Demonstration Practice.

The work is fulfilling and makes a meaningful contribution to international healthcare…

Having been in my current role for more than 18 months now, I am so grateful that the people who interviewed me saw promise and offered me the position. I enjoy and am interested in the work that we do. I have taken opportunities to work on a wide range of deliverables in different therapeutic areas and at different stages of the product lifecycle. I enjoy working on global value dossiers and health technology assessments, which help to communicate the value of therapies to payers, with the aim of getting therapies to market and so to patients who have a high unmet medical need. I have also enjoyed developing relationships with clients and helping to implement their needs and strategies with each deliverable.

Oxford PharmaGenesis values both team and individual development; you never have to go far for opportunities to develop, and I have attended a variety of internal workshops and external training courses to help with my day-to-day work and to build a strong foundation for career progression. The culture here at Oxford PharmaGenesis is lovely and it feels like a community. Everyone I work with is friendly, accommodating and passionate about the work that they do. I am surrounded by people who constantly strive to do better, and there is no better environment for personal and professional growth. Each deliverable is a team effort, and everyone works together to achieve the best possible outcome, with reviewers providing helpful and constructive feedback and everyone in the team chipping in and supporting the project when needed to make sure that we deliver the best product for our clients.

I would highly recommend medical writing at Oxford PharmaGenesis: the work is fulfilling and makes a meaningful contribution to international healthcare, and the people here make every day enjoyable.

Claire Woon

AMICULUM Access

A degree in chemistry, followed by a PhD, then on to a career in research – that's the career path when you enjoy science, right? That's what I thought as I came to the end of my PhD in salt crystallisation at The University of Manchester and struggled with the realisation that I didn't want to be in the lab anymore. The challenge was that I had no idea what else was out there!

Despite my pharmaceutically sponsored PhD, I had never really considered the ex-laboratory process that drugs went through to reach patients. As I searched for my next move, I started looking into the different pharmaceutical functions, especially marketing, medical affairs and market access. I had a vague awareness that companies needed to show authorities that their products worked and were safe, but who was paying for them and what information they would need hadn't crossed my mind. I found the need to balance clinical and economic data fascinating. Market access and health economics opened a new perspective and an opportunity to mitigate a challenge I hadn't even known existed! The need to clearly and concisely communicate the value of a product, both in clinical and economic terms, to audiences with many different backgrounds and knowledge levels really appealed.

My market access journey began at Complete Market Access, part of the Complete Medical Group. There, I was first introduced to a wide range of projects. Through various company takeovers (including a takeover of the group by McCann), I moved with the group as they became Double Helix. Being a part of this agency gave me a wide array of opportunities in terms of project experience, responsibility and global travel.

Market access and health economics opened a new perspective and an opportunity to mitigate a challenge I hadn't even known existed!

In 2015, however, I decided to investigate other opportunities and learn more about the broader MedComms industry. I joined AMICULUM, an independent business comprising a cluster of specialised agencies, still owned by its founders, and thus far with only a small presence in the market access space. At AMICULUM, I have provided expert support for market access projects across the different agencies within the business, and driven growth of the area, tapping into pockets of experience and training/educating teams as needed.

In 2020, AMICULUM's approach to market access evolved with the launch of 'AMICULUM Access'. I now lead the AMICULUM Access team, which comprises market access experts covering different geographies with a range of specialist skill sets. We still take a collaborative approach as standard and work with other agencies in the AMICULUM cluster to provide the right skills to meet our clients' needs. Having led the team for 2 years I have loved watching the team grow, expanding our client relationships and service offerings, and our ability to support other AMICULUM agencies. As we go from strength to strength, I am excited to see where the next 2 years will take us!

Harrison L. *Evidence generation and communication*. June 2022.
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I work in HEOR/market access...

"I work in HEOR/market access because where else can you find a career where you get to work on everything from hard data analysis to emotive visuals, to dig around in brand strategy, walk the complex paths to drug reimbursement and also delve into the disease course for the patients themselves?"

Mary Beton, Market Access Writer at redthread market access

"I work in HEOR/market access as it allows me to combine my passions for scientific research and creative thinking and apply them in a way that may significantly impact patient care. As a medical writer, I work on a variety of projects and disease indications, so every day is different and full of interesting new challenges. The role offers a continuous flow of learning and the ability to gain a diverse range of new skills."

Jen Ferris, Medical Writer at Source Health Economics

"I work in HEOR/market access because I enjoy translating complex scientific data into compelling evidence-based messages that ultimately help patients to gain access to better treatments. I love working across a diverse range of disease areas and collaborating with colleagues and client teams to tackle challenges and produce creative solutions."

Rosie Greatrex, Senior Market Access Writer at redthread market access

"I work in HEOR/market access as it's a career that offers a unique opportunity to work with pharmaceutical companies around the world to support patient access to novel, life-changing therapies. The variety in deliverables, therapy areas and clients means that every day is different, and a new challenge is always just around the corner."

Scott Higgins at AMICULUM Access

"I work in HEOR/market access because every day brings new challenges; I am constantly learning about novel and exciting healthcare interventions, and applying transferable skills learned during my PhD as well as new skills learned during my time so far as a medical writer. The opportunity to work across a broad range of deliverables, including health technology assessments, global value dossiers, posters and manuscripts, means no 2 days are the same! Ultimately, it is extremely rewarding, in close collaboration with colleagues and clients, to play a part in helping patients access novel therapies."

Emma Lones, Medical Writer at Source Health Economics

"I work in HEOR/market access because it involves an ever-changing landscape of different projects and disease areas. I learn something new every day and love becoming an expert in a specific disease area for a few months before moving onto the next challenge. Working in market access allows me to combine the scientific knowledge I developed through my degree with critical thinking and commercial awareness to benefit the world of medicine."

Tom Metcalf, Value Analyst at Adelphi Values | PROVE

"I work in HEOR/market access because it never fails to present new challenges and opportunities to learn. My workload is always diverse, involving a range of project types in a variety of disease areas. Each project aims to provide bespoke solutions that are tailored to our clients' needs, allowing me to develop my business acumen while striving to achieve the overall goal of improving patient lives."

Gillian Nicol, Senior Value Analyst at Adelphi Values | PROVE

"I work in HEOR/market access because it gives me the opportunity to be curious. The variety of therapy areas and types of deliverables means I am constantly learning something new or applying my knowledge/experiences in unusual ways. The work is also incredibly rewarding, as a lot of what we do contributes towards patients receiving novel treatments, which hopefully improve their lives."

Dom Partridge, Medical Writer at Source Health Economics

"I work in HEOR/market access because it allows me to expand my scientific knowledge and academic skills in a variety of projects across many disease and therapeutic areas. It is fascinating to learn about different aspects of healthcare technologies, as well as effective value communication, which will help to provide patient access to new medicines."

Eva Wan Ying So, Associate Medical Writer at Source Health Economics

"I work in HEOR/market access because of the flexibility and variety of work, while at the same time enjoying the challenge of mastering scientific and technical aspects and winning the trust of each client. Each working day brings new science and new techniques, and I'm constantly stimulated by the mix of science and business."

Robin Wyn, Senior Technical Value Analyst at Adelphi Values | PROVE

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