



# An industry perspective

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# Disclaimer

- ▶ All views are my own and do not represent any formal policy of Merck KGaA.

# My career path

- ▶ BSc Biology, PhD Medical Microbiology
- ▶ Post doc for 7 Years
- ▶ Independent agency for 11.5 years
- ▶ Medical writer to Director
  - ▶ Group head and primary contact for multiple clients
  - ▶ Managing team of 12, largely writers but also client services/account management
  - ▶ Company-wide leadership responsibilities, new business, training of writers etc
  - ▶ In-house consulting for Global, moderation of internal and external meetings etc

# Associate Director, Global Medical Communications Merck Group

- ▶ Global Med Comms is part of Global Medical Excellence, within Global Medical Affairs
- ▶ Publications, medical information and associated strategic activities
- ▶ Core member of Global Project Team, work closely with medical directors
- ▶ Interface with regional and local Medical Affairs on local publication planning/execution
- ▶ Mentoring Global Publication Managers/Junior Publication Managers
- ▶ Core Congress Team members for major oncology meetings
- ▶ Support Medical Information in development of key materials

# Thoughts on training of medical writers

- ▶ Conducted (highly unscientific) survey of our group
- ▶ Mixed group some with agency experience, pubs leads at various levels and also medical information
- ▶ Simple questions, free text answers

# What are the key attributes for medical writers?

- ▶ Know how to write
- ▶ Attention to detail
- ▶ Good knowledge of the disease area
- ▶ Strong scientific background
- ▶ A lot of experience in publication writing
- ▶ Understand clinical data
- ▶ Know how to visually display data
- ▶ Good contextual writing and communication skills, and customer orientation
- ▶ On-time delivery
- ▶ Proactive attitude
- ▶ Accurate, organised, creative
- ▶ Ability to write to different audiences/in different styles
- ▶ English native speaker

# Qualifications

What qualification do you most often see for medical writers?

- ▶ PhD (95%)

Do you assign any importance to the qualifications of the writers you work with?

- ▶ No
- ▶ Not so much the final qualification but the scientific education, important for writers to have a strong scientific base and know the data
- ▶ “To a degree”. I expect the writer to have an understanding of the medical issues and data in the manuscript but that does not need to be in-depth. More important is good communication, an understanding of how our stakeholders work, and of course very good writing skills
- ▶ Great deal

Are you aware of any medical-writing specific qualifications?

- ▶ Only CMPP (50%)
- ▶ None (40%)
- ▶ AMWA and Euro equivalent, medical writing association chapters
- ▶ “I believe there are online courses but not sure how credible they are”

# CMPP

Do you know what the CMPP qualification represents? Yes 90%

Is it important: No 66%

- ▶ “No, as experience can provide without the formal CMPP”
- ▶ “Not really; however, some may consider it useful to solidify knowledge on process/standards or as a point of differentiation”
- ▶ “Important for editorial directors to possess the CMPP qualification but not necessarily medical writers.”
- ▶ It helps, although not crucial to the job

What benefits do you think it brings?

- ▶ Provide guidance in GPP, industry standards; ensures that Pharma stay on the right side of compliance with ICJME and knowledge on good pub practices
- ▶ It provides additional qualification for scientists in publication practices if these were not already part of their education.
- ▶ It shows a certain level of competence” if you wish to work in the publications strategy/management arena

## Role of industry

- ▶ Train in specific Pharma needs - ensuring editorial style meets needs in terms of ensuring publications are message driven; provide guidance in terms of content (messaging, lexicon)
- ▶ We do have a role in transferring product and process knowledge, as well as strategy
- ▶ We should always be clear when providing our briefs/expectations and aim to provide constructive criticism
- ▶ “The agency has to take the bulk of responsibility for quality (flow, grammar etc.) and appropriate style (poster vs manuscript vs visual slide set)”
- ▶ Very little; I don’t think that it is our role more than ensuring that a new agency is trained in Merck-specific processes
- ▶ “In medical information we invested a lot in the training of agency medical writers. Given the high staff fluctuation, I’m not sure if this investment is worth it. I would prefer a higher level of qualification in medical writing from the beginning”

## Additional observations

- ▶ From an agency point of view, a good editor is a must and this task should not fall solely on the medical writer.

## Summary

- ▶ Perception is that our role is really around internal processes and supporting product/disease area education
- ▶ Not our role to support basic writing training
- ▶ Good awareness of CMPP, though not perceived as critical by the majority
  - ▶ Ex-agency employees seem more comfortable with experience in lieu of CMPP qualification than people who've never worked agency-side
- ▶ If formal training/qualifications are to be instigated or supported by agencies they will need to educate pharma pubs groups on what it is and why it's important!