Starting your career in med comms

Jane Smith
altogether different
How did I get here?

A passion for science and a desire to keep learning

Switch tracks… from editorial to account management

Editorial role in first med comms agency

Work experience at Lippincott Williams & Wilkins

Research role at Laboratory of the Government Chemist

Journalism scholarship at Royal Society of Chemistry
So, what is med comms?

Work with the pharmaceutical industry to raise awareness of diseases and treatments, educating and informing healthcare professionals on the benefits and risks of new therapies, supported by clinical and economic data.
Types of projects

Meetings
- Satellite symposia
- Standalone meetings
- Advisory boards
- Speaker training

Medical affairs
- Slide kits
- Expert engagement
- Publications/pubs planning
- Literature reviews

Commercial
- Promotional materials
- Objection handlers
- Internal training
- Market analyses

Digital
- Websites
- Apps
- E-learning
- Videos and animations
What does med comms mean to me?

- Work with the pharmaceutical industry to raise awareness of diseases and treatments, educating and informing healthcare professionals on the benefits and risks of new therapies, supported by clinical and economic data.
- Intellectually stimulating and rewarding
- Chance to expand scientific understanding
- Opportunity for development and growth
- Teamwork and collaboration
- May involve travel to meet clients/KOLs
What are the entry opportunities?

Key attributes for any role: Scientific knowledge, teamwork, eye for detail, organizational skills, good communication, eagerness to learn
Choosing an agency – key criteria

- **Network**: Larger organizations, often spanning med comms, advertising and PR
- **Independent**: Tend to be smaller; may offer opportunity for greater responsibility early in career
- **Local**: Focus on an individual market or region
- **Global**: Support HQ clients pre- and post-launch
- **Specialist**: Focus on one sector – eg training or market access
- **Full service**: Span a range of services – eg publications, digital, training, meetings, consultancy
Not all agencies are the same…

You need to consider:

- Reputation
- Culture
- Team turnover
- Training opportunities
Sources of information

Company websites provide insights into agency life and culture
Check out Firstmedcommsjob.com for more specific information about landing your first job
Internships, work experience and networking events are all invaluable sources of information to ensure that you are prepared for the interview and for your first day on the job.
Agency life

Dominika Bijos
My path to my first #medcomms job

How did I get here?
My path to my first #medcomms job

“Your CV must be #medcomms perfect, not just academia perfect”
Obaro

I love science and creativity. What can I do?

#medcomms event

London

@DBijos
Transferable skills

Dominika Anna Bijos, PhD

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ACADEMIC WORK EXPERIENCE
2014–2015  Postdoctoral researcher at School of Physiology and Pharmacology, University of Bristol
Project title: Effects of Viagra on over- and underactive bladder problems

Science communication:
- Writing and reviewing manuscripts (9 publications)
- Summarizing scientific literature in reviews
- Visualizing research concepts in comics, flow charts and figures
- Presenting medical research outputs in posters and STEM outreach
- Editing of a popular science review publication
- Winner of ‘3-minute thesis’ in Bristol, TEDx speaker

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE
2012–2016  Founder and organizer of an annual conference, ‘Young Urology Meeting’. Four meetings to date (www.young-urology.org)

Event organization:
- Managing an organizational team of 4 people: Arranging meetings, producing a yearly plan, distributing tasks
- Budget management and strategic development: Raised over £20,000 over 4 years, reporting to sponsors
- Coordinating logistics and leading on-site activities: Organizing venue, travel, socials and delegate bags

Communication:
- Developing event branding, social media activity and web content
- Inviting key opinion leaders and attendees, email communication
- Building a network: Creating relationships with key opinion leaders, medical researchers and pharma representatives

Account/project manager
Writer: Meetings, symposia
New internal opportunity
Account/project manager
Writer

Communication Collaboration
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Obaro

“I love science and creativity. What can I do?”

“Hi Mai! How are you?”

“Hi, my name is Justyna”

“Hi Mai! How are you?”

“I’m in!”
New job

“Hi, my name is Justyna”

#medcomms event

London

14 September 2015
Manchester

3 writing tests
4 interviews

Mai gets one too!
What to expect?

You will be working as part of a team from day 1 to deliver projects.
Be organized, work to deadlines, communicate clearly, focus on improving the quality of your work
How are you supported?

**Inductions with senior members:**
- Therapy areas
- Processes
- Ongoing on-the-job learning
- Tailored objectives

**Training:**
- ABPI/compliance training
- Monthly seminars
- Formal training

**Social learning and events:**
- Mentoring and feedback
- Social learning
- Industry events
- #medcomms, networkpharma.tv

**As a medical writer**

**Trainee medical writer**

**Ongoing learning**

**As a team member**

- Weekly internal status meetings
- Client calls
- Best practice sharing
- Lunch & learn or tea & teach
- Company events
You are part of the team

- Medical writer
- Medical lead
- Project/account manager
- Designer, editor, technologist
- Client

Communication Collaboration
How do coagulation assays work?

Diagnostic tools in haemophilia used for potency assignment and clinical monitoring:

- **One-stage clotting assay** measures the ability of FVIII in sample to support clot formation once coagulation is initiated with contact activator
  - Uses activator, phospholipid, Ca²⁺
  - Endpoint: Fibrin clot formation (time)

- **Chromogenic assay** measures the ability of FVIII in sample to support FXa generation by the FIXa, FX, (pro)thrombin, and phospholipid provided in the kit
  - Uses chromogenic substrate, phospholipids, Ca²⁺
  - Endpoint: Colour change indicating FXa generation
Feedback is a gift

To investigate the efficacy and safety of a dipeptidyl peptidase 4 inhibitor (DPP4i) once daily in type 2 diabetes (T2D) patients for whom metformin was inappropriate

Barnett et al. 2012

Study aims

Placebo run-in (2 weeks) n=227
Randomization (2:1)
18 weeks
DPP4i 5 mg (n=151)
34-week extension
DPP4i 5 mg (n=137)
Placebo (n=76)
Sulfonylurea (n=64)

Study design

Primary efficacy results

Placebo n=73
0.21
DPP4i 5 mg once daily n=147

Adjusted mean change in HbA1c

Glycated haemoglobin (HbA1c) was significantly reduced with DPP4i compared with placebo at week 18

Adjusted mean difference in change from baseline HbA1c at week 18 was −0.80% (P<0.0001)

Key safety results

During the first 18 weeks, hypoglycaemia was reported in 1.3% (n=2) of the DPP4i-treated patients; these episodes were neither severe nor confirmed by blood glucose measurement

Conclusion

• DPP4i was an efficacious and well-tolerated first-line oral glucose-lowering drug in T2D patients with inadequate glycaemic control who were unable to take metformin
• DPP4i monotherapy is associated with less hypoglycaemia and weight gain compared with sulfonylurea
Justyna joins AMICULUM

“I’m all good. Med comms treating me great. Even 3 years in I still love and appreciate the full-time job!”
Obaro

“I love science and creativity. What can I do?”

“Currently on site for the first time on my own!”

“Hi, my name is Justyna”

“I’m in!”
New job

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@DBijos
Things I have learnt so far

Sweet point between perfection and efficiency
- How to be realistic with your time
- Perfectionism doesn’t always work with budgets
- Even simple things can take far longer than expected

“Team-orientated and collaborative approach”
- We all work towards the same goal
- Share and ask for help without feeling protective of your work
- Briefing external teams – what if what was created doesn’t match your vision?
- Everyone is good at something and we can learn from each other

Agile
- It’s OK to ask questions
- Sharing is caring – brainstorming can trigger fantastic ideas
- Feedback is a gift – faster review cycles can result in higher quality of work more quickly

“Exceptional attention to detail”
- I can recognise a double space
- I use hyphens, en dashes and em dashes
- I see pixel misalignments between slides
- I dug into ‘half-life’ until I discovered people meant ‘terminal half-life’
Come and speak to the team at the AMICULUM booth