The agency perspective: What we do and how we do it

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Overview

• What is medical communications?
• The role of the medical writer, and what we look for in one
• The role of the account manager, and what we look for in one
• Why join a Med Comms agency?
My background
What is medical communications?
What is medical communications?

When your Dad asks you exactly what it is you do for a living...

• Journalism?  ❌
• Academic publishing?  ❌
• ‘Evil’ pharmaceutical industry henchman?  ❌

Medical communications agencies provide consultancy services to the pharmaceutical industry to help raise awareness of medicines via education and promotion
What does a Med Comms agency do?

• Most importantly... we help pharma companies to educate and inform their customers about the benefits and risks of [new] therapies, **supported by data**

• We also provide strategic counsel to pharma on optimising and maximising dissemination of data to all relevant target audiences

• Scientific and commercial communications to increase anticipation around the therapy and differentiate it from competitors, **supported by data**

Why would pharma companies need this?
Average R&D cost of a new medicine up to launch: $1 billion

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<th>Year 0</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>11</th>
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<td>Discovery research</td>
<td>Development research</td>
<td>Regulatory review</td>
<td>Post-mktng level</td>
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<td>Synthesis Biological testing &amp; pharmacological screening</td>
<td>Phase I</td>
<td>Phase II</td>
<td>Phase III</td>
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<td>30 voluns</td>
<td>100-200 patients</td>
<td>1000 patients</td>
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Many different agency services... and a lot of terminology

- Regulatory documentation
- Professional relations
- Publications
- Medical education
- Public relations
- Market research
- Positioning
- Branding
- Advertising
- Health economics
- Market access
- Consultancy
Many agency models

- Large corporate holding groups with advertising, PR, medical education divisions
- Specialists in one or more of the above, or something related (e.g. market access, strategic positioning)
- ‘[exPharma] Man in his shed’

There are also many agencies providing content-free services specifically for the pharma industry:

- Logistics and meeting management
- Skills training
- Venue finding, and so on
You’ll hear the term ‘full service agency’ a lot!

• What does it mean?
  – It means they can do ‘everything’...

• There are good reasons for this:
  – Success in one activity potentially opens up access to different budgets
    – Therefore many agencies:
      • Have specialist divisions that deliver many or all of these services, or
      • Align themselves with complementary agencies
On a day-to-day level, what do Med Comms companies actually do?

• Develop materials, such as:
  – Journal manuscripts [with authors, for peer review]
  – Congress posters and presentations for new data
  – Learning resources [internal training & external education]
  – Scientific slide kits and animations

• Oversee scientific meetings (contents and logistics):
  – Educational events for doctors
  – (Strategic) advisory board meetings
  – Scientific round tables / working groups

• Also:
  – Commercially focused materials, e.g. brochures, leaflets for use by sales reps
  – Competitor intelligence
  – Media materials to support PR
Many agency structures

Core team

- **Client Services Director**
  - Leads team responsible for coordination of delivery timelines and financial management

- **Scientific Services Director**
  - Leads medical writing team and responsible for scientific consistency and accuracy

- **Strategic Counsel**
  - Senior management ensuring programme achieves strategic aims

- **Account Manager**
  - Responsible for managing budgets and timely delivery; coordinating all agency activity

- **Medical Writer**
  - Responsible for developing scientific content and liaising with external experts

- **Editorial Services**
  - Review all content to ensure quality control
  - Liaise with studio on layout

- **Creative Services**
  - Manage all creative elements including design, print, digital

- **Meetings Support**
  - Provide logistical support to core team as appropriate
The role of the medical writer
Role of the medical writer

• Write high-quality, scientifically accurate copy
• Keep up to date with new developments in therapy area(s), and among competitors
  – Reading scientific literature
  – Attending scientific congresses
  – Online learning
• Build relationships with clients, colleagues, other agency teams and opinion leaders (external experts)
• Contribute to strategy for commercialisation of drug and identify opportunities to communicate relevant information to relevant audiences
Role of medical writers

- Ultimately...

Ensure our client’s drug/device is on the prescriber’s “mental formulary” and remains on his/her radar during its lifecycle
A typical day for a medical writer

- There isn’t one!
- Teleconference with client and authors of a publication to take direction from authors on content – and then start writing!
- Finalise core slide deck for use by physicians in European educational meetings
- Develop the agenda for a strategic advisory board for leading global physicians on the launch of a new drug
- Brainstorm ideas and prepare a presentation for the client for a sales force training programme
What do we look for in a new medical writer?

- **MEDICAL:** A science background (but not necessary medical science) – PhD is advantageous
- **WRITER:** Enjoy writing and have a talent for it
- Attention to detail
- Think on your feet
- Problem solver
- Excellent ‘desktop’ research skills
- Able to absorb new concepts rapidly
- Comfortable with statistics
- People skills – ‘bonding’ with colleagues and clients
- Take feedback well!

Deliver what the client wants, on time, on budget
The role of the account manager
Client services fundamentals

• Remember we work in the service industry
• Drive projects to ensure efficient planning and execution
• Recognise client needs and organise resources to deliver
• Know the product you are working on and its basic properties, features and benefits
  – Indication(s)
  – MOA
  – Unique attributes/differentiators
  – Key messages
  – Marketing objectives
Client service: basic principles

- Create a positive, and memorable experience for every client
- Meet (and strive to exceed) expectations while you satisfy the brand team’s needs
- Manage expectations
  - Keep the client informed at each step of the project
- Show that you are a pleasure to work with
- Go the extra mile and look for ways to provide excellent service
- Learn your clients’ individual needs and style of working
  - Regular client contact builds positive relationships
  - Tailor your style of working to that of the client’s
- Become partners with your client
What do we look for in a new account manager?

- **MEDICAL:** Interest in science
- **ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT**
- Enjoy working in the front line!
- Commercial awareness
- Good communication skills
- Good organisational skills
- Team player
- Be comfortable with numbers (budgeting and reconciliations)
- Be comfortable presenting (new business, client meetings, internal meetings)
- Understand product strategy and assist in delivering tactics

> Deliver what the client wants, on time, on budget
Why join a Med Comms agency?
Why join a Med Comms agency?

• Broad experience to be gained
• Fast paced and deadline driven
• Career progression: scope to progress rapidly
• Opportunities for change in direction within agency
  – Editorial & creative
  – Client services
  – Event management
  – Interactive/digital specialism
• Opportunity to work with global experts in their field
• Opportunity to work in a range of therapy areas
Think about whether you like travel

In the past 18 months Darwin has...

Organised...
- 8 large (250+ pax) standalones
- 15 satellite symposia
- 50+ advisory boards
- 12 steering committees
- 4 MDT meetings

... by working with...
- 10+ logistics companies
- More than 15 AV suppliers
- 8 creative agencies
- 12 client teams
- 8 purchasing departments

... In doing so we have...
- Worked with over 200 speaking faculty
- Created more than 90 presentations, edited more than 80 others
- Produced half a dozen supplements, 60 reports / minutes
- 35 electronic minutes, reports and 10 newsletters
Good agency staff are well rounded...

- Expertise and knowledge
- Planning and performance
- Commitment and drive
- Effective communication
- Working with others
- Client responsiveness
- Market awareness
- Practical and creative solutions
- Highest ethical standards

Our clients
... and adopt the highest ethical standards

- Those directed at pharmaceutical companies (and their agents)
  - e.g. Good Publication Practice
- Those directed at journal editors
  - e.g. ICMJE Uniform requirements
- Those directed at authors
  - e.g. The Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT)
- Those directed at professional medical writers
  - e.g. AMWA (US) and EMWA (Europe) guidelines
It’s not all ‘stiff’ medical projects...

Just a few of our more unusual jobs:

• Video live physician interviews (and go for nice lunch in the Tuscan hills)
• Develop and deliver “Jeopardy” game for sales rep training
• Run debate for lung cancer nurses, moderated by Michael Buerk
• Organise live webinar for breast augmentation surgery
  • Assist Miles Hilton-Barber (blind adventurer) with his keynote speech at a standalone meeting for ophthalmologists
...And it isn’t all work, work, work either