Life in MedComms

Rick Flemming MSc, PhD, CMPP
What does a medical writer in MedComms 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 formats

*Also biotech, diagnostics and device companies
**And other audiences!
Overview of some medical communication services

- Publications
  - Educational materials, such as slide kits and training manuals
- Services
  - Digital projects, such as websites, apps, e-learning
  - Strategic and commercial services
  - Live medical/scientific meetings of all sizes
Publications

• Abstracts for congresses
• Posters/slide presentations for congresses
• Clinical study manuscripts
• Review articles
• Meta-analyses
Clinical study manuscript: how it works in practice

Teleconference with study sponsor and authors (e.g. clinical study investigators)

Receive brief for an experienced colleague

Write a bulleted outline

Write first draft based on comments on outline

Address internal review comments and send to study sponsors and authors for review
2.4: Professional Medical Writers

2.4.1: Role of the Professional Medical Writer. Professional medical writers may assist authors in preparing publications and presentations. Properly trained and experienced writers can help authors with the development of publications in a compliant, complete, and timely manner, particularly when authors have limited time or knowledge of publication ethics and current publication and reporting guidelines (7, 21–23). In addition to technical expertise, medical writers should have a good understanding of publication ethics and current publication guidelines. Training programs are provided by various organizations (for example, ISMPP, American Medical Writers Association, European Medical Writers Association, and Drug Information Association), and certification programs with enforceable codes of conduct have been introduced (ISMPP certification Web site, www.ismpp.org/certification; American Medical Writers Association certification Web site, www.amwa.org/certification).
How did I get into medical writing? (and what can you learn from my experience?)
Before MedComms

• BSc in Physiological Sciences, Newcastle University (’93–96)
• MSc in Human and Applied Physiology, King’s College, London (’96–97)
• Editorial Assistant, Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, London (’97–98)
Before MedComms

- PhD Physiology & Pharmacology, Leeds ('98–2002)

Discrete store-operated calcium influx into an intracellular compartment in rabbit arteriolar smooth muscle

R. Flemming, A. Cheong, A. M. Dedman and D. J. Beech
School of Biomedical Sciences, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT, UK

This study tested the hypothesis that store-operated channels (SOCs) exist as a discrete population of Ca\(^{2+}\) channels activated by depletion of intracellular Ca\(^{2+}\) stores in cerebral arteriolar smooth muscle cells and explored their direct contractile function. Using the Ca\(^{2+}\) indicator fura-PE3 it was
Leaving academia

- Narrow career path
- Short-term contracts
- Time for a change
Why did I become a medical writer?

- Wanted to stay in science
- Clear career pathway
- Good mentorship and training
- Good financial benefits
- Variety of projects and therapy areas
- Work in different parts of the UK / world

... and fundamentally, I enjoy and am good at writing...
‘Ups’ and ‘downs’ of MedComms
Challenges: deadlines
Challenges: criticism

√ (6/10)
Could do better
Challenges: writing treadmill
Upsides: variety

- Epilepsy
- Oncology
- Spinal devices
- Thrombosis
- Men’s health
- Plus lots more...
Upsides: teamwork

- Medical writers
- Editorial managers
- Account managers
- Business development
- Design studio
Upsides: travel

- New York
- Chicago
- San Francisco
- Stockholm
- Prague
- Paris
- Florence
- Munich
Upsides: working with the experts
Upsides: demand for your services
Upsides: clearly defined progression

Associate Medical Writer
Medical Writer
Senior Medical Writer
Editorial Manager or Principal Writer
Editorial Unit Manager or Editorial Director
My career in MedComms
My career in MedComms

2003
- Medical Writer, MedComms Agency, Macclesfield
My career in MedComms

2003
- Medical Writer, MedComms Agency, Macclesfield

2005
- Senior Medical Writer, MedComms Agency, Knutsford
My career in MedComms

2003
• Medical Writer, MedComms Agency, Macclesfield

2005
• Senior Medical Writer, MedComms Agency, Knutsford

2006
• Editorial Manager, MedComms Agency, Knutsford
My career in MedComms

2003
- Medical Writer, MedComms Agency, Macclesfield

2005
- Senior Medical Writer, MedComms Agency, Knutsford

2006
- Editorial Manager, MedComms Agency, Knutsford

2008
- Freelance Writer & Consultant
My career in MedComms

2003
- Medical Writer, MedComms Agency, Macclesfield

2005
- Senior Medical Writer, MedComms Agency, Knutsford

2006
- Editorial Manager, MedComms Agency, Knutsford

2008
- Freelance Writer & Consultant

2011
- Co-founder & Director, Medical Writing Agency (Aspire Scientific)
Aspire Scientific is a boutique medical writing agency led by experienced professionals and supported by a select team of talented and highly educated writers.
We deliver an extensive range of high-quality medical writing projects

- Narrative/systematic reviews
- Clinical study manuscripts
- Publication Planning
- Slide kits and posters
- Advisory board reports
- Scientific congress reports
- Training documents
- Educational materials
- Educational materials
Aspire Scientific offer paid work experience to talented and suitably qualified UK-based individuals who have or are working towards a PhD.

If you would like to find out more, then please email Jane Woodrow (jane.woodrow@aspire-scientific.com), with a copy of your CV and, to showcase your writing skills, a 250-word summary of your current research focus.

Quote from a former member of our team, now working for a medical communications agency:

"Working with Aspire alongside my academic role has been a fantastic experience. I have been involved in a range of oncology-based medical writing projects, which has given me a unique insight into the industry. I thoroughly enjoyed completing each assignment and really benefitted from the constructive feedback I received from Aspire. I am now leaving academia having been offered a position with a MedComms agency. My time with Aspire not only helped to confirm my career choice of medical writer, but I believe really helped with my interviews, allowing me to demonstrate a genuine interest in MedComms and my familiarity with the industry."

www.Aspire-Scientific.com
Tel: 01625 575101
What can you learn from my experiences in MedComms?

• Your PhD and/or post-doc are valued!

• But you have to be prepared to start again ‘at the bottom’ and prove your worth in a new, unfamiliar environment
  – Once you have done that, however, there are a lot of opportunities

• Before applying for jobs, try to ensure you can demonstrate the following skills
  – Writing experience and talent
  – Research skills
  – Scientific accuracy
  – Ability to work in a team
  – Knowledge of industry codes and guidelines
Feel free to contact me

rick.flemming@aspire-scientific.com

Search for ‘Rick Flemming’, ‘Aspire’

@RickAspireSci