



Been there, done it, got the T-shirt. Life in Med Comms

Rick Flemming PhD, CMPP





What does a medical writer in Med Comms typically do?

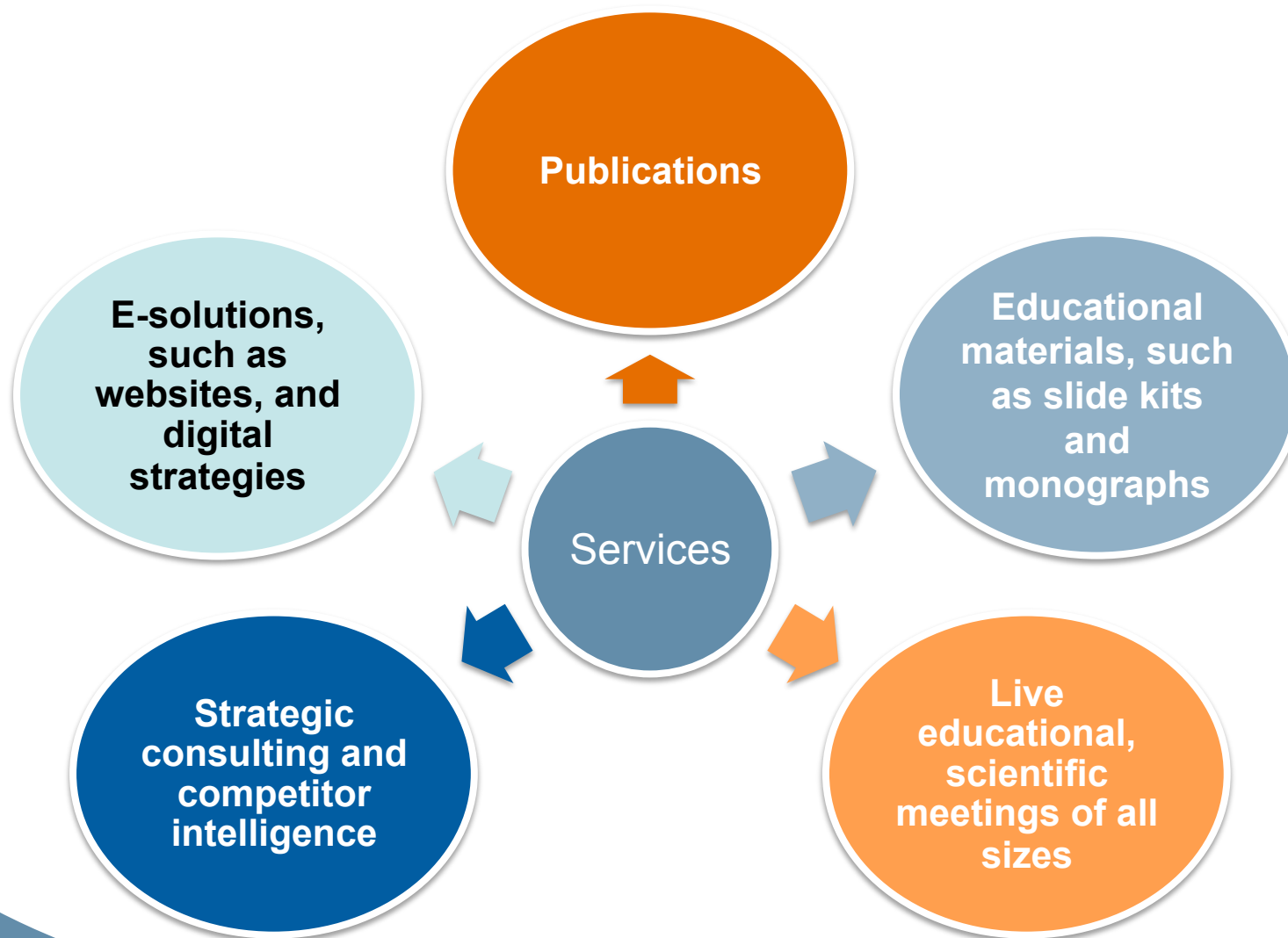
- **Helps pharmaceutical* companies to communicate about their drugs to healthcare professionals****
- **Writes high-quality, scientific copy**
 - in many different therapy areas
 - in many different formats



*Also biotech, diagnostics and device companies


**And other audiences!

Overview of some medical communication services



Publications



- Abstracts for congresses
 - Posters/slide presentations for congresses
 - Clinical study manuscripts
 - Review articles
 - Meta-analyses
- 

Clinical study manuscript

Tolerability and safety of perampanel: two randomized dose-escalation studies

Krauss GL, Bar M, Biton V, Klapper JA, Rektor I, Vaiciene-Magistris N, Squillacote D, Kumar D. Tolerability and safety of perampanel: two randomized dose-escalation studies. *Acta Neurol Scand*: DOI: 10.1111/j.1600-0404.2011.01588.x.
© 2011 John Wiley & Sons A/S.

Objectives – To evaluate, for the first time in patients with epilepsy, the tolerability and safety of escalating doses of oral perampanel, a novel, selective, non-competitive AMPA antagonist, as adjunctive therapy for refractory partial-onset seizures. *Materials and methods* – Two consecutive, randomized, double-blind, dose-escalation studies recruited adults (18–70 years) with uncontrolled partial-onset seizures receiving one to three concomitant antiepileptic drugs. In study 206,

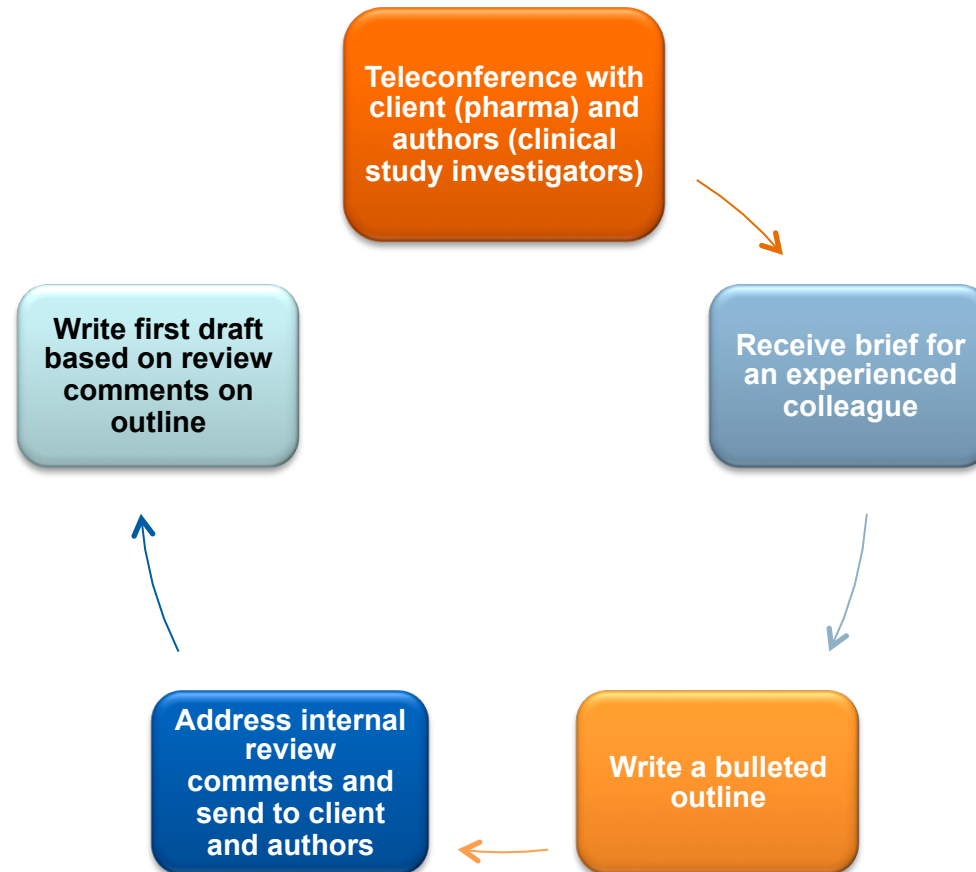
**G. L. Krauss¹, M. Bar², V. Biton³,
J. A. Klapper⁴, I. Rektor⁵,
N. Vaiciene-Magistris⁶,
D. Squillacote⁷, D. Kumar⁷**

¹Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, MD, USA; ²Faculty of Medicine, University of Ostrava, Ostrava, Czech Republic; ³Arkansas Epilepsy Program, Little Rock, AR, USA; ⁴Mile High Research Center, Denver, CO, USA; ⁵Neurologica Klinika, Fakultni Nemocnice U sv. Anny, Brno, Czech Republic; ⁶Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, Kaunas, Lithuania; ⁷Eisai Neuroscience Product Creation Unit, Woodcliff Lake, NJ, USA

Acknowledgements

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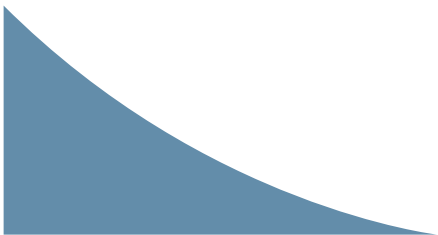
Clinical study manuscript: how it works in practice



Meetings




- Satellite symposia
- ‘Standalone’ meetings
- Advisory board meetings
- Pitches
- Medical/scientific association congresses




Medical congresses

- ASCO, Chicago
 - American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) Annual Meeting
 - >25,000 registered delegates + ca. 10,000 affiliated professionals
 - Cutting-edge science
 - Asked to produce a report for a biosimilar manufacturer





**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)

Journal of Physiology (2002), 543.2, pp. 455–464
© The Physiological Society 2002

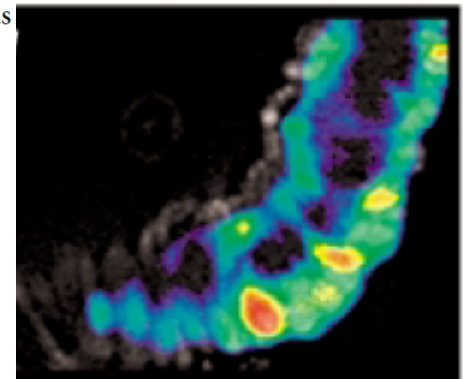
DOI: 10.1113/jphysiol.2002.023366
www.jphysiol.org

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
- Knew my limitations



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...**

What did I learn in academia that is relevant to medical writing?

Research skills and not get side tracked by needless detail

Attention to detail and scientific accuracy

Confidence in learning new skills and facts

Ability to contribute to a team

Challenges of moving into Med Comms: culture shock

- Friday.....



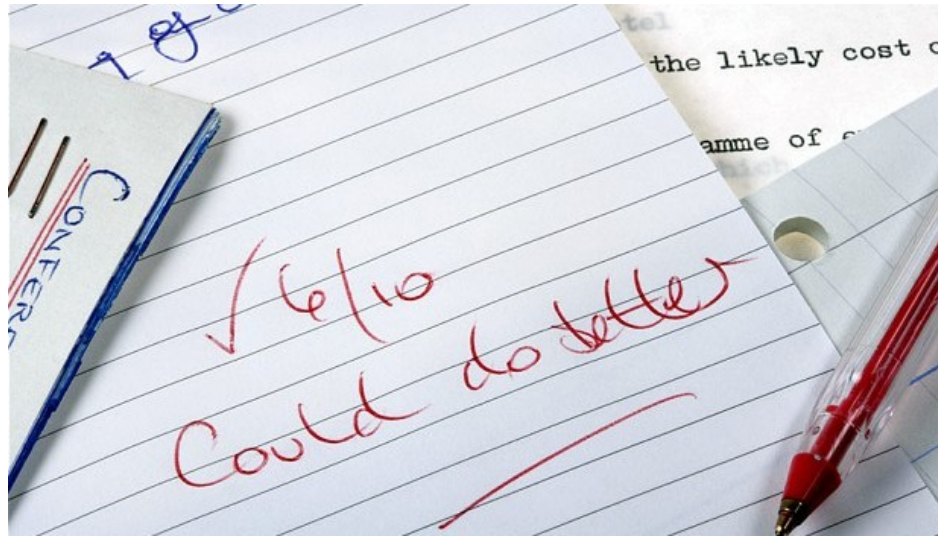
- Monday....



Challenges: deadlines



Challenges: criticism



Challenges: writing treadmill



Upsides: variety



- Epilepsy
 - Oncology
 - Spinal devices
 - Thrombosis
 - Men's health
 - Plus lots, lots more...
- 

Upsides: flexibility (sometimes...)



Upsides: teamwork

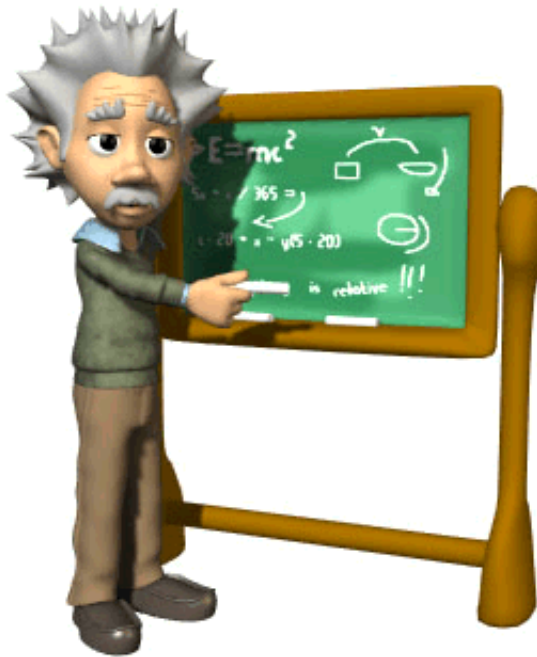


Upsides: travel

- New York
- Chicago
- San Francisco
- Stockholm
- Prague
- Paris
- Florence
- Munich



Upsides: working with the experts



Upsides: demand for your services



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for your move into Medical Communications

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[Principal Medical Writer - Greater London](#)

London

Principal Medical Writer - Greater London
Lucrative Salary
An opportunity has recently come up within a leading Medical Education agency in Greater London. They are looking for someone to fill an integr [Recruiter: SEC Pharma | Posted: 15/09/2015 | Jobcode 140535 | [More...](#)]

[Editorial Team Leader - Medical Communications - Cheshire](#)

North West

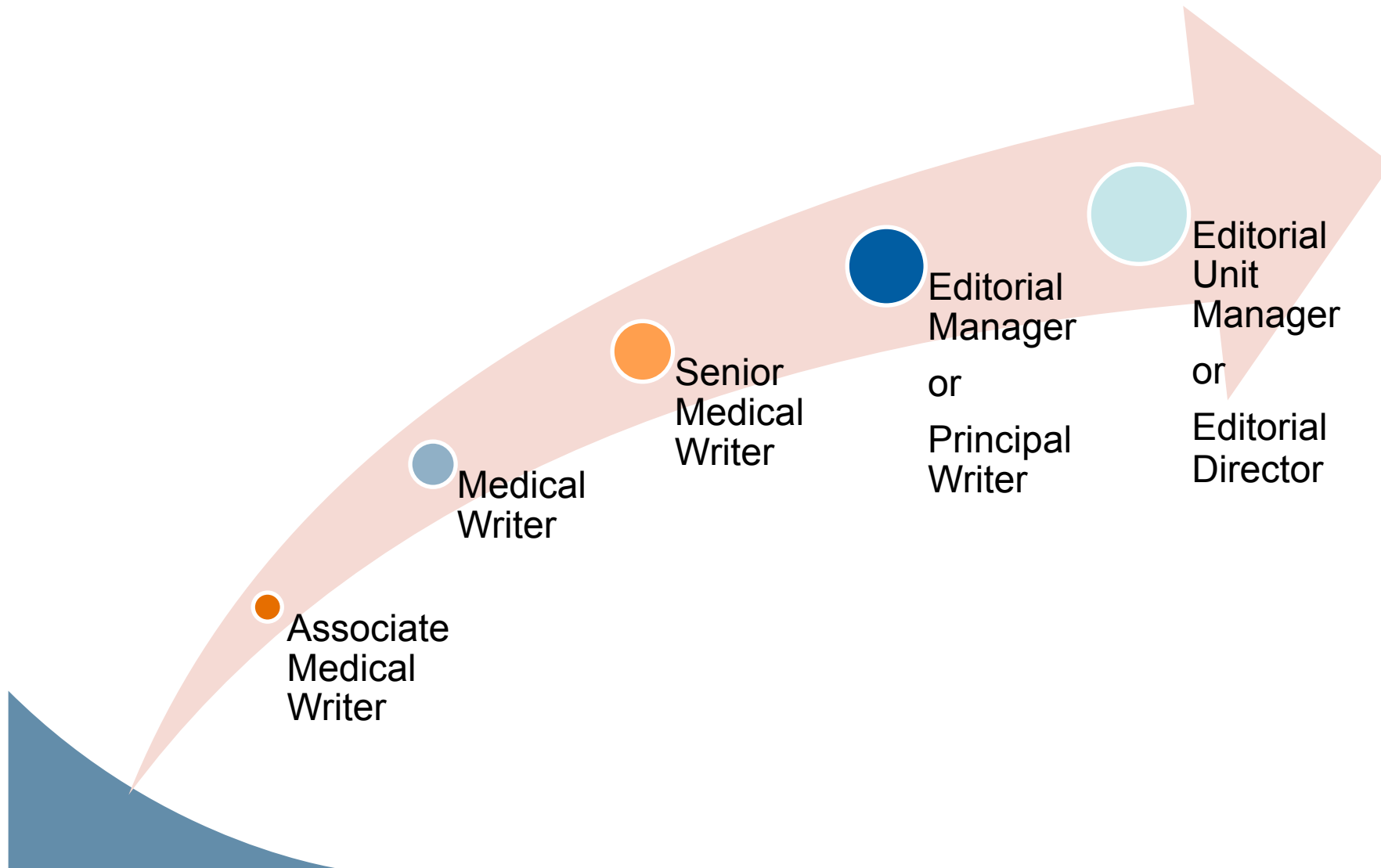
A well-established Medical Communications agency is looking for an Editorial Team Leader to join its team in Cheshire. You will manage a talented editorial team in the development and delivery of high [Recruiter: Fresh Connect | Posted: 15/09/2015 | Jobcode 140533 | [More...](#)]

[Senior Medical Writer - Greater London](#)

London

Senior Medical Writer - Greater London
Salary: Up to £52,000 P/A
Interested in working for an award winning MedComms agency? If so then you may be intrigued by the Senior Medical Writer position I' [Recruiter: SEC Pharma | Posted: 15/09/2015 | Jobcode 140532 | [More...](#)]

Opportunities: clearly defined progression



Increasing opportunities with greater experience

Associate
Medical Writer

- Learn the job
- High proportion of job spent writing at desk

Medical Writer

- Build up experience
- Increase client contact & live meeting experience

Senior
Medical Writer

- Pass on experience and review the work of others
- Lead client teams and meetings without support

Editorial
Manager

- Line management and business development
- Provide clients with strategic advice

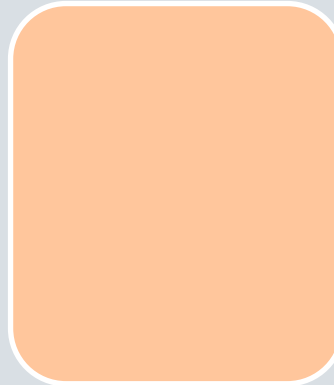
My career in MedComms

2003

- Medical Writer, MedComms Agency, Macclesfield

2005

- Senior Medical Writer, MedComms Agency, Knutsford



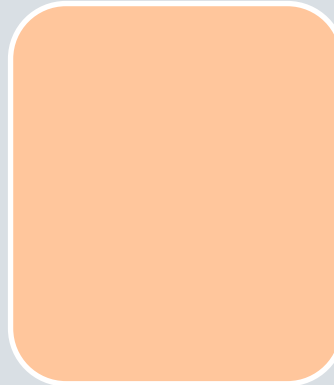
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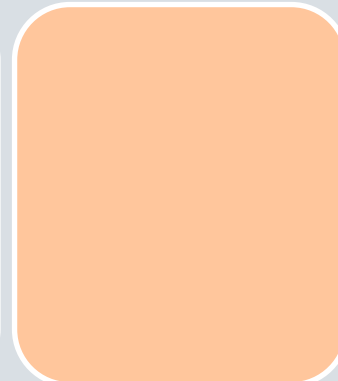
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- Freelance Medical Writer



Benefits of being a freelance medical writer



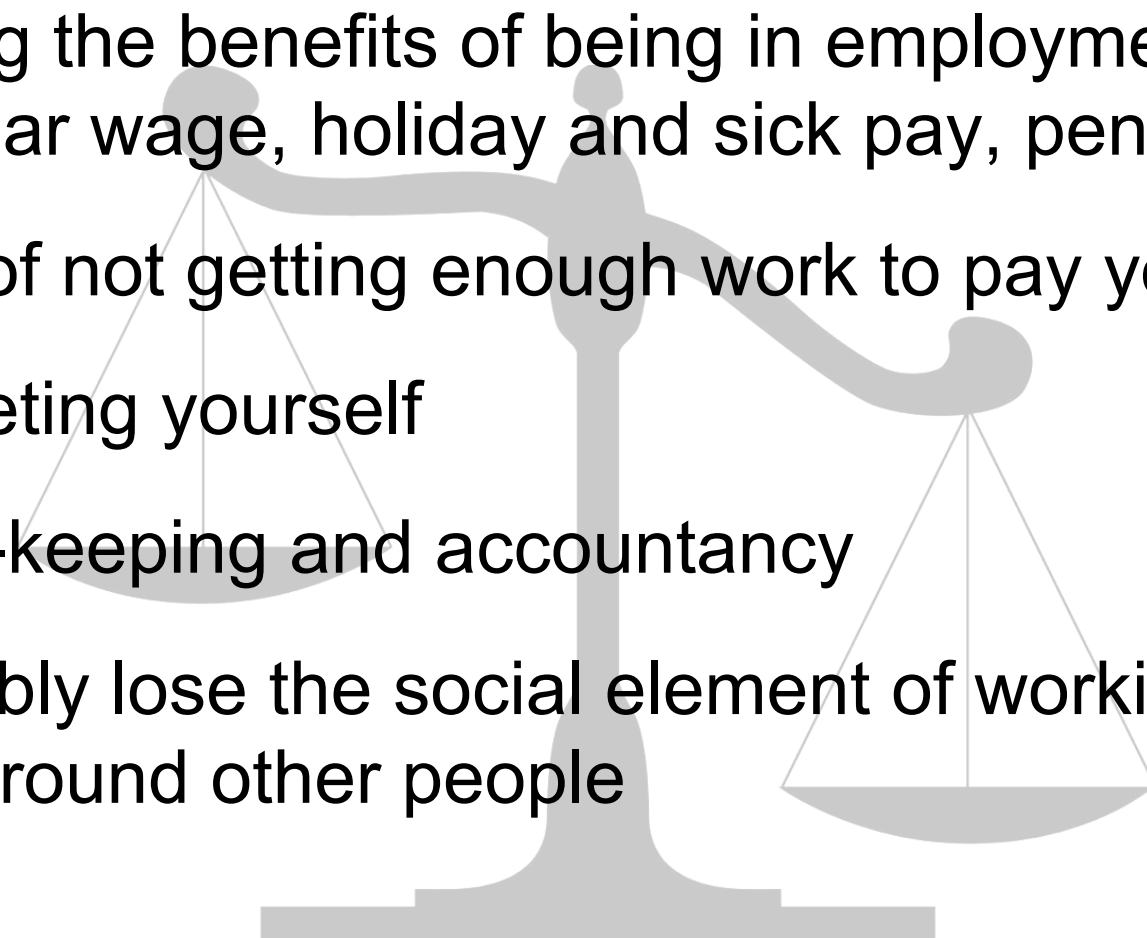
You are your own boss

Flexibility in when you work
and what work you do

Potential to earn more

Drawbacks of being a freelance medical writer

- Losing the benefits of being in employment (regular wage, holiday and sick pay, pension etc.)
- Risk of not getting enough work to pay your bills
- Marketing yourself
- Book-keeping and accountancy
- Possibly lose the social element of working with and around other people



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2006

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2008

- Freelance Medical Writer

2011

- Medical Writing Agency



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"Life is like riding a bicycle, in order to keep your balance, you must keep moving." Albert Einstein (1879–1955)




What can you learn from the pathway I took into medical writing?

- 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
 - Before applying for jobs, try to ensure you can demonstrate the following skills
 - Writing experience
 - Research skills
 - Scientific accuracy
 - Ability to work in a team
 - Knowledge of industry codes and guidelines
- 

Tips for getting into Med Comms



- Write at every opportunity
 - Learn about medical writing, Med Comms and pharma
 - Perfect your CV, covering letter and emails!!!
 - Highlight any therapeutically relevant knowledge/experience (e.g. oncology, cardiovascular medicine, neurology)
 - Try and get relevant work experience
 - Contact freelance medical writers, Med Comms companies
 - Although not advertised, some may offer paid or unpaid experience
 - Contact relevant recruitment companies
 - They will do the hard work by sending your CV to relevant companies
 - They may also help you prepare for interviews
 - Try to identify those who truly understand Med Comms
- 

Feel free to contact me



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