



# **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?

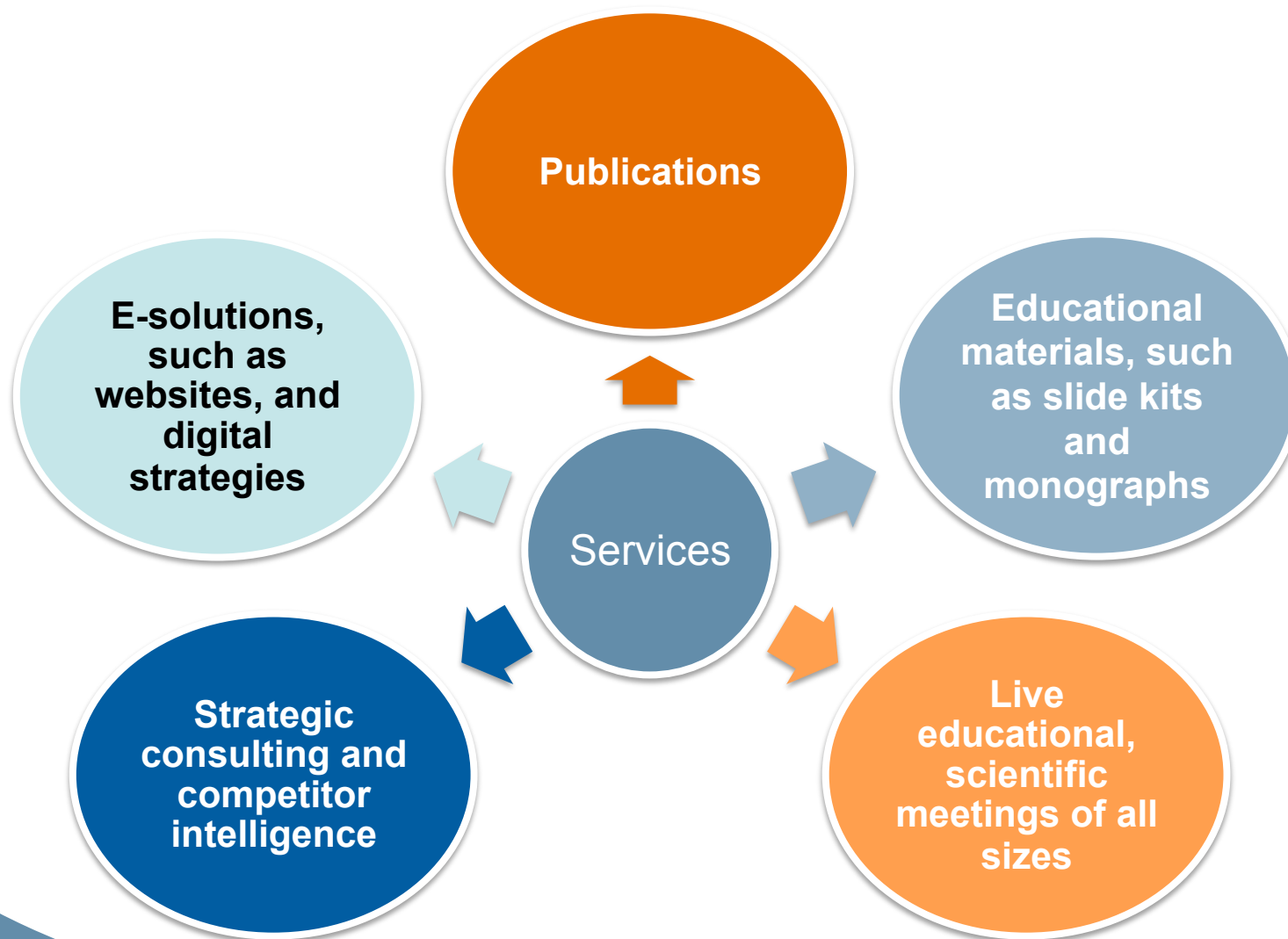
- **Helps pharmaceutical\* companies to communicate about their drugs to healthcare professionals\*\***
- **Writes high-quality, scientific copy**
  - in many different therapy areas
  - in many different formats



\*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. Krauss<sup>1</sup>, M. Bar<sup>2</sup>, V. Biton<sup>3</sup>,  
J. A. Klapper<sup>4</sup>, I. Rektor<sup>5</sup>,  
N. Vaiciene-Magistris<sup>6</sup>,  
D. Squillacote<sup>7</sup>, D. Kumar<sup>7</sup>**

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

### Acknowledgements

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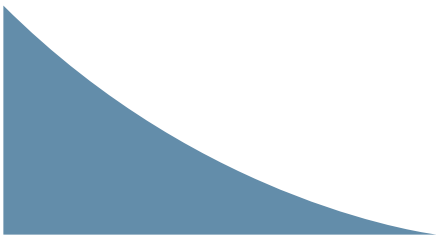
# Clinical study manuscript: how it works in practice



# 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

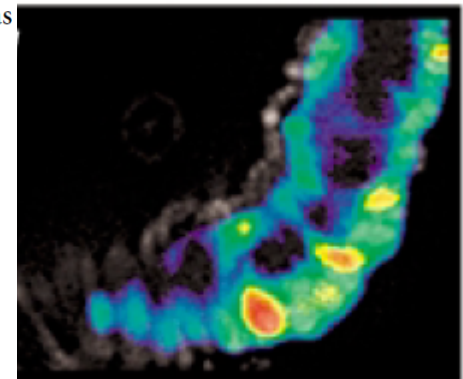
DOI: 10.1113/jphysiol.2002.023366  
www.jphysiol.org

## 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  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  channels activated by depletion of intracellular  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  stores in cerebral arteriolar smooth muscle cells and explored their direct contractile function. Using the  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  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....

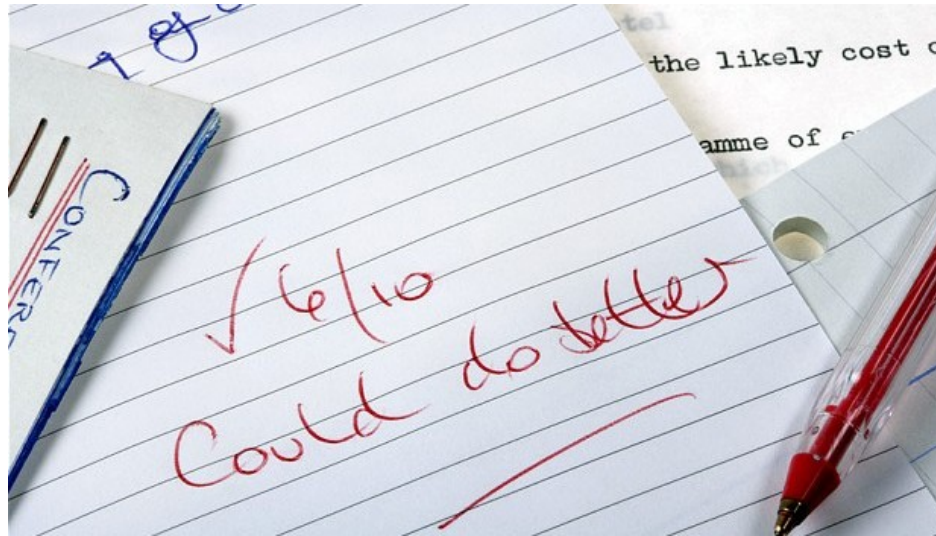


# Challenges: deadlines





# Challenges: criticism




# Challenges: writing treadmill



# Upsides: variety



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

# Upsides: flexibility (sometimes...)



# Upsides: teamwork

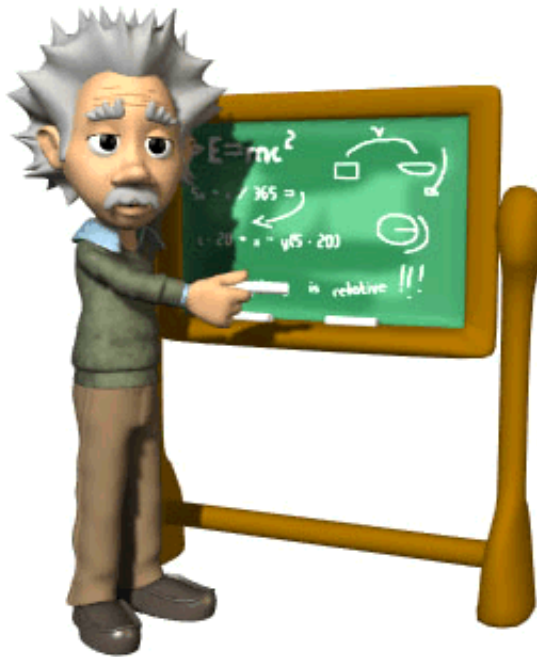


# Upsides: travel

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



# Upsides: working with the experts



# Upsides: demand for your services



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#### [Principal Medical Writer - Greater London](#)

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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...](#) ]

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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

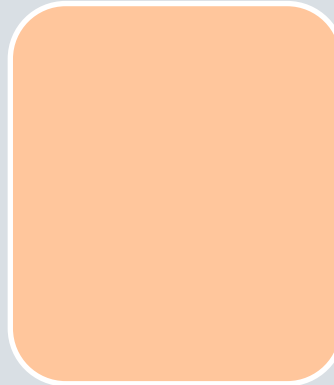
# My career in MedComms

**2003**

- Medical Writer, MedComms Agency, Macclesfield

**2005**

- Senior Medical Writer, MedComms Agency, Knutsford



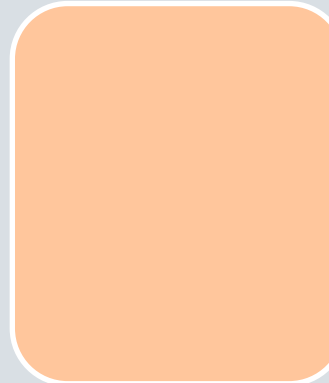
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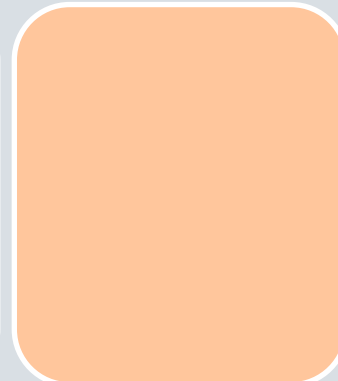
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**2008**

- Freelance Medical Writer



# Benefits of being a freelance medical writer



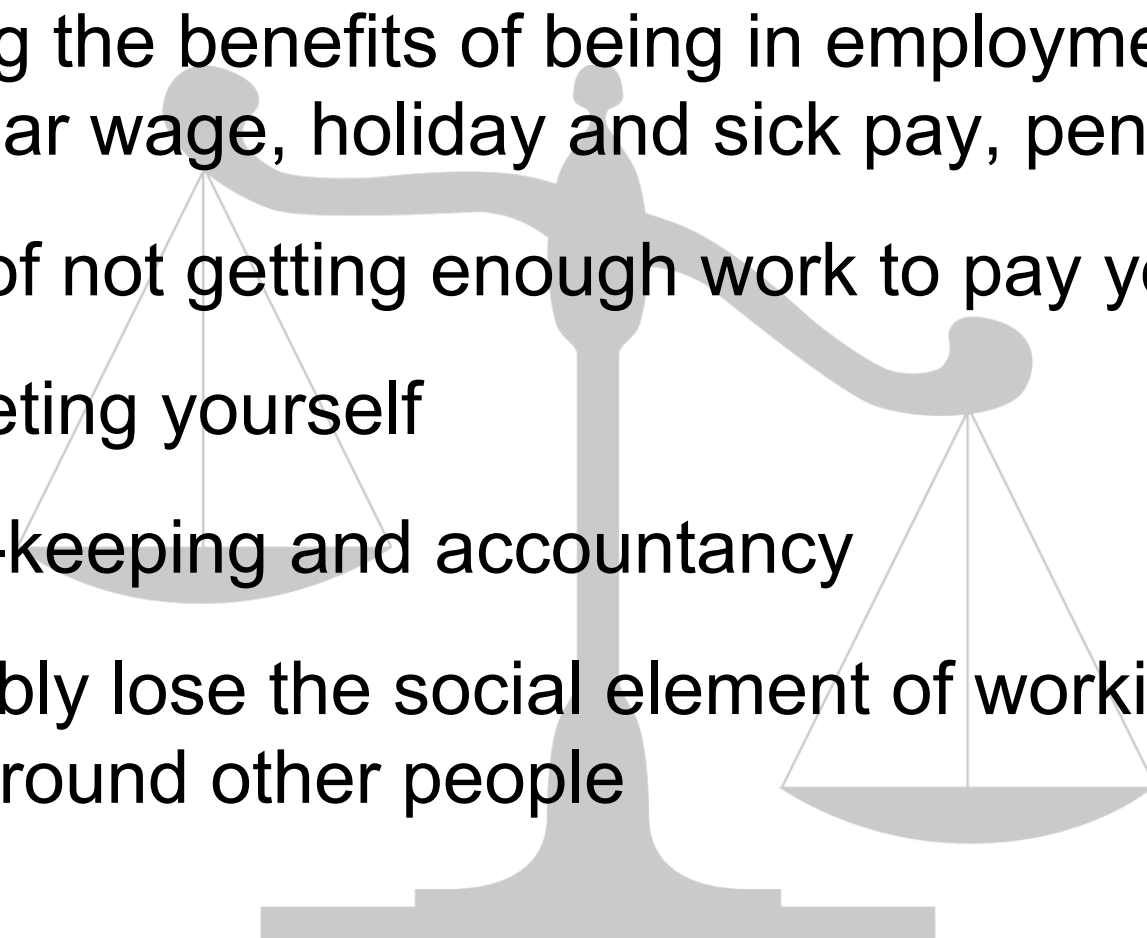
You are your own boss

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**

- Editorial Manager, MedComms Agency, Knutsford

**2008**

- Freelance Medical Writer

**2011**

- Medical Writing Agency



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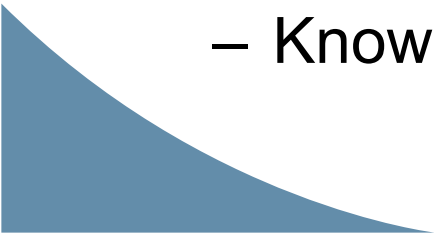
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*“Life is like riding a bicycle, in order to keep your balance, you must keep moving.”* Albert Einstein (1879–1955)




# 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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