My career in MedComms

Rick Flemming
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
- 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
Moving into MedComms: culture shock

- Friday.....
- Monday.....
Overview of some medical communication services

- Publications
- Educational materials, such as slide kits and monographs
- Live educational, scientific meetings of all sizes
- Strategic consulting and competitor intelligence
- E-solutions, such as websites, and digital strategies
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


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. Rektor⁴, N. Vaiciene-Magistris⁵, 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; ⁵Neurologia 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

Editorial support was provided by Rick Flemming, PhD and Sian-Marie Lucas, PhD of Complete Medical Communications and was funded by Eisai Inc. These studies were funded by Eisai Inc.
Clinical study manuscript: how it works in practice

1. Teleconference with client (pharma) and authors (clinical study investigators)
2. Receive brief for an experienced colleague
3. Write a bulleted outline
4. Write first draft based on review comments on outline
5. Address internal review comments and send to client and authors
Factor Xa Inhibitors: Next-Generation Antithrombotic Agents

Donald J. P. Pinto, Joanne M. Smallheer, Daniel L. Cheney, Robert M. Knabb, and Ruth R. Wexler*

Research and Development, Bristol-Myers Squibb Company, P.O. Box 5400, Princeton, New Jersey, 08543

Received February 3, 2010

Acknowledgment. Professional writing and editorial assistance were provided by Rick Flemming, Ph.D., at PPSI, and were funded by Bristol-Myers Squibb and Pfizer. The authors also thank Joseph Luetggen, Meriah Valente, and Swanee Jacutin-Porte for technical assistance.

Figure 4. Parenteral direct FXa inhibitors 3, 4, and 5 and the dual FXa/thrombin inhibitor 6.
EGFR mutation testing in lung cancer: a review of available methods and their use for analysis of tumour tissue and cytology samples

Gillian Ellison,¹ Guanshan Zhu,² Alexandros Moulis,³ Simon Dearden,¹ Georgina Speake,¹ Rose McCormack¹

Acknowledgements Medical writing support was provided by Rick Flemming, PhD, CMPP and Annette Smith, PhD of Complete Medical Communications, and was funded by AstraZeneca.
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
  – Comprehensive report for a biosimilar manufacturer
Meeting reports

CONFERENCE REPORT

State of play of CME in Europe in 2014: proceedings from the Seventh Annual Meeting of the European CME Forum

Eugene Pozniak¹ and Rick Flemming²

¹Siyem Learning, University of Manchester Innovation Centre, Manchester, UK
²Aspire Scientific Ltd, Bollington, UK

Abstract

European CME Forum is a not-for-profit organisation that was established in 2007 in order to bring together all stakeholder groups with an interest in European CME and promote multi-channel discussion in an independent and neutral environment.
Challenges: deadlines
Challenges: criticism
Challenges: writing treadmill
Upsides: variety

- Epilepsy
- Oncology
- Spinal devices
- Thrombosis
- Men’s health
- Plus lots more...
Upsides: flexibility (sometimes...)
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
Opportunities: clearly defined progression

- Associate Medical Writer
- Medical Writer
- Senior Medical Writer
- Editorial Manager or Principal Writer
- Editorial Unit Manager or Editorial Director
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
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2005
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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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2008
• Freelance Medical Writer

2011
• Medical Writing Agency
“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
### Is medical writing for you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enjoy and excel at writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scientific background and love of science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedantic and accurate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent research skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t mind or love travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to think on feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thick skinned!!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tips for getting into MedComms

• Write at every opportunity

• Learn about medical writing, MedComms and pharma

• Perfect your CV, covering letter and emails!!!

• Try and get relevant work experience
  – Contact freelance medical writers, med comms companies
  – Although not advertised, some may offer paid or unpaid experience
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