What kind of animal is a medical writer? Attributes and attitudes

Jane Fraser
An intelligent ape

• A quick learner
  – Lots of different therapeutic areas
  – Lots of different drugs

• Highly adaptable
  – Lots of different kinds of projects
  – Lots of different people and situations

• Highly socialized
  – It’s all about teamwork and communication
  – Not an ivory tower
Passionate about writing

Things you can learn before you apply for jobs

• Write as much as you can (papers, posters, abstracts, magazine articles)
• Edit others' work
• Read as much as you can
• Be an enthusiastic journal club member
• Take advantage of any training your university offers
  – writing skills
  – presentation skills
  – Word
  – Powerpoint
  – reference management
  – statistics
A nit-picker – and willing to be nit-picked by others

- Accuracy
- Spelling
- Grammar
- Word use
- Consistency
- Compliance with industry guidelines and codes of practice
An elephant

- A heavyweight
  - able to mix with opinion-leaders
  - without getting crushed
- An excellent memory
A donkey

- Hard-working
- Carries heavy loads without complaint
- Able to take direction
- Do your share of the boring work
- Will be offered carrots
A cheetah

• Curious
• Alert
• Quick
  – meets deadlines
  – without compromising accuracy
A camel

• Travels long distances (sometimes fun but not always!)
• Tolerates difficult conditions when necessary
• Able to go for long periods without food and water (or at least able to survive on sandwiches and coffee for days at a time when attending conferences)
A swan

• Serene on the surface
• Even if paddling frantically underneath
A rhinoceros

• Has a thick skin (you will be criticized; your text will \textit{always} be amended by other people such as clients and opinion-leaders)

• Charges a lot (good writers are at a premium)