The agency perspective
Vicky Lawson, Darwin
12 January 2017
1. What is medical communications?
2. Why might you like a career in med comms?
3. The role of a Medical Writer
4. The role of an Account Manager
1

What is medical communications?
What is medical communications?

Communication of medical/scientific information to healthcare professionals, most often around a particular disease or a specific drug, and generally on behalf of a pharmaceutical company.
When is med comms needed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discovery research</th>
<th>Development research</th>
<th>Regulatory review</th>
<th>Post-marketing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>Phase I</td>
<td>Phase II</td>
<td>Phase IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological testing &amp; pharmacological screening</td>
<td>N = 30</td>
<td>N = 100</td>
<td>N = 1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Year 0: Final patent application
3: Investigational new drug application
9: Marketing application
11: Product launch

10,000 substances → 1 new medicine
What does med comms look like?

Integrated medical strategy

- Strategic support
- Scientific events
- Promotional marketing
- Online communities
- Integrated digital solutions
- Posters, presentations, slide kits
- Advisory boards
- Thought leader preparation
- Integrated publication planning
- Medical support
- Media comms
- Training programmes
Medical communication: from strategy to tactics

Raw data/lead manuscripts

Weighing and planning strategic communication approach

Tactical implementation
Challenges

Scientific complexity
Rigour, accuracy and simplicity

Legal complexity
Regulatory environment

Sensitivity
Relationships with clients and experts

Competition
- for audience time and attention

Speed
...yesterday
Why might you like a career in med comms?
Why might you want to join an agency?

- Opportunities to
  - work with global experts in their field
  - work in a wide range of therapy areas
  - help to create materials for different audiences
  - travel
  - experience different job roles

- Fast-paced, challenging and never dull!
Events at Darwin: an example of a 12-month period

- 186 Speaking faculty
- 249 presentations
- 46 advisory boards
- 12 symposia
- 12 standalones
Training

Medical communications agencies offer opportunities for training:

• Formal training arranged with external experts
  • Presentation training
  • CMPP training
  • Code of practice training (ABPI, EFPIA)
  • Negotiation skills training

• Mentoring – on-going training from colleagues

• Internal training – offered by colleagues, these might be lunch and learn-style sessions, challenge ‘surgeries’ to share best practice and experiences from other accounts
The role of a medical writer
A typical day for a medical writer

...there isn’t one!
A typical day for a medical writer could include:

- Take minutes at an advisory board and draft a meeting report/consensus document.
- Review another writer’s work and provide feedback on scientific content/style/quality check.
- Teleconference with client and authors of a publication to take feedback/authors’ comments.
- Brainstorm ideas, research new disease area and prepare slides for pitch presentation.
- Attend strategic planning meeting at client’s offices to discuss next projects.
- Draft presentation for salesforce training programme and assessment.
- Devise content and functionality for the launch of a new educational website.
- Finalise core slide deck for use by physicians in national educational meetings.
- Prepare CME accreditation application for a satellite symposium on behalf of faculty.
- Work to tight deadlines as well as ad hoc requests!
- Draft a manuscript/primary paper for a peer-reviewed journal.
My day yesterday as a medical writer

• 8:30 write up notes from a client face-to-face meeting 2 days ago
• 9:00 find out someone has rearranged their holiday, and I have to brief a speaker later in the day. Have a biscuit
• 10:00 conduct an appraisal for a junior writer
• 11:00 decide what to do for the rest of the day
• 11:10 send some slide work over to another writer and answer their questions
• 11:20 start working on a deck of slides for a standalone meeting
• 11:30 interrupted by some emails about referencing to data on file
• 11:35 continue with slides
• 12 ish lunch al desco
• 13:30 prep for...
• 2:00 a call with a new client – we are going to Sweden next week to see them, it seems
• 2:45 continue with slides
• 3:30 speaker doesn’t turn up to their briefing call. Rejoice at extra half hour
• 5:30 finish slides and pass them to our editor, forget to complete timesheet, go home
What do agencies look for in a medical writer?

Someone who

• Has a **science background** – a PhD is an advantage but it is not mandatory
• **Enjoys writing** and has a talent for it
• Is able to **digest new information** rapidly
• Has good **desktop research** skills
• Has a ‘**can do**’ attitude and is willing to have a go at most things
• Enjoys working with others as **part of a team**
• Has good attention to **detail**
• Presentation skills
• Can think of **new ideas** that will be useful to the client
• Is willing to travel and work **flexibly**
• **Takes feedback** from others well

The ability to deliver what the client wants, on time and on budget!
My route into med comms

- Biochemistry degree
- Biotech research assistant
- Immunology Ph.D
- Neuroscience post-doc
- Biotech marketing person
- Still a medical writer!
The Client Service Team
A typical day for one of the Client Services Team

...there isn’t one!
A typical day in client services could include

- Creation of a client budget for a new project
- Develop a pitch presentation, working with members from the wider group
- Brainstorm ideas for a new project and prepare slides for pitch presentation
- Work to tight deadlines as well as ad hoc requests!
- Status call teleconference with client and team to update on current project work, changing priorities and plan next steps
- Attend strategic planning meeting at client’s offices to discuss next projects
- Brief educational materials into the Scientific Services and Creative Teams
- Review a piece of material created by the team before it is sent to the client
- Create a budget reconciliation following the conclusion of a project
- Hold a kick-off meeting to discuss the content and functionality of a new educational website
- Investigate potential venues for a forthcoming stand alone meeting
A typical day rarely goes as planned
(borrowed from my client services colleague)

What I planned to do

1. Write list 😊
2. Finish proposal for client X
3. Finish budget for proposal
4. Draft slides for careers event
5. Attend internal account status call at 2pm
6. Attend client call at 3.30pm
7. Complete appraisal form for colleague
8. Review budget status for account Y
9. Review advertising schedule for account Y and make recommendations to client to go through 2016
10. Liaise with stand builders to obtain design and cost estimate

What I ended up doing

1. Write list 😊
2. Get half way through proposal for client X – who then calls to discuss current project, asks for extra work to be done that we thought he was going to do
3. Scramble to find resource to accommodate the client X request in order to maintain timelines
4. Get involved in taking on part of task – we’re a team, divide and conquer!
5. Attend internal status call
6. Get a bit more done on proposal for client X
7. Receive a barrage of confusing emails from one of the client Y team about a handful of current projects, attend project related call with same client at 3.30pm
8. Write ‘to do list’ for tomorrow which contains approximately 30% of those things that I didn’t manage to fit in today…
9. Oh – and I need to complete my timesheet!
What do we look for in a member of the Client Service Team?

Someone who
• Has an **interest** in science – many, but not all, have a science background
• Has a ‘**can do’ attitude** and enjoys a challenge
• **Stays calm** under pressure
• **Enjoys liaising** with clients and the wider team
• Has good **communication skills**
• Is **organised** with the ability to plan and drive a project
• Enjoys working as **part of a team** and knows how to get the best out of it
• Is **comfortable with numbers** (budgeting, reconciliations)
• Is **comfortable presenting**
• Understands the product strategy and can **offer ideas**
• Can **problem solve**
• Is willing to **travel** and work **flexibly when needed**

**The ability to deliver what the client wants, on time and on budget!**
Thank you