ISN’T GHOSTWRITING A THING OF THE PAST?

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CAUDEX & GAPPER!
DISCLOSURES

- The opinions expressed in this presentation are not necessarily those of my employer
- I am co-chair of the ISMPP Advocacy and Outreach Committee
- I am a member of the Global Alliance of Publication Professionals
The Global Alliance of Publication Professionals

Providing a timely and credible response to influential stories about medical publication professionals

GAPP aims

- To provide a timely and credible response to influential stories about medical publication professionals (eg. professional medical writers, publication planners)
- To be a "go to" group for those needing timely input from international leaders of medical publication professionals.

GAPP team

Each member of GAPP has held leadership roles in not-for-profit associations from around the world that support the professional development and ethical practices of medical publication professionals.

Details about each member of the GAPP team can be found on the About page.

Should you wish to contact us, please use contact@gappteam.org or direct message us on Twitter @gappteam

We aim to respond to all enquiries within 1-2 business days
WHO ARE WE?

- Leadership positions in established organizations
- Regional
- Small nimble team
- Dead men’s shoes!
PROCESS

Article alert → Forward to team

Yes

Bullet points for response

Lead responder:
  • Seeks response method
  • Drafts response

Team review/comments

No

Occasionally, respond personally

Posted/submitted

PubMed commons

Editorial correspondence
RESPOND OR NOT?

**Probably**
- High profile journal/wide reach
- Impressionable audience
- Publication practices
- Ghostwriting
- Anecdote vs evidence
- Dredging
- “Known” critics

**Probably not**
- Old news
- Low reach/paywalled
- Airtime
- Points we can’t disagree with
- Not in our remit
  - General criticism of pharmaceutical industry practices
  - Data disclosure rates
LAST SPRING…

- Is the incidence of ghostwriting articles really falling?
- What’s the future for GAPP?
- Have we won?
43 responses over 5 years

Probably 20 more we have considered and not actioned

Letters to the editor, online comments (articles and blogs), PubMed commons comments, correspondence to publishers/editors, tweets

1 invited article

Publication plan? Not really, we are totally reactive...

CAUDEX
COMMON THEMES

- Professional medical writers are ghostwriters
  - ICMJE, WAME, CSE
  - Journal guidelines
  - GPP3 and process

- Confusion of ghost authors, guest authors, ghostwriters
  - Definitions tailored to fit the crime

- Evidence-free statements
  - “Industry sponsored ghostwriting is common”
  - “Ghostwriters introduce spin”
  - “Professional writers have to please marketing departments”

- Occasionally, we thank authors/editors for being right!
MOST RECENT RESPONSES: 2016

- Philadelphia Inquirer: Criticism in a newspaper article of disclosure statement in peer reviewed article
- Urologic Oncology: Supportive editorial regarding industry sponsored research, but citing out of date literature
- BMC Medical Ethics: Matheson: criticizing the ICMJE criteria for legitimizing ghostwriting
- British Medical Journal: Matheson: initial response to BMJ article
- European Journal of Cancer: Misdefinition of ghost authorship to automatically include disclosed medical writing support
- British Medical Journal: Matheson: final joint statement
GHOSTS OF CHRISTMAS PAST...
THERE GOES THE RUG…

**Ghostwriting prevalence among AMWA and EMWA members (2005 to 2014)**

Cindy W. Hamilton¹ and Adam Jacobs²

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and Hamilton House Medical and
Scientific Communications, Virginia
Beach, VA, USA
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61.8% in 2005
41.7% in 2008
33.0% in 2011
34.4% in 2014
POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS

- It’s true
- Responder selection bias
- Responses are anecdotal/historical, not personal or not current
- Respondents are mainly freelancers (...hold on, I will explain...)

CAUDEX
AUDIENCE QUESTION

When using freelance writers on publications, do you:

- Acknowledge freelancer by name, as normal
- Acknowledge supervising agency writer instead
- Acknowledge both freelancer and supervising agency writer
- Acknowledge neither
SO...

- It looks like ghostwriting is still happening in our industry, but we must continue to work towards eliminating it
SALAMI SLICING


WHY DIDN’T WE RESPOND TO MATHESON’S THE WRITE STUFF ARTICLE?

- Distracted by ghostwriting survey
- Another article was describing practices not in line with GPP
  - Badly phrased or bad practice?
- We didn’t notice it until later
  - Would’ve been nice to have a heads up...
- Hard to respond to accusations with an article in the same issue stating that 34% of EMWA/AMWA members were still participating in undisclosed roles
OUTCOME SWITCHING
DEFINITIONS

- **Ghostwriting:** Unacknowledged writers who make substantial contributions (falling short of authorship) are ghostwriters

- **Ghost authors:** Individuals who satisfy authorship criteria but are not credited

- **Honorary (or guest) authors:** Authors who do not satisfy authorship criteria but appear in the author byline

- Apples and pears, or not fruit at all!


CAUDEX
THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE,
YOU JUST HAVE TO KNOW WHERE TO LOOK...
DAMNED IF YOU DO

BMJ blog: Richard Lehman’s journal review
http://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2015/06/08/richard-lehmans-journal-review-8-june-2015

Just how much of this paper was written by the named authors is unclear. “Professional medical writers who were paid by Bristol-Myers Squibb contributed to the preparation of the manuscript and are not listed as authors.”

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DAMNED IF YOU DO

MedPage Today, August 2015

http://www.medpagetoday.com/PublicHealthPolicy/HealthPolicy/53057

A quick look at the paper reveals that three of the five authors are Amarin employees and that a commercial company was paid by Amarin for editorial assistance. The other two authors, including well-known KOL Christie Ballantyne, received funding from Amarin. The ProPublica Dollars For Docs database shows that in 2013 the first author, Harold Bays, received $4,823 and Ballantyne received $8,155 from Amarin.

In addition, the acknowledgements section at the end of the paper includes the following statement:

Editorial assistance was provided by Peloton Advantage, LLC, Parsippany, NJ, and funded by Amarin Pharma Inc. Dr Harold Bays (Principal Investigator) wrote the first draft of this report, with subsequent drafts revised and edited by the other authors, who vouch for the accuracy and completeness of the data and approved the final version for submission.

This means, in case you’re not familiar with the way these things work, that the paper was almost certainly the product of an elaborate publication plan funded by Amarin. Regarding the role of Peloton Advantage, let me put it this way: it is highly unlikely their role was restricted to proofreading and copyediting.
Re: Clinical use of

I am pleased to submit the above paper for consideration for publication in [ ]. This article provides a clinical overview of treating [ ] in the UK, includes a clinical data summary for [ ], and discusses my practical experience. I have also included case studies to illustrate different approaches with different patients.

I can confirm that this paper has not been published previously and is not under consideration for publication in another journal. I agree to transfer copyright to [ ] for all publication purposes in whatever form and for permanent or temporary retention in an archive retrieval system.

Medical writing assistance was provided by [ ] and [ ] (Caudex Medical Ltd), funded by [ ]. Assistance was provided from the outset of the manuscript, with my full consent and in compliance with Good Publication Practice 2 (BMJ 2009;339:b4330 doi: 10.1136/bmj.4330). This writing assistance is disclosed in the acknowledgments section of the manuscript.

I hope that you find this paper of interest and look forward to hearing from you.

---Original Message---
From: [ ]
To: [ ]
Sent: Tue, 28 Sep 2010 21:24
Subject: [ ]

Hi- I am sorry but we only consider original papers written by the researchers.
BG
LIES, DAMNED LIES AND STATISTICS
REVISITING SOME STATISTICS
ARTICLE REACH: BAD NEWS TRAVEL FURTHEST

11 **NEUTRAL** articles have Altmetric scores
Mean 19.9
Median 4 (1–118)

6 **POSITIVE** articles have Altmetric scores
Mean 11.5
Median 9 (2–34)

49 **NEGATIVE** articles have Altmetric scores
Mean 32.1
Median 15 (1–153)
THANK YOU!
ANY QUESTIONS?

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