MEDICAL WRITING
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MedComms Career Event
1st July 2014
My take on “Medical writing”

Messages & “Stories”

- Drugs & therapeutic innovations
- Distilling & interpreting data and evidence
- Researching & enquiring
- Working with experts
- Providing a Writing Service
- Clinicians & Marketers, Patients & Public

Providing a Writing Service

Researching & enquiring

Working with experts

Distilling & interpreting data and evidence

Drugs & therapeutic innovations

Clinicians & Marketers, Patients & Public

Messages & “Stories”
How I got started

- First degree in Pharmacology (Glasgow University)
- PhD in Pharmacology (Queens’ College University of Cambridge)
- “Enjoyed” writing my thesis but knew research wasn’t my calling
- Wanted a job:
  - Marrying scientific understanding with communication, marketing and language
  - With variety of focus
  - Still in realm of drugs and therapeutics
My career path: the start

First job – Medical writer with small agency outside Cambridge (1 year)

Next step – Medical writer in special projects team - trade newspapers and journals (Doctor, Hospital Doctor) (2 years)

Taking a chance – My boss and a business partner ask me to be their first member of staff in a new venture in Medical Communications.......... the Colwood Years begin...
My career path: the middle

**Colwood House:** From two partners, me and a secretary to a 50-strong agency

**Business:** Servicing the pharmaceutical industry

**My job evolves:** New business work, complex and challenging therapies and therapeutic areas

**Bosses announce after 13 years that they are selling to a US agency....**

**I work part-time through the birth of two children**
My career path: the recent past

- Colwood is sold
  - The process is slow and disruptive
  - New boss is nice...but...an old client gets in touch... would I like a job at her company?
  - 2 years at a new agency - I find my skills are transferable

- Scratching an itch....
  - In 2002 I decide to risk going freelance
  - 12 years on....I have a set of clients who know me and my work...and I enjoy being my own boss
Day to day work of a medical writer

- Scholarly
- Selling & persuading
- Thought-leaders & innovators
- Topical content
- Creative
- Drugs & Diseases
- Deadline based

Infinite variety
Career options for Medical Writers

- A core skill in Medical Communication agencies
- Springboard and platform for progression
  - Account management
  - People and team management
  - Professional relations
  - Work in pharma
  - Freelance working (own boss)
  - Establish own agency
Traits & Key skills

Willing to write as a SERVICE rather than for personal kudos

- Able to work to deadlines
- Able to assimilate briefs and data
- Accurate & thorough
- Written articulacy
- Analytical, enquiring & scholarly
- Willing to write as a SERVICE rather than for personal kudos
Snapshot of typical work

- Technical writing
  - Original manuscripts, reviews, feature articles, posters, abstracts, product monographs, disease management books, health technology appraisals
- Journalistic writing
  - Congress and meeting reports, news story writing, meetings highlights, advisory board minutes
- Educational work
  - Slide-lecture sets, programme development, training materials, e-learning
- Marketing
  - Internal communications, marketing workshops, training materials
- Patient
  - Patient booklets and materials, web copy
Case example: Congress Reporting

- The Medical Writer’s Brief
  - Attend CIRSE 2-6 October 2010 (Valencia, Spain)
  - Produce a Highlights Report within 2 days of meeting
  - Focus of Report - A competitor review
    - Client interested in news and reports of treatments and interventions that compete with / are alternatives to their drug therapy
    - Will the client’s drug be mentioned and if so – how will it be portrayed?
Case example: Congress Reporting

**Saturday**
- Get to Valencia in time to register and meet client
- Attend 2 hour session – notes, photos and audio required
- Copy selected posters
- Write up Saturday's copy

**Sunday**
- Only scheduled to attend 1 hour session at 4pm........maybe some sightseeing?
- Client rings at 8am – wants me at an advisory board
- Back to congress to attend session
- Client rings – they may have overlooked a key session today – can I cover it?

**Monday**
- 3 sessions to attend and write up and Sunday sessions to write and file
- Track down presenter of “missing” Sunday session and interview – client will be pleased
- Hotel internet connection too slow for uploading audio files – but slide copy filed

**Tuesday**
- Two sessions to attend starting 7.45am
- Travel home, writing final sessions on plane and uploading once “home”
Case example: Manuscript

- The Medical Writer’s Brief
  - Attend expert meeting
  - Work with faculty to develop a White Paper on the need for newborn screening for SCID across Europe
- Rare disease
  - Treatable/curable if diagnosed at birth
Case example: Manuscript

Feb 2013
- Attend 2nd meeting of European JMF group
- Faculty of clinicians, scientists, lobbyists
- Minute meeting

May 2014
- Manuscript published

- Faculty consider there is a need for a European White Paper detailing the need for NBS for SCID
- Faculty need a dedicated writer/editor to pull together the evidence and arguments in a format suitable for non-expert readers

- White Paper used in European Parliament and UK lobbying to have SCID included in the NBS battery
- Faculty consider there is a need for a clinical article on the case for SCID NBS