




# **Been there, done it, got the T-shirt. Life in Med Comms**

Ryan Woodrow





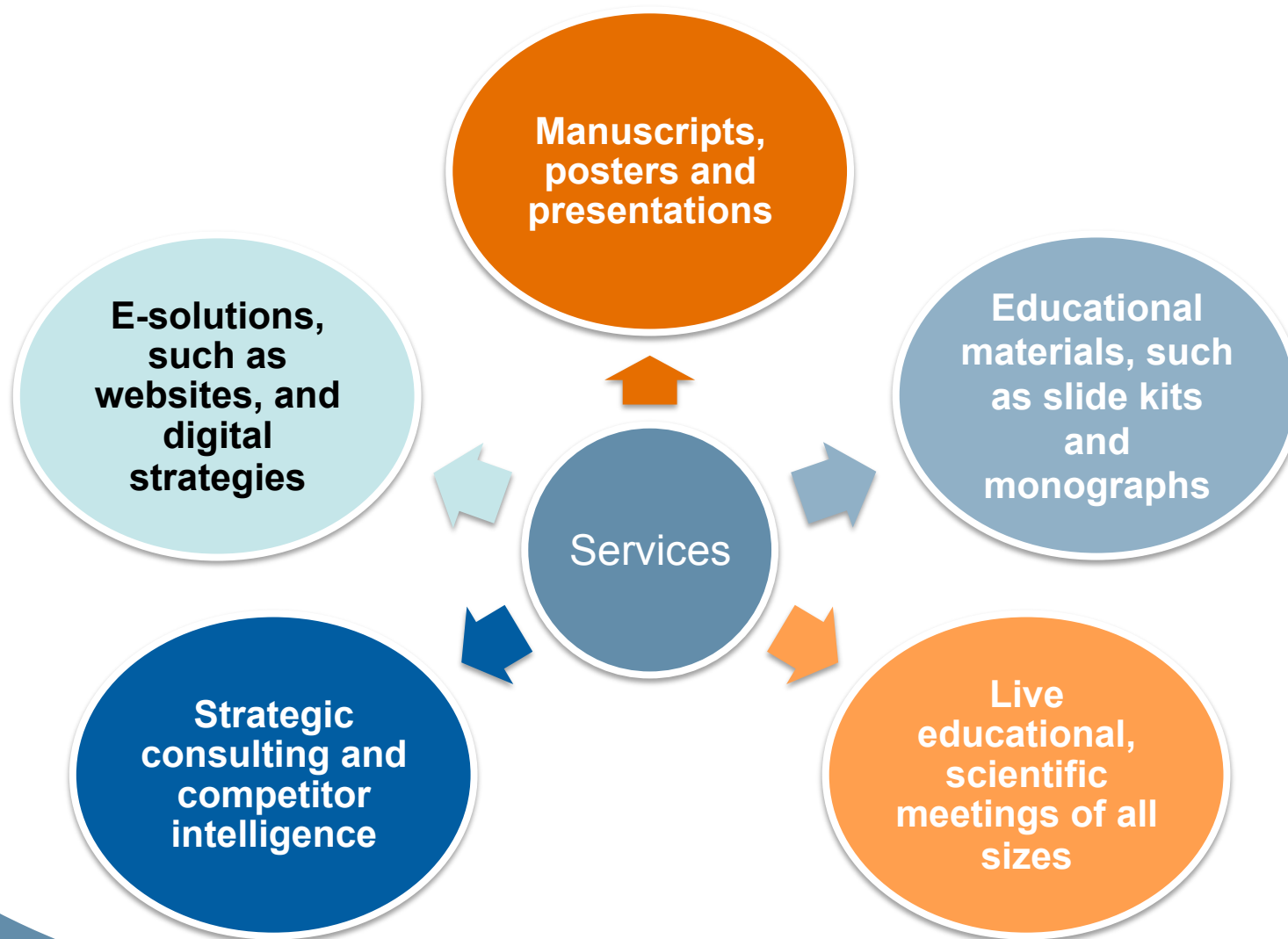
# What does a medical writer in med comms typically do?

- **Helps pharmaceutical\* companies to communicate about their drugs to healthcare professionals**
- **Writes high-quality, scientific copy**
  - in many different therapy areas
  - In many different types of format

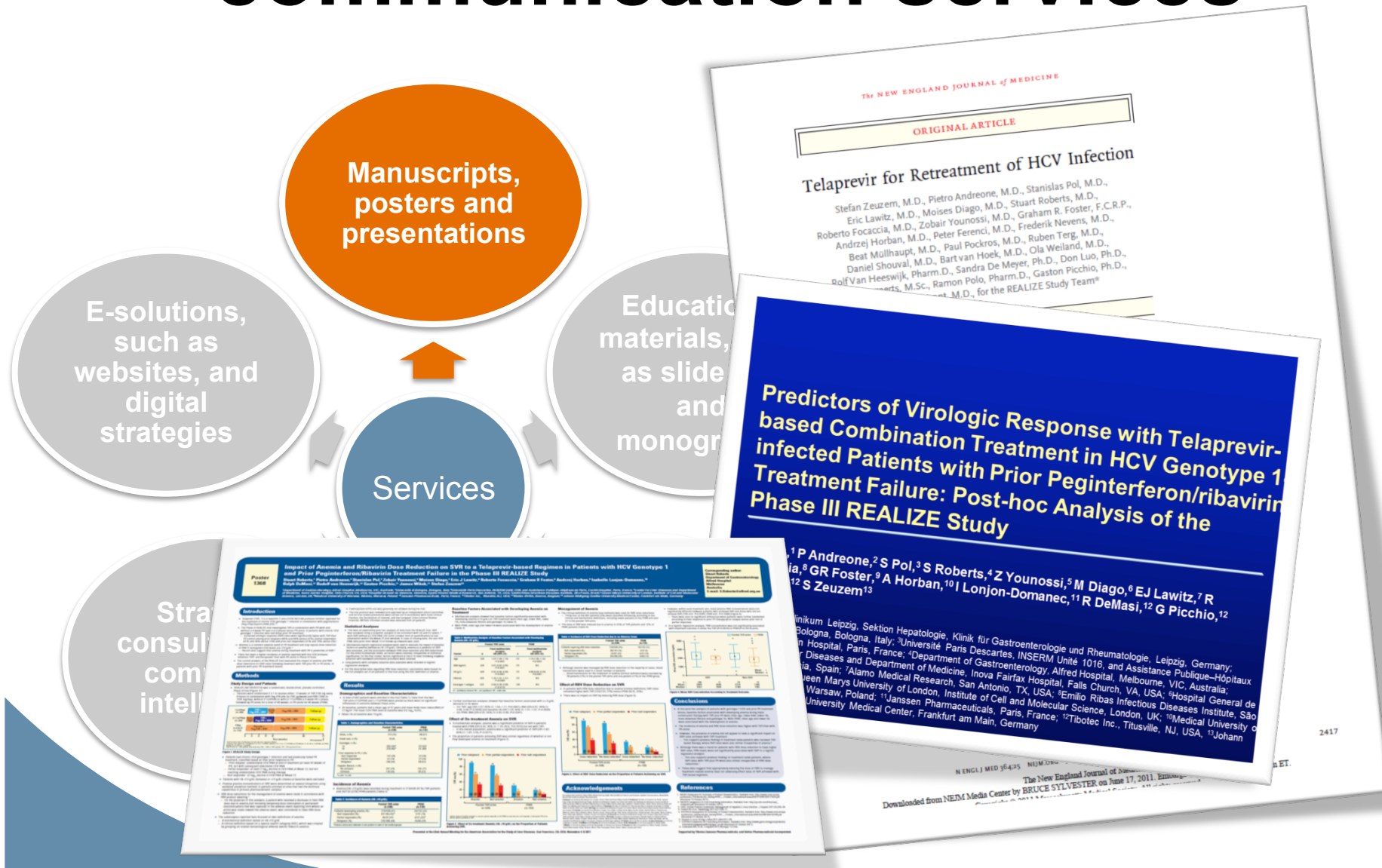


**\*Also biotech, diagnostics and device companies**

# Overview of some medical communication services



# Overview of some medical communication services





# Overview of some medical communication services



# Overview of some medical communication services





**BUT... there is so much  
more...**



# No two days are the same

## Monday

- Incorporating minor author comments on a **poster** and send to client
- Call with an author regarding a planned **manuscript**
- Start to write a **manuscript outline** based on author comments in the call

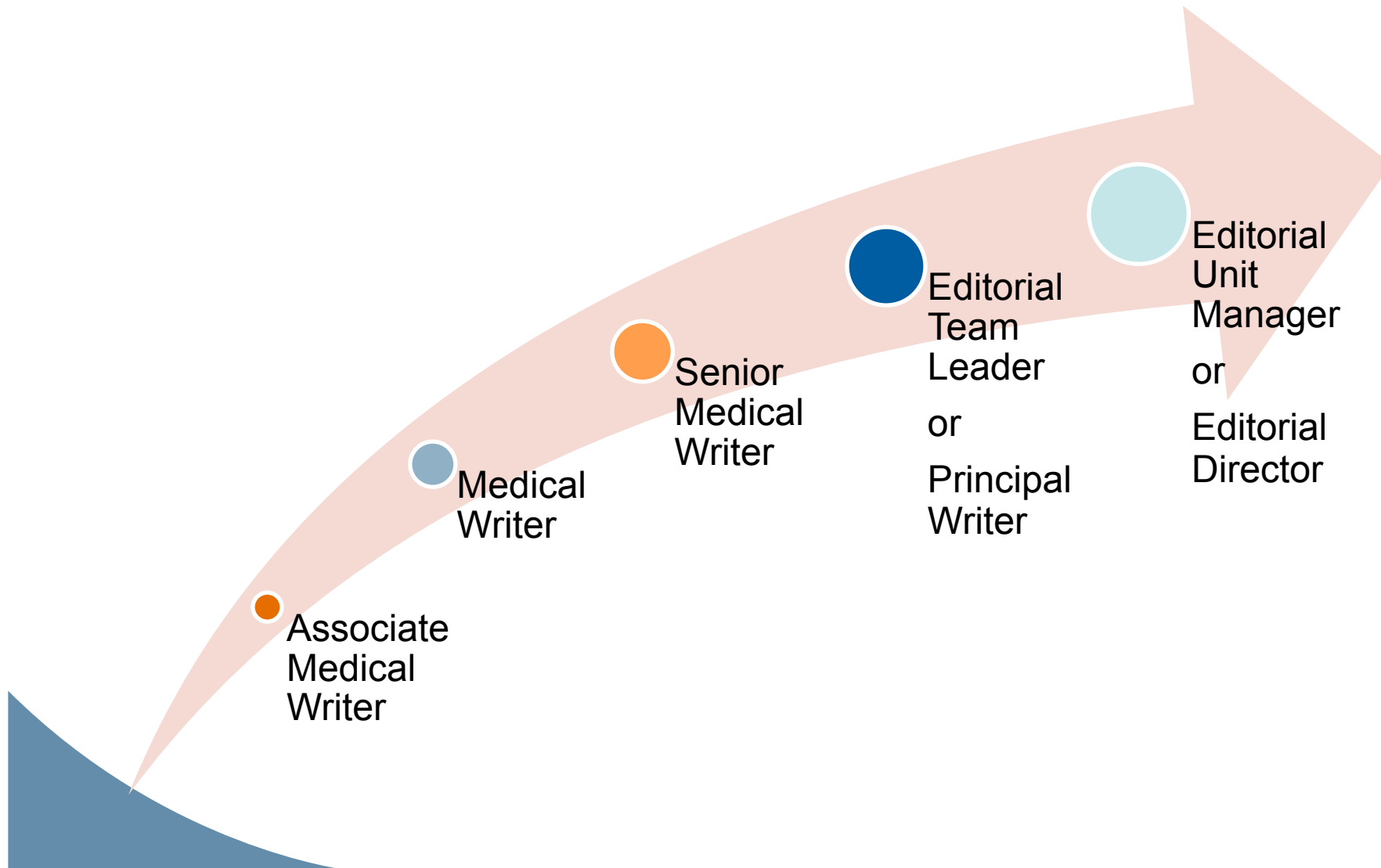
## Tuesday

- **Internal team meeting** to run through status of projects
- Continuation of writing **manuscript outline**
- Incorporating comments from client on the **agenda for an advisory board** and send to meeting Chair

## Wednesday

- **Client call** to go through status of projects
- **Call with Chair of advisory board** to discuss agenda
- Completion of **manuscript outline**, which is given to Senior Writer for QC
- **Preparation for client meeting** in Belgium the following week

# Opportunities: typical pathway in med comms for a medical writer



# 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 Team  
Leader

- Line management and business development
- Provide clients with strategic advice

# Why did I become a medical writer for a medical communications company?

Variety of projects and therapy areas

Clear career pathway

Good mentorship and training

Good financial benefits

Like-minded people

Work in different parts of the UK / world

**... and fundamentally, I enjoy writing**



# Is medical writing for you?

---

Enjoy writing

---

Scientific background and love of science

---

Pedantic and accurate

---

Good communication skills

---

Excellent research skills

---

Don't mind or love travel

---


Ability to think on feet

---


**Thick skinned!!**







**How did I get into medical writing?  
(and what can you learn from my  
experience)**



# Qualifications



- I did a BSc (Hon) in Biological Sciences
- **BUT most medical writers have a MSc or PhD**
  - **And an advanced degree is now almost a requisite**
- Most, but not all medical writers have a life sciences degree

# Work experience




- I worked at AstraZeneca in their communication dept. during Summer holidays while I was at University

## Benefits of gaining work experience

- Shows you are self-motivated
- Demonstrates your interest
- Enables you to provide references
- Helps you to get on your feet faster when you begin medical writing



# Tips to gaining relevant work experience

- Contact freelance medical writers, med comms companies
  - Although not advertised, some may offer paid or unpaid experience
  - We currently offer paid experience for suitable individuals
    - Contact me at [ryan.woodrow@aspire-scientific.com](mailto:ryan.woodrow@aspire-scientific.com)
- 

# Some other examples of relevant experience

1

- **WRITE REGULARLY**, preferably on a relevant topic
- **Doctoral thesis, publications and grant applications**
- **Otherwise: blogs, newspapers, university newsletters, etc**

2

- Demonstrate **PRESENTATION SKILLS**
- **Lecturing and giving presentations at conferences**
- **Otherwise: journal clubs, dept talks and other Uni clubs**

3

- **ATTEND RELEVANT COURSES** in medical writing or related to pharmaceutical communications
- **Continue to attend relevant events**

# My first jobs were not directly in medical writing...

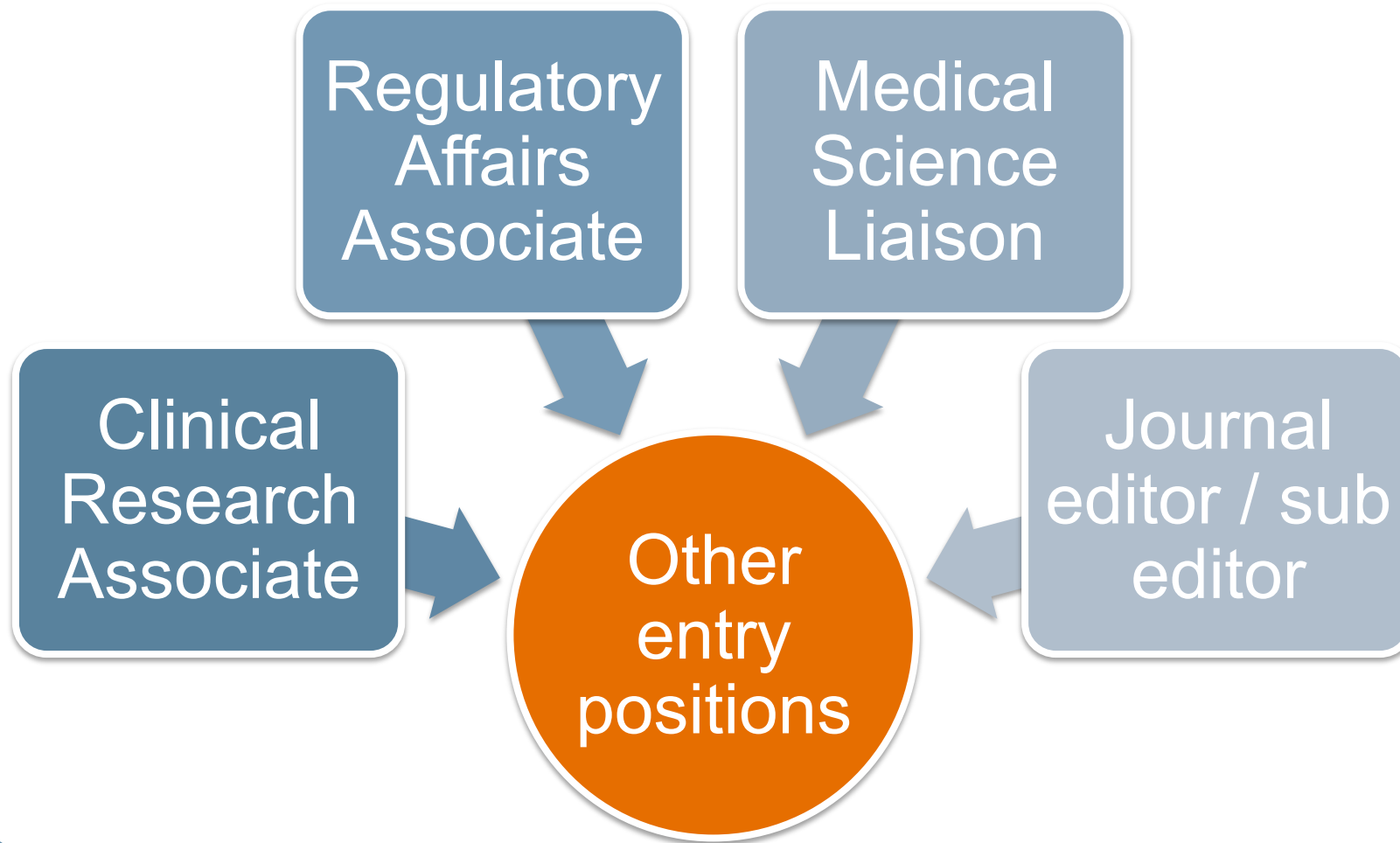
...but were very relevant

- I worked in medical information



- Provided information to internal teams and healthcare professionals on a number of drugs in written and oral format

# Other non-med comms entry positions to consider



# What did I learn from medical information?

## Research skills

- Ability to drill down to key info without getting side-tracked by needless detail

## Attention to detail and scientific accuracy

- Ensuring scientific accuracy is one of the most critical requirements for med writing

## Ability to contribute to a team

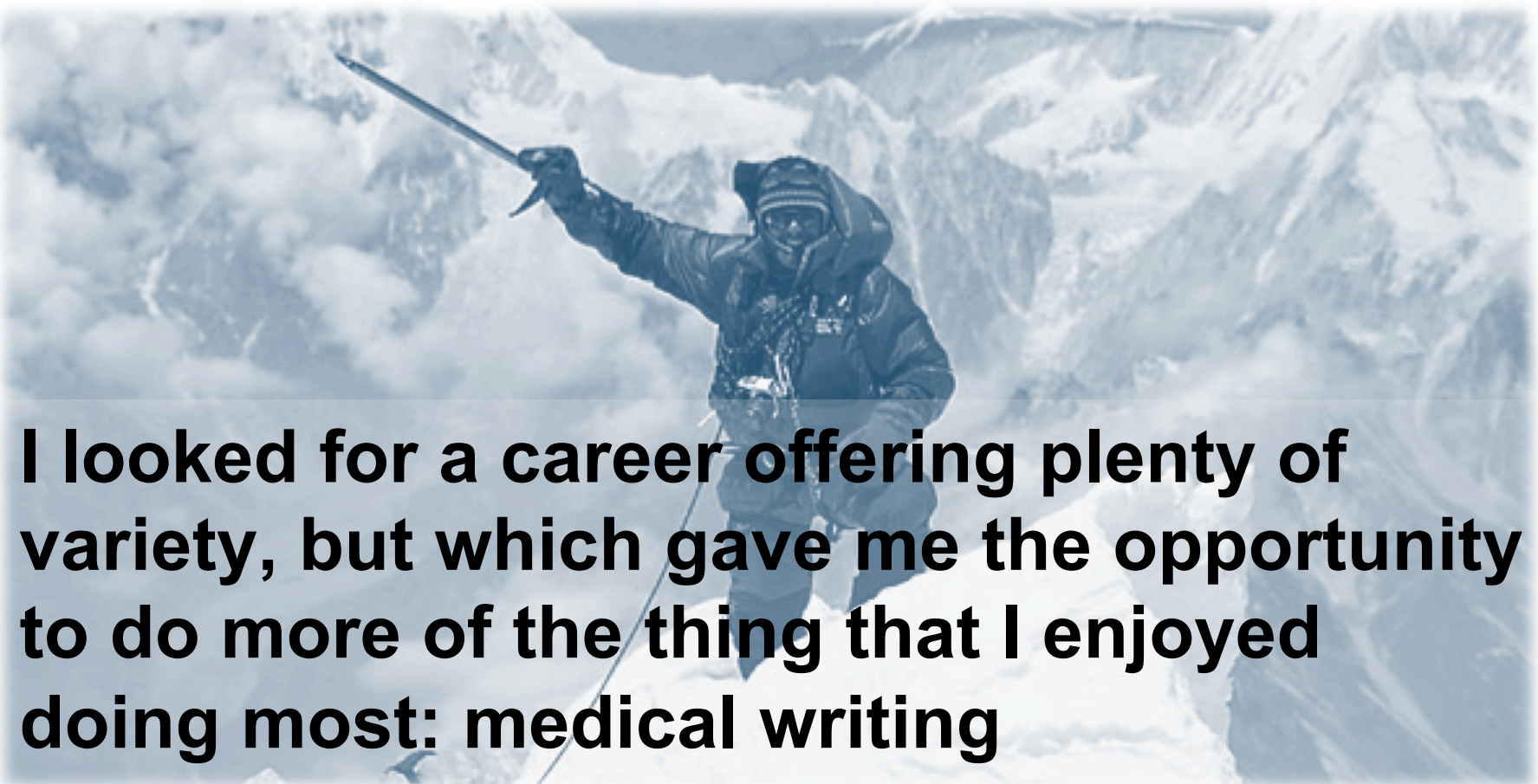
- In med comms companies, you always work as part of a team

## Guidelines and codes


- Need to become familiar with many different codes and guidelines




# **Twelve years ago, I felt it was time for a new adventure**

A photograph of a person in winter climbing gear, including a hooded jacket and gloves, ascending a steep, snow-covered mountain. The person is holding an ice axe in their right hand. The background shows more snow-capped peaks under a clear sky.

**I looked for a career offering plenty of  
variety, but which gave me the opportunity  
to do more of the thing that I enjoyed  
doing most: medical writing**



# What can you learn from the pathway I took into medical writing?

- **Gaining relevant experience** will help you get your first job in medical writing
  - Your first job may not be in med comms
  - 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
- 



**How about freelance  
medical writing?**



# Benefits of being a freelance medical writer



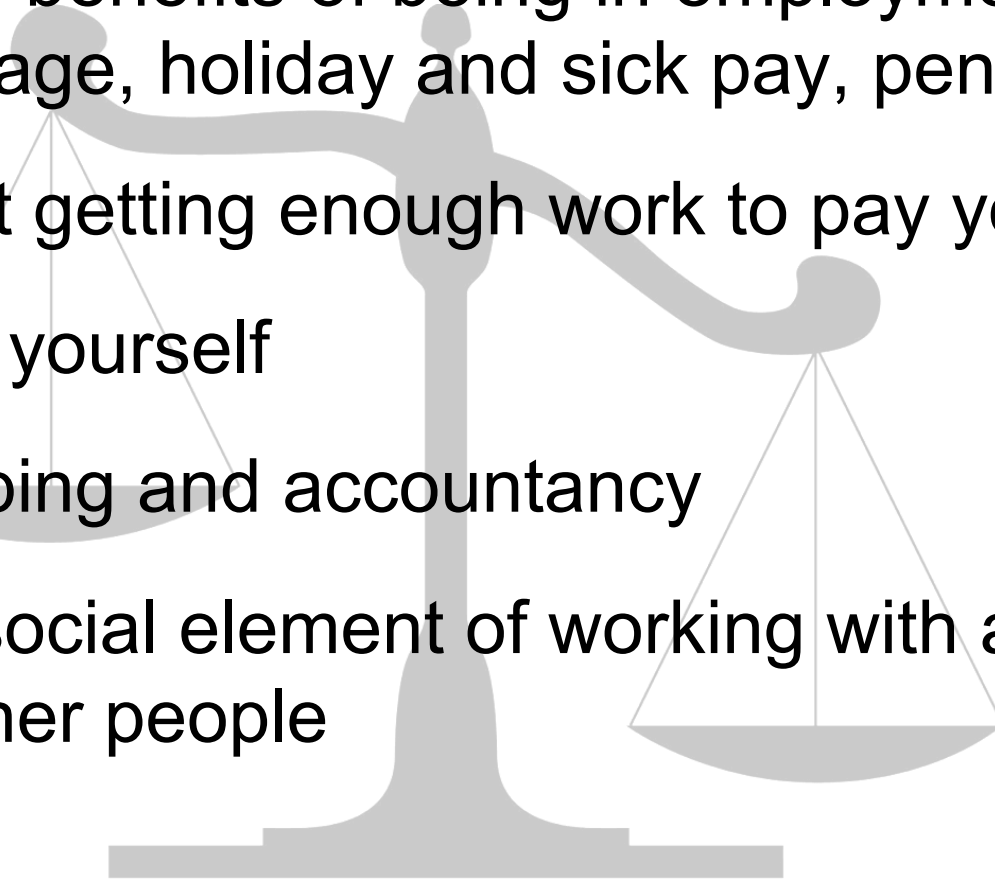
You are your own boss

Flexibility of 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
- Lose the social element of working with and around other people





# Don't think about becoming a freelancer too soon!!

- I had over 10 years of medical communications experience before I started working for myself
- This meant
  - I had a wide range of experience of working on different projects and therapy areas
  - I had considerable experience in providing strategic guidance and finding solutions to particular problems
- Most importantly – the longer you have stayed within agencies, the more people you know




# **Quick tips for your job application process**





# Contact relevant recruitment companies

- As well as contacting med comms companies, contact recruitment agencies
  - They will do the hard work by sending your CV to relevant companies (and they are FREE for you to use!!)
  - They may also help you prepare for interviews
- 



# Social network



- Join LinkedIn, connect with people in med comms and participate in relevant groups
- Follow the conversation, companies and experts on Twitter (#medcomms and #pubplan)
- **BUT** think carefully about the way you are perceived



# Research the job!!



- Make sure you know
  - About the pharmaceutical and med comms industries
  - About regulations and guidelines
  - About what a medical writer actually does

# What's next for me?

- The truth is I can't imagine being in a different role
- Each day I am writing or communicating about something different, and in doing so I am learning about something new



**Who needs more than that?**

# Feel free to contact me

twitter



@aspiresci



ryan.woodrow@aspire-  
scientific.com

LinkedIn

Search for Ryan Woodrow