




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

Ryan Woodrow





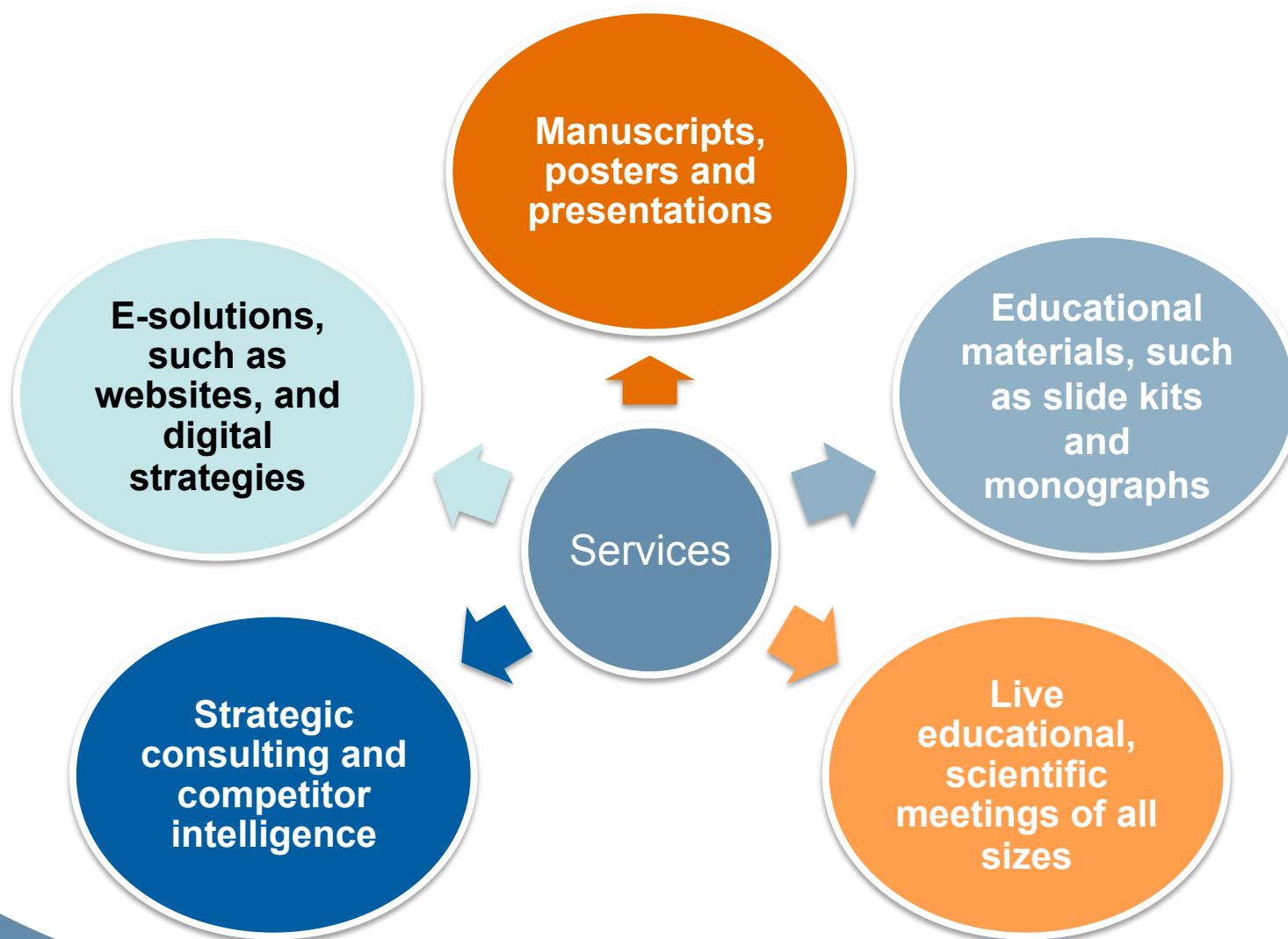
# What does a medical writer in med comms typically do?

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

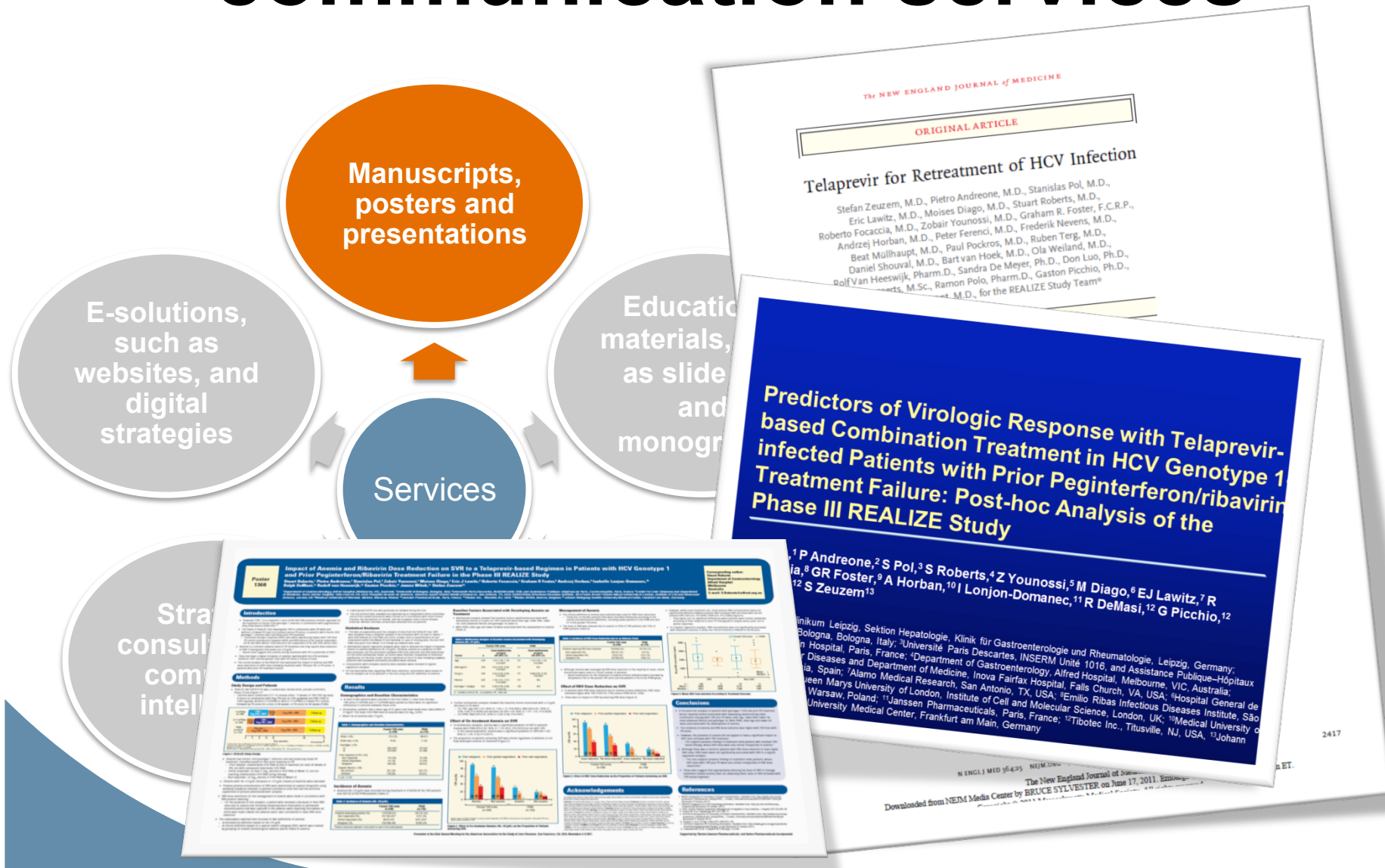


**\*Also biotech, diagnostics and device companies**

# Overview of some medical communication services



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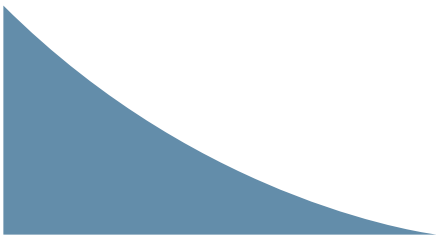
# Overview of some medical communication services





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

- **NO two days are ever the same**
- As you become more experienced, you will be given greater opportunities



# 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

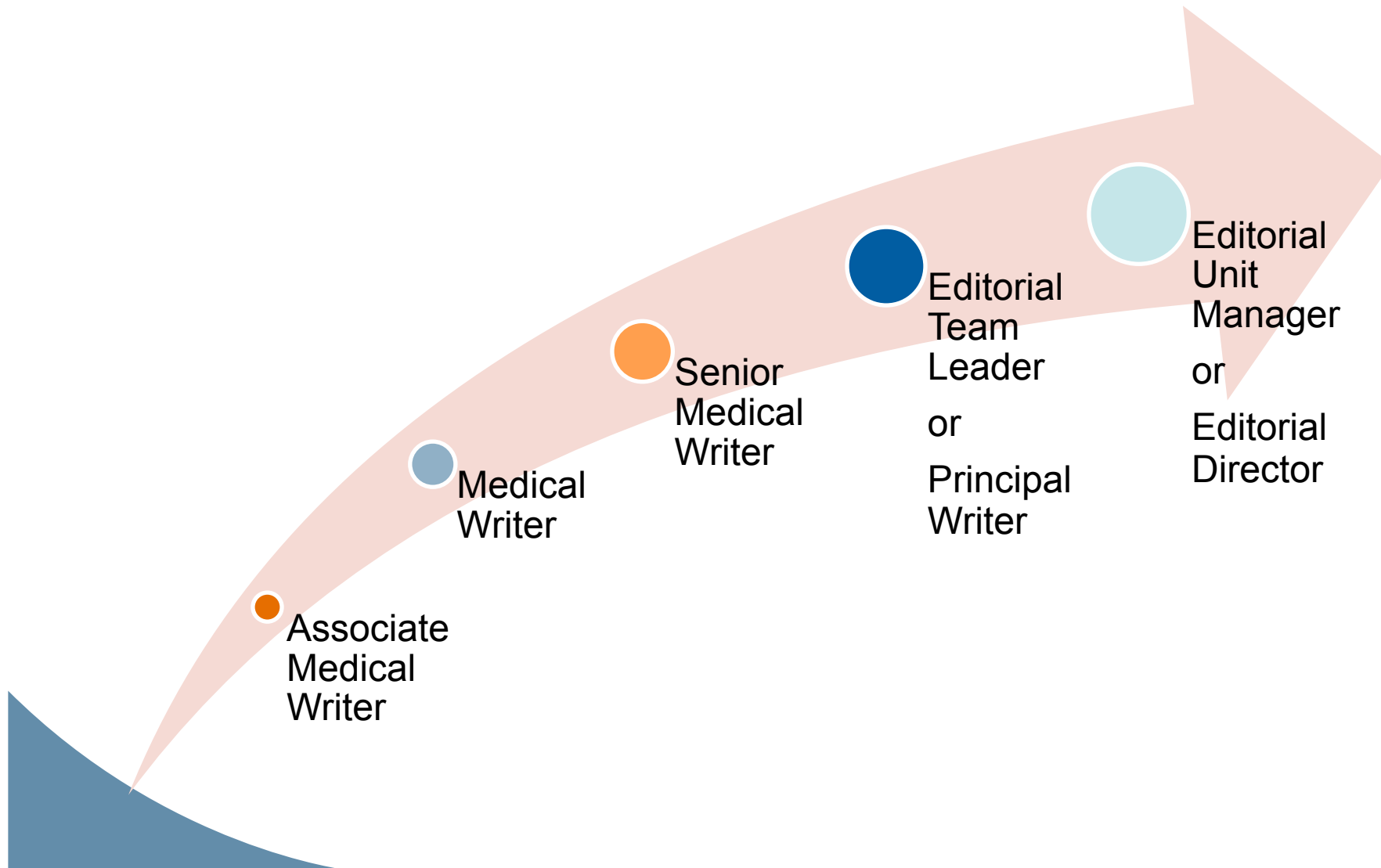
- **Internal team meeting** to run through status of projects
- Continuation of writing **manuscript outline**
- Incorporating comments from client on the **agenda for an advisory board** and send to meeting Chair

## 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?

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Enjoy writing

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Scientific background and love of science

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Pedantic and accurate

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Good communication skills

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Excellent research skills

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Don't mind or love travel


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Ability to think on feet


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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





# 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...

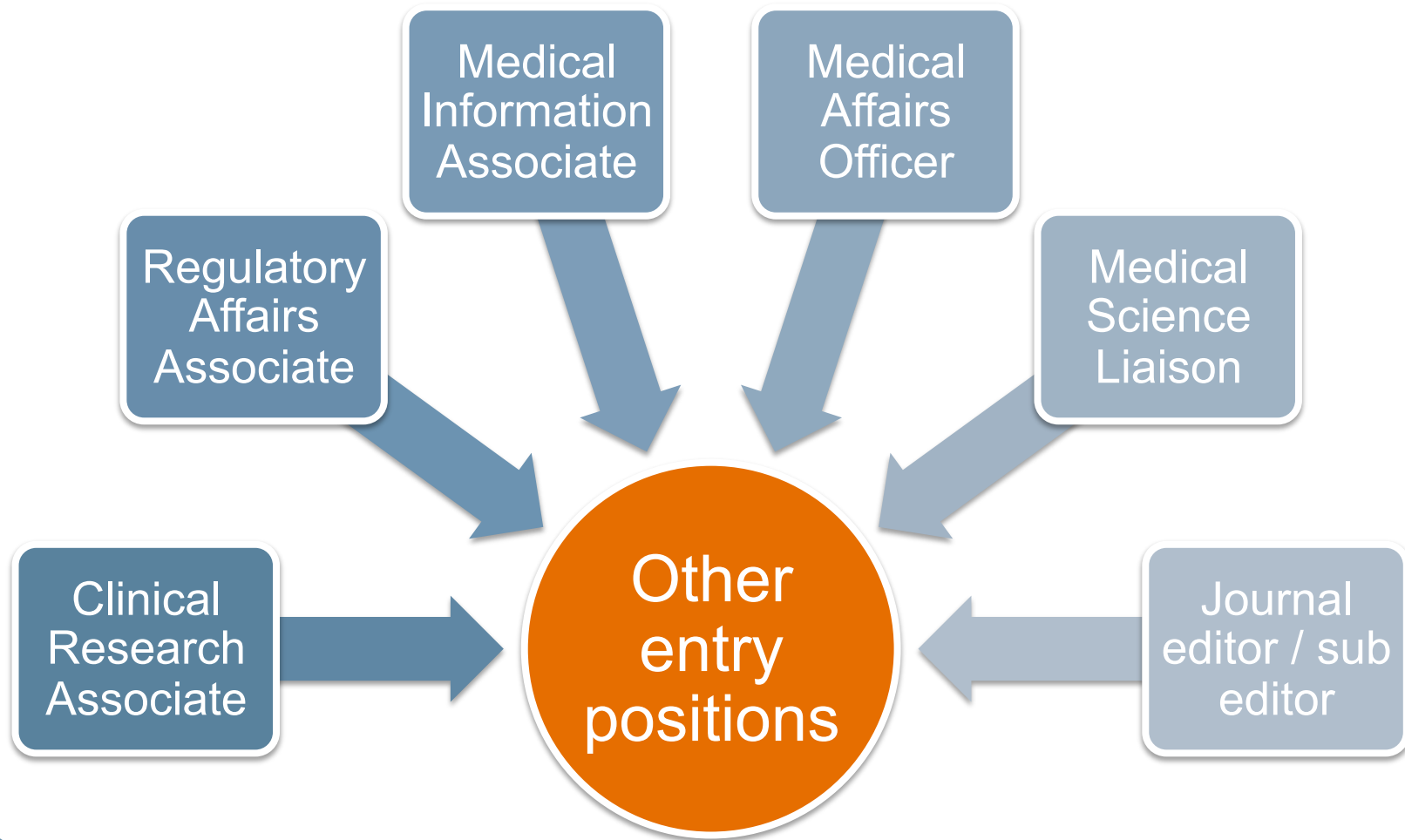
...but were very relevant

- I worked in medical information



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

# Just some entry other 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

## Filter key information fast

- Picking-up on a new drug or therapy area within days or weeks is often needed

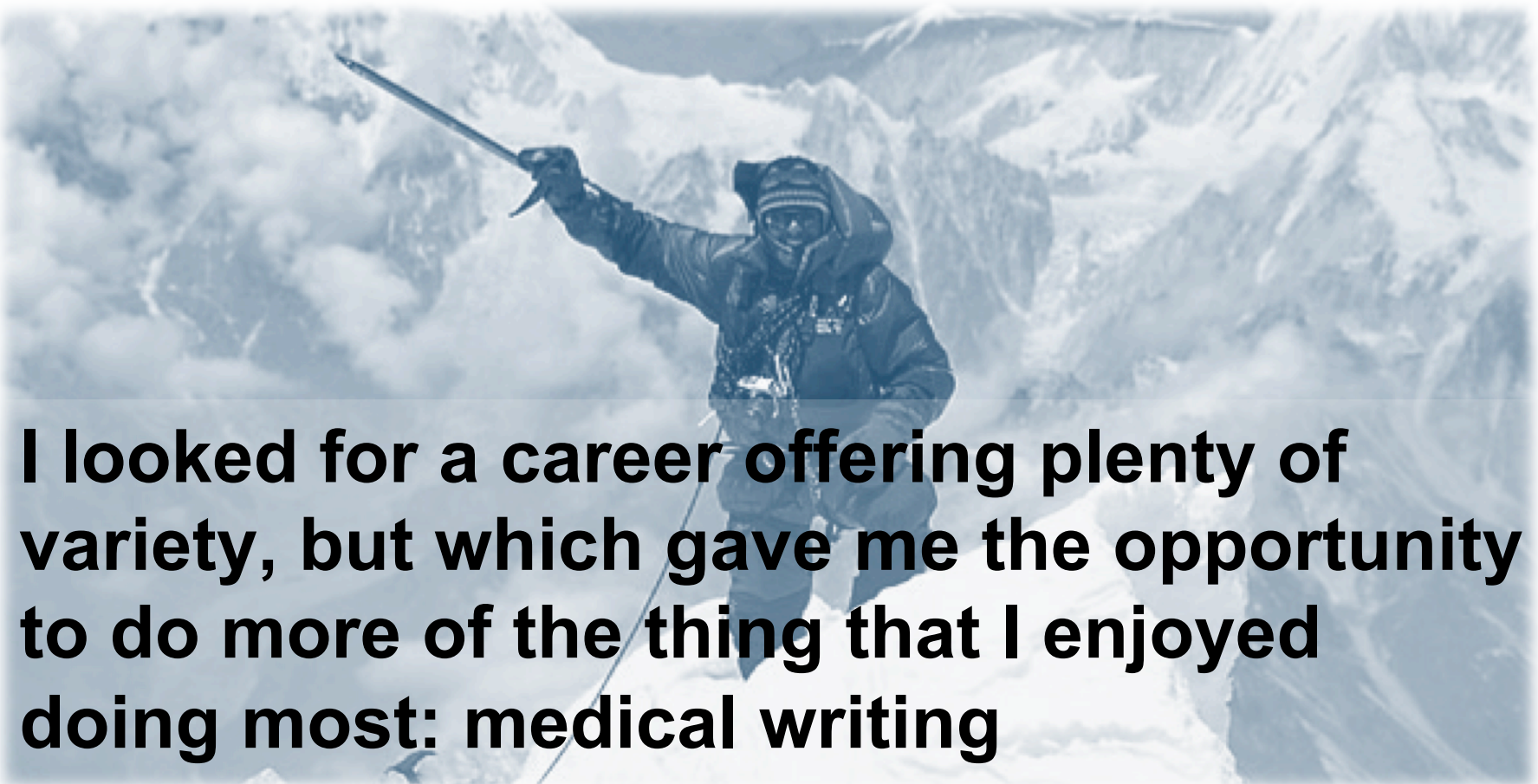
## Attention to detail and scientific accuracy

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


## Guidelines and codes

- Need to become familiar with many different codes and guidelines

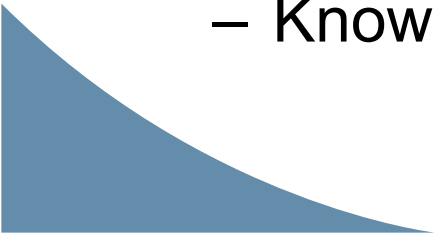
# **Twelve years ago, I felt it was time for a new adventure**

A person in winter gear is climbing a snowy mountain peak, holding an ice axe. The scene is set against a backdrop of rugged, snow-covered mountains.

**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
    - Knowledge of industry codes and guidelines
- 



**How about freelance  
medical writing?**



# Benefits of being a freelance medical writer



You are your own boss

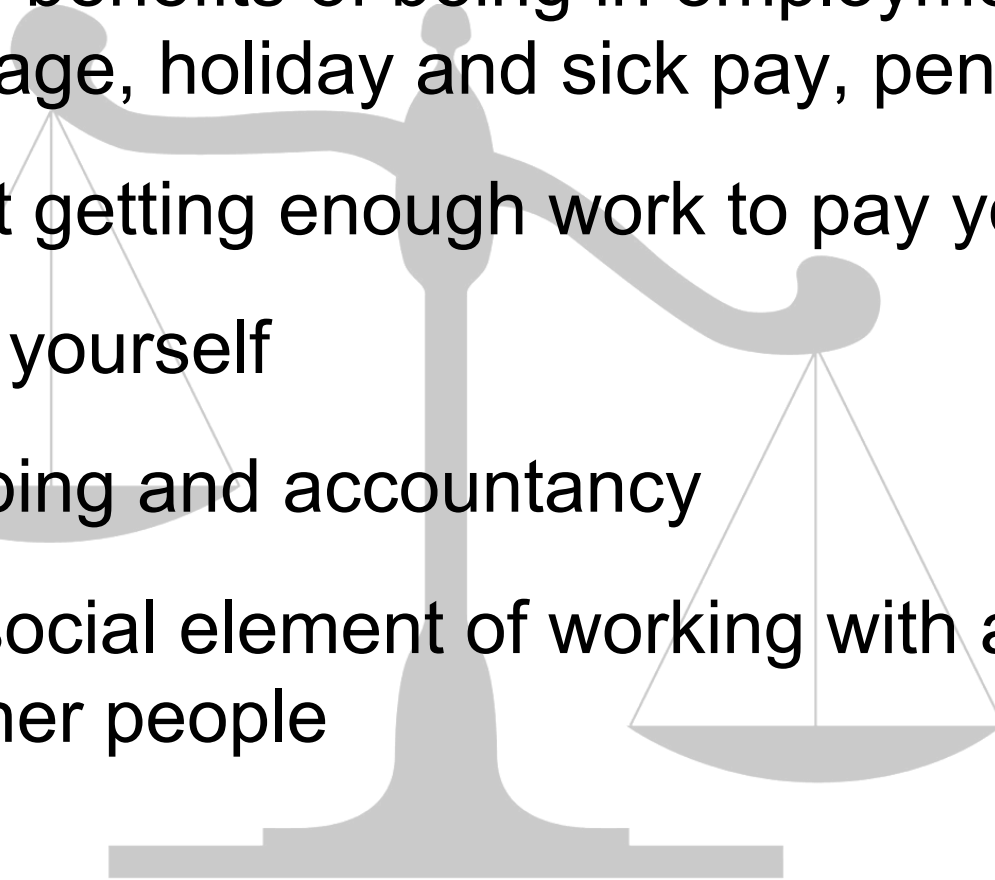
Flexibility of when you work  
and what work you do

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)

# 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

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