

September 2022

Ensuring timely dissemination of research

A guide to
*working as a
medical publications
professional*

Written by Dr John P Gonzalez

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Attributes

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Teamwork	<div><div></div></div>
Eye for detail	<div><div></div></div>
Organization skills	<div><div></div></div>
Communication skills	<div><div></div></div>
Adaptability	<div><div></div></div>
Willingness to learn	<div><div></div></div>

Background

Biomedical sciences, passion for science communication

Publications realm loading...

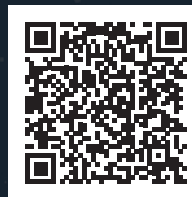
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Sounds great – where can I apply and find out more...?

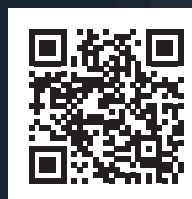
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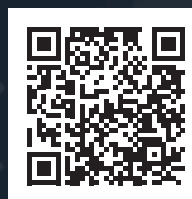
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Foreword to 2022 edition



I've been running MedComms Networking activities for many years now and along the way collected together a wide range of free resources at www.FirstMedCommsJob.com to provide insights into MedComms and related businesses. Developing and delivering publications strategies and plans represents a significant part of MedComms activity and depends on a successful team approach. A wide range of specialists from within the sponsoring companies and their supporting agencies work with authors, journal publishers, congress secretariats and others to ensure accurate and timely publication of data throughout the drug development lifecycle.

Ultimately the objective is to inform optimal decision-making by those who care for patients. I hope this guide will help you better understand some of the roles involved, and to appreciate the ethical and regulatory environment within which medical publications professionals work. We welcome your feedback.

Peter Llewellyn

For more information see: www.linkedin.com/in/networkpharma

About the author



John is a UK-registered pharmacist who started his career in academia following completion of a PhD in pharmacology. For the past 35 years he has worked in the publishing, healthcare agency and pharmaceutical industry sectors. At AstraZeneca, John worked in healthcare professional relations and publications, holding various leadership roles involving publications skills development and policy. John manages Solanum Medical Communications, which provides consultancy to the pharmaceutical, biotech and device industries on medical affairs, patient engagement in research, publications policy, strategy, planning, guidelines and ethics. John has been Secretary of the ISMP Board of Trustees and Vice Chair of the CMPPTTM Board of Trustees.

John P Gonzalez

For more information see: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/johnpgonzalez>

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Introduction

You probably know a little about publications management and are curious as to whether it would be right for you. You may already have a background in medical writing, project management or a similar organisational or planning role in an agency, or publishing, pharmaceutical, biotechnology or device company. If so, then you could be on the right track to securing a role in publications management.

Those of us who work in publications management consider it to be a profession; hence, you will often see the term 'medical publications professional'. Professions are defined by specialised skills gained through prior experience, education and training, but above all, by the high standards that need to be maintained to perform the job. We will look at this again in later sections covering ethics and codes, and how they link to our ultimate goal of improving patient care through medical publications.

In this guide, I describe how the principles outlined above apply broadly to those individuals working in industry or medical communication (MedComms) agencies who have the responsibility for delivering publications programmes.

*The ultimate goal is to improve patient care
through medical publications*

About this guide

The aim of this guide is to provide an overview of medical publications management. As well as explaining the processes and the regulatory environment, we provide a number of profiles from specialist medical publications professionals that give valuable insights into the various different roles involved to help you determine if you'd like to join the team.

For more information about starting out in MedComms and details of careers events, past and future, visit: www.FirstMedCommsJob.com

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See also...

The business of medical communications

A guide to getting started in account management

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Making it my own business

A guide to being a freelance writer in MedComms

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A guide to getting started in HEOR/market access medical writing

A writer's role in drug development

A guide to getting started in regulatory medical writing



Gonzalez JP. *Ensuring timely dissemination of research*. September 2022.
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What is publications management?

The aim of publications management is to disseminate the findings of research in an accurate and timely manner, to communicate evidence and build trust in the research and the product, and ultimately, to enable informed decision-making by those who care for patients.

As such, publications management provides a vitally important role, particularly in the current environment of scepticism and mistrust in science, the abundance of so-called 'fake news' and the proliferation of misinformation perpetuated on the internet and social media.

Typical publications deliverables from a programme or project, irrespective of the stage of development, include manuscripts, abstracts, posters and PowerPoint slide presentations. Manuscript types generally include full papers, short communications, letters to the (journal) editor and review articles.

What background/experience do I need?

Depending on the role, you are likely to have a science background and, while not essential, having an advanced degree (Masters or PhD) within a business, scientific or healthcare field is an advantage. Overall, you need a broad understanding of medical publishing and the pharmaceutical industry, particularly the early and clinical development of medicinal products and medical affairs, plus how medicinal products are approved and launched.

A track record of project leadership, project management skills, cross-cultural and cross-functional working will help you progress. If you have experience or an understanding of how to develop publications strategies and plans, you will find it easier to transition into publications management. And if you are already a CMPP™ (Certified Medical Publication Professional™), that's important because many employers will be looking for candidates with this qualification (see page 11).

Publications management requires experience in leading, facilitating, influencing, negotiating and resolving conflict to enable you to work within a cross-functional team, because for most of your time you will be dealing with people. Above all, you have to operate with integrity and to the high ethical standards set by this profession, remembering that patients may be harmed by inaccurate or misleading medical publications.

On the industry side, to take a role as publications lead will require several years of medical publishing, agency or industry experience. You may, for instance, have worked in medical affairs or clinical development and now wish to take on responsibility for the publications strategy and coordination of the publications plan.

On the agency side, you might join the team at entry level, for instance as an associate-level medical writer, editorial assistant or account executive. Or you may join at a more senior level, drawing upon your broader MedComms experience to provide expertise in writing and project management, and eventually more specialist scientific strategy support. Other careers guides from FirstMedCommsJob.com will give valuable advice if you are starting out at entry level from academia.

What is the role of the publications management team?

The team ensures that every publication in a publications strategy and plan counts towards creating an evidence base and improving patient care. The team will comprise people with a wide range of roles, and success depends on team members working closely together.

In practical terms, what does the team do? While the following is not an exhaustive list, it gives an indication of the many elements to be managed.

Success depends on team members working closely together

- Developing and delivering publications strategies and plans. This remit could include global, regional or local publications plans. In addition, the team may be managing a number of products in several indications at different phases of development in the portfolio.
- Planning and facilitating internal publications strategy and planning workshops.
- Acting as a point of contact for external publications steering committees and publications advisory boards.
- Representing the publications function or skill throughout your organisation (industry or agency) and advising on all aspects of publications strategy, planning, execution, processes and policy.
- Managing publications gap analyses, vocabulary development and literature searches.
- Managing and tracking budgets to ensure spend comes in on budget.
- Developing effective relationships with external experts.
- Interacting with journal publishers and editors.
- Interacting with medical societies and congress secretariats.
- Interacting and working closely with authors to support the development of publications.
- Ensuring compliant review of publications (sometimes providing scientific expertise if appropriate), to ensure data are interpreted correctly and comply with good publications practices and company policies.
- Developing documents to ensure clarity and consistency in scientific communications and terminology (i.e. lexicons, scientific statements, scientific communication platforms).
- Working with investigators, pharmacists, nurses, patients and other healthcare professionals who prescribe or are involved in patient care, to develop publications.

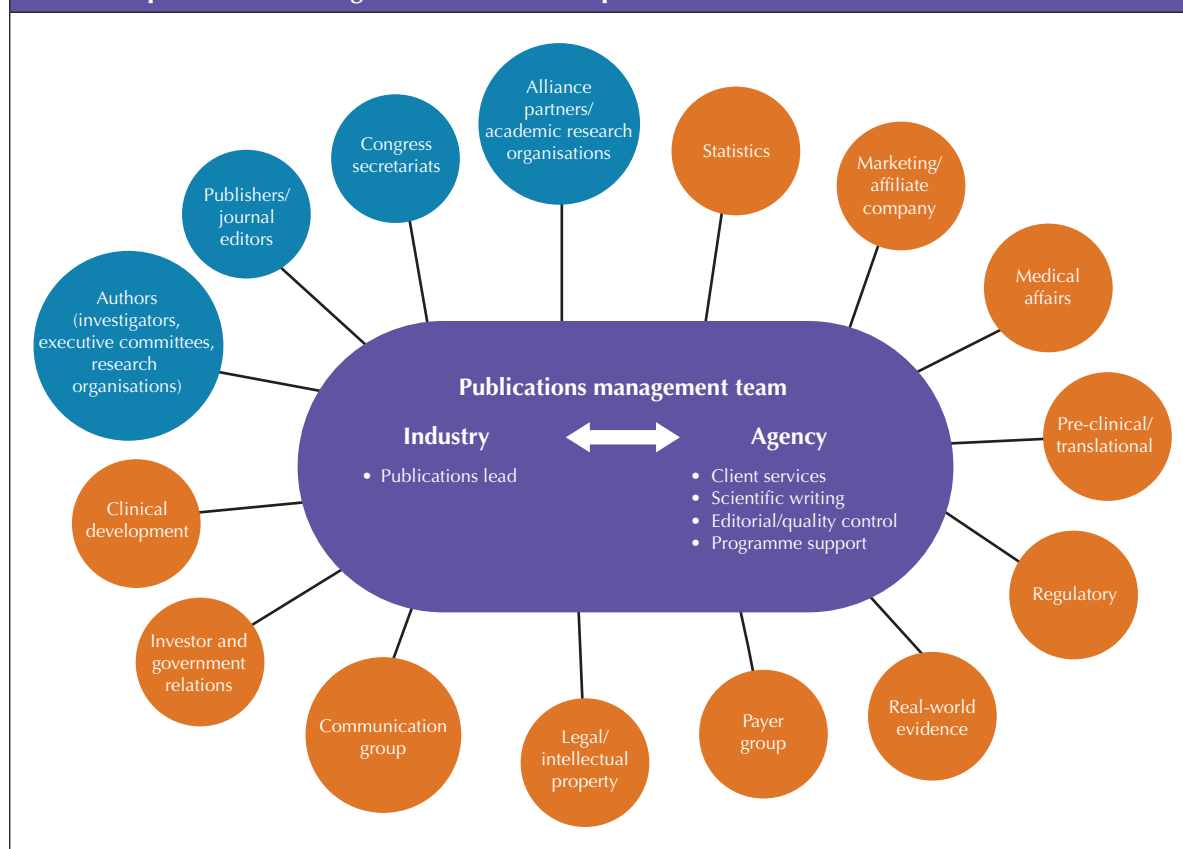
Who will I work with?

As a publications lead in industry or as part of a publications team in an agency, you will work and interact with people performing a wide range of roles in a cross-functional manner, supported by other in-house colleagues. As shown in **Box 1**, the extent of these interactions covers internal pharma company functions ranging from research through to legal and regulatory affairs roles (orange circles). Outside of the company and beyond the cross-functional publications team, the breadth of interactions is extensive, covering all aspects of the publications development process from authors through to journal publishers and editors (blue circles).

Each final publication in the programme results from the successful collaboration between the publications lead and his/her colleagues in the sponsoring company, and the agency team of specialist writers, editors, scientific leads, project managers and others. It's truly a team approach.

You can read more about some of the individual agency roles by reading the profiles provided by specialist medical publications professionals on pages 16–21.

Box 1: The publications management team has multiple stakeholder interactions



Publications management across the drug development lifecycle

In many pharma companies, publications and the development of publications strategies and plans are not formally started until phase II of the drug development lifecycle. Often, the reasons given for not starting until this stage of development include cost and also that the services of a publications lead and agency team are not available to assist with early projects. Since a proportion of projects will inevitably get discontinued in phase II due to efficacy or safety considerations, the costs to fund publications management resources are sometimes deemed unnecessary expenditure. However, the early involvement of a publications team will make a real difference when publications strategy, processes, planning and general education can be put in place. When left until phase II, time has been lost and the pharma company has to catch up quickly; often communications that have already been issued may be contradictory with additional effort required to rectify them. In addition, ad hoc publishing of research within the organisation without a robust publications review process may lead to inadvertent loss of intellectual property rights through public disclosure.

The early involvement of a publications team will make a real difference when publications strategy, processes, planning and general education can be put in place

Elsewhere there have been calls for better reporting of pre-clinical research and this is one area in which a publications team can usefully support the publications process. Pre-clinical publications facilitate transparency, and the sharing of data and ideas with other scientists, helping to reduce unnecessary use of laboratory animals and avoid duplication of studies that have been conducted elsewhere but were never disclosed. It is therefore prudent to deploy medical publications expertise and resources to assist publications development at all stages of the drug development programme. For example, by phase II, the following should ideally be in place and a publications team would support these activities:

- a lexicon and list of scientific communication statements that describe the product, disease area, molecule and its mechanism of action (MOA)
- published papers on the MOA, chemistry, pharmacology, pre-clinical and safety profile of the drug.

The above materials can be cited as full citations in subsequent clinical papers and regulatory submission documents, thus avoiding the need to cite “data on file” or refer to internal report numbers. Internal reports are difficult to access by the research community, with poor discoverability and transparency.

Technology solutions to manage the publications process

Think about what a day in publications management might look like. Firstly, an inbox full of publications-related emails requiring prioritisation and responses. Then, email messages needing to be sent out to authors or reviewers containing drafts of manuscripts, abstracts or posters for review for a range of different projects. Then there are the requests for journal or conference recommendations plus metrics and reports on publications activities that need to be prepared. Elsewhere, supporting information such as study reports of data listings to accompany drafts needs to be accessed, sent out and stored.

What about deadlines, consolidating draft comments, chasing individuals who have not responded? All of that needs tracking and follow-up. And if that is not enough to be going on with, a request comes in to dig out all correspondence, drafts and comments from a project completed some years ago. Finally, you are informed that the publications department is going to be audited for policy compliance. This could just be routine or because some issue of concern has been flagged up somewhere, but the question is will you be able to locate all the documentation requested by the auditors?

Well, thankfully, your life does not have to be chaotic or even scary. Help is at hand with the availability of several proprietary publications management tools to assist you and smooth out your working day. The main examples of these are:

- Datavision®, part of the iEnvision® platform, from Envision Pharma Group
- PUBSTRAT® from Anju Life Sciences.

These platforms have been designed to be user-friendly and to follow typical publications management workflow processes. They enable the streamlining of the whole publications lifecycle and development process from planning through all review stages, to submissions and storage of the final document and all other associated materials in one place. This means no more emails clogging up inboxes. Note that these publications management tools are not just for large companies with extensive plans: such plans are valuable and can be tailored for any organisation with a publications programme.

Additionally, these publications tools are repositories for documentation storage while also providing industry standard or customisable workflows, online document editing for medical writers/editors and external authors, version control and complete project history tracking visible to all involved in the programme. Publications teams can track and manage all project activities from a single system linking global, regional and local plans. Built-in databases of up-to-date information on congresses, journals and citation indexes can be accessed, avoiding the need to conduct separate internet searches. The monitoring and reporting functions facilitate audit trails, compliance checking and the output of charts, graphs and metrics. Every item of documentation related to a publications project requested in an audit can be quickly accessed when a publications management tool is being used to manage all projects and workflows.

Compliance, guidelines and guidance in publications management

The publications team needs to be very familiar with a number of organisations and regulations that have a significant impact on publications (see [Further information](#) on page 15). The areas that these organisations cover include authorship, data transparency/disclosure, obligations to publish results, confidentiality of personal information, payments and items of value given to healthcare professionals, and copyright law.

Publications management is supported by specific guidelines as well as several guidance documents covering processes and ethics that provide the publications team with a vast resource to assist in their daily role. Key sources of guidance are given below (see also [Further information](#) on page 15).

EQUATOR Network (Enhancing the QUALity and Transparency Of health Research)

EQUATOR is described as a one-stop shop for writing and publishing high-impact health research. This is an essential tool in publications management containing a comprehensive searchable database of over 430 reporting guidelines as well as links to other resources relevant to research reporting.

The following research reporting guidelines from EQUATOR are those most commonly used in publications management:

- CONSORT: randomised trials
- STROBE: observational studies.
- PRISMA: systematic reviews
- ARRIVE: animal pre-clinical studies
- SQUIRE: quality improvement studies
- CHEERS: economic evaluations.

Good Practice for Conference Abstracts and Presentations (GCAP)

GCAP provides specific guidance on what needs to be considered when developing materials for submission to research-based conferences, as opposed to Good Publication Practice (GPP), which focuses mainly on manuscripts and less so on conference materials.

The main practice points included in GCAP for the publications team to consider and manage include the need for clarity regarding authorship and contributorship, the inclusion of study registration numbers, and the disclosure of sources of funding and other author conflicts of interest.

Good Publication Practice (GPP)

GPP recommendations cover the majority of what you will need to guide you through publications management, whether you are in industry or an agency. The recommendations are designed to help individuals and organisations maintain ethical and transparent publications practices and comply with legal and regulatory requirements. GPP covers publications in peer-reviewed journals and presentations at scientific congresses. The main recommendations include:

- the importance of complete, accurate and balanced reporting in publications
- processes should follow international guidelines plus journal and congress requirements
- publications planning and development should be a collaboration between parties
- authors should take responsibility for all aspects of a publication
- author lists and contributorship statements should be accurate.

International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE)

Along with GPP, the ICMJE requirements, particularly those sections relating to authorship, comprise the most essential sets of guidance required almost daily in publications management. ICMJE is a group of general medical journal editors and related organisations working to improve the quality of medical science and its reporting.

ICMJE have developed recommendations on authorship, conflicts of interest disclosures, data access and transparency, which are critical elements to be considered in the publications development process. The recommendations also provide useful insights and an understanding of the medical editing and publishing process for the publications professional.

International Society for Medical Publication Professionals (ISMPP)

Being a member of ISMPP is helpful for anyone moving into publications management in industry or an agency. ISMPP advances the medical publications and communication professions by improving standards and best practices, education, advocacy and professional collaborations.

ISMPP publishes a Code of Ethics giving details of shared values and ethical benchmarks for all medical publications professionals, regardless of ISMPP membership. ISMPP also offers a certification programme that offers medical publications professionals an opportunity to earn the CMPP credential, which certifies: expertise as a medical publications professional, proficiency in good publications practices, a commitment to ethical and transparent data dissemination standards, and leadership in upholding and fostering integrity and excellence in medical publications.

Medical Publishing Insights & Practices Initiative (MPIP)

MPIP was founded by members of the pharmaceutical industry and ISMPP to elevate trust, transparency and integrity in the reporting of the results of industry-sponsored research. Their website provides useful resources of value, including journal selection tools, relevant societies and organisations, and guidance documents particularly aimed at assisting authors.

Management of the journal publications process

As covered on page 9, when developing manuscripts to be submitted to medical journals, publications management tools greatly assist in the logistical aspects of the publications process, from planning through to submission, and then to dealing with journal comments. However, the publications team needs to have oversight and control of all aspects of these processes to ensure compliance and adherence to best practices and company policies. This may include anything from checking the eligibility of proposed authors or organising project kick-off meetings with authors at the start of manuscript development to scrutinising draft manuscripts for inclusion of important information such as clinical trial registry numbers, contributorship information, sponsorship, funding, disclaimers and conflicts of interest statements.

Once the manuscript is submitted, journals and their peer reviewers will want access to documentation relating to the research they are reviewing. The publications team needs to work proactively and provide supporting documentation, such as protocols, statistical analyses plans (SAPs) and completed CONSORT Statement checklists, to accompany manuscript submissions of original research to assist peer reviewers. Likewise, on manuscript acceptance, there is often the requirement that these documents will be made publicly accessible as a condition of publication, so this expectation has to be managed.

Where possible, it is useful to set up a dialogue with journal editors, which can start with a pre-submission inquiry, where appropriate, once a journal has been chosen. At submission, it is important to ensure the covering letter to the journal editor is well written, summarises the study succinctly, and conveys the significance and relevance of the study to the journal.

The publications team must also oversee any revisions required by the journal, as well as the re-submission process, and deal with rejections. With regard to the latter, it is important not to ignore comments provided on rejection. These need to be dealt with and the new chosen journal should be made aware of how they have been addressed.

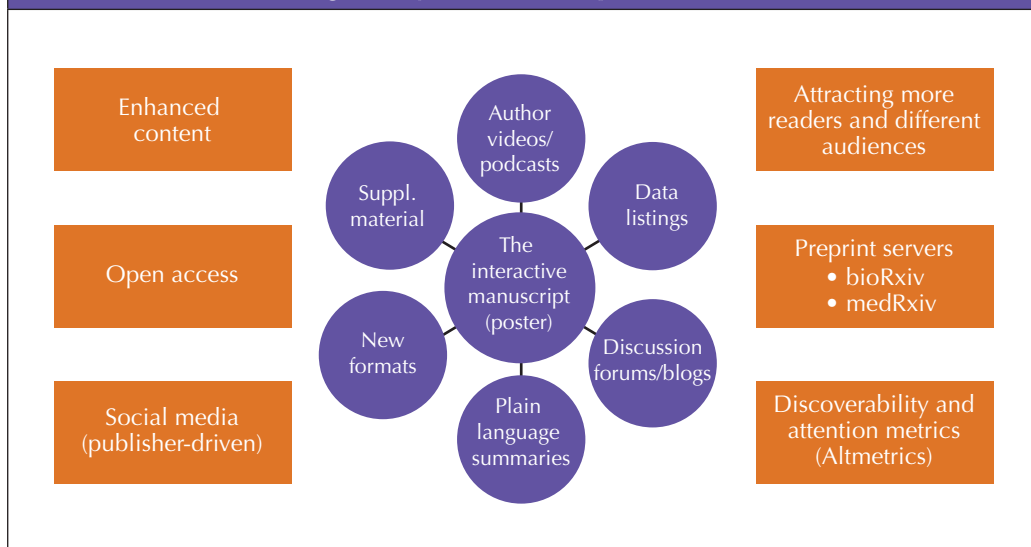
Innovations in journal publishing

Articles published in journals have progressed from a 'two dimensional' traditional printed format to what might be loosely described as multifaceted communication pieces, as shown in **Box 2**. The publications team has at its disposal a wealth of new opportunities to be more creative and enhance the value of the publications it manages.

The remit of a publications team now includes:

- providing the readership with enhanced content
- extending the reach of publications to newer audiences
- improving the discoverability of papers and removing barriers to their access through open-access publishing
- facilitating transparency and wider disclosure of data.

Box 2: Journal articles have gone beyond traditional print formats



A published manuscript can become the conduit to additional information relating to a piece of research or a clinical study. Links to supplementary content on methodology, data listings, graphics, videos and discussion/correspondence are all possible now and provided by many publishers and journals.

The increasing focus on patients

Increasingly, we need to embrace the reality of patient involvement in clinical trial design, research and scientific advisory panels, and as co-authors on medical publications. These are relatively recent developments but in a continually evolving publications environment, patient authorship is expected to increase, not just for patient-focused journals but also for general or specialist medical journals. Publications teams must keep a look out for appropriate patient authorship opportunities that meet ICMJE criteria and encourage patients to contribute and become authors. In addition, publications plans wherever possible should now include plain language summaries (PLS) for studies that are to be submitted for publication.

It is important to note that many publishers and congress organisers are embracing these changes involving patients. For example, the BMJ Publishing Group commits to partnering with patients and the public in all aspects of its work to advance the debate on patient and public involvement in healthcare and health research. Manuscripts submitted to *The BMJ* require a declaration on what involvement patients had in the study design.

Join the conversation...

#MedComms

Hints and tips when applying for roles

Much has been written about the do's and don'ts of job applications and interviews, which does not need to be repeated here. However, when applying for roles in publications management, whether in industry or agencies, the following points may be useful (depending on the role) when you are completing an application form or attending for interview. Where relevant, be prepared to provide specific case examples and information on what your involvement was.

Think about your experiences of:

- project management and cross-functional team working
- writing/editing scientific publications
- dealing with difficult people
- interacting with publishers and journal editors
- having conversations around authorship eligibility
- dealing with compliance and policy issues
- dealing with multiple manuscript rejections
- budget management.

Highlight your:

- transferable skills relevant to publications management
- experience using publications management tools
- membership of ISMPP, or medical writer associations such as European Medical Writers Association (EMWA) or American Medical Writers Association (AMWA)
- specialist qualifications, such as the CMPP credential.

Further reading

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Further information

Key organisations impacting publications

- Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) – www.abpi.org.uk
- Copyright Clearance Center – www.copyright.com
- Copyright Licensing Agency – www.cla.co.uk
- European Clinical Trials Database (EudraCT) – eudract.ema.europa.eu
- European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA) – www.efpia.eu
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – gdpr-info.eu
- Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) – www.phrma.org
- US Food & Drug Administration – www.fda.gov
- US National Library of Medicine: ClinicalTrials.gov – ClinicalTrials.gov

Careers support

- FirstMedCommsJob – www.firstmedcommsjob.com
- PharmiWeb Jobs www.pharmiweb.jobs

Industry information

- MedComms Networking – www.medcommsnetworking.com
- Open Pharma – www.openpharma.blog
- Plain Language Summaries (PLS) of Publications Toolkit: a best-practice resource for PLS of peer-reviewed publications and congress abstracts – www.envisionthepatient.com/plstoolkit
- The Publication Plan – www.thepublicationplan.com

Key regulations impacting publications

- The Bribery Act 2010 – www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/23/contents
- The Physician Payments Sunshine Act – www.bmj.com/content/347/bmj.f4704
- US Department of Justice: Foreign Corrupt Practices Act – www.justice.gov/criminal-fraud/foreign-corrupt-practices-act

Key sources of guidance

- EQUATOR Network (Enhancing the QUALity and Transparency Of health Research) – www.equator-network.org
- Good Practice for Conference Abstracts and Presentations (GCAP) – www.gpcap.org
- Good Publication Practice (GPP) – www.ismpp.org/gpp-2022
- International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) – www.icmje.org
- International Society for Medical Publication Professionals (ISMPP) – www.ismpp.org
- Medical Publishing Insights & Practices Initiative (MPIP) – www.mpip-initiative.org

Other professional bodies

- American Medical Writers Association (AMWA) – www.amwa.org
- Australasian Medical Writers Association (AMWA) – www.medicalwriters.org
- European Medical Writers Association – www.emwa.org
- Medical Affairs Professional Society (MAPS) – www.medicalaffairs.org

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Ben Clarke

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After completing my BSc in virology, I was undecided about whether I wanted to study for a PhD, so I began a role as a research assistant in a vaccine research laboratory. During this time, I realised that I didn't particularly enjoy lab work, but I thoroughly enjoyed learning about virology and immunology, the responsibility of leading my own research, communicating the findings of my research to different audiences, collaborations with other research institutes, and the teamwork and culture.

I began researching different careers away from the lab that might encompass the parts of my research assistant role that I found most fulfilling, and I realised that it might not be necessary to complete a PhD to pursue my career ambitions.

I spent 2 years as the production editor for a newly launched, open-access, biomedical research journal, which was really the foundation for my interests in publishing and communicating science to a variety of audiences through different formats. Unfortunately, I found the scope for career progression somewhat limited and that publishing jobs seemed to be restricted to a few locations in the UK, and so, in 2010, I applied to be a medical writer at various healthcare communications agencies, including AMICULUM.

I have now been at AMICULUM for 12 years and have progressed from a medical writer to a senior medical writer, editorial lead, line manager, account director and I am now the joint agency lead for Cence, which is a specialist publications agency that launched in 2021. At Cence, the goal for our team of publications experts is to maximise the reach and understanding of scientific evidence by combining high-quality technical content with impactful visuals in audience-focused materials. I have found this goal aligns well with my current interests, including many of my original career ambitions.

When I joined AMICULUM, I was interested in an opportunity to work in oncology and I have since spent much of my time supporting publications associated with the same investigational oncology treatment; it's been truly rewarding to have developed long-standing relationships with investigators and partnerships with clients. Another particularly rewarding aspect of my role at AMICULUM has been training medical writers and it's been really special to see entry-level (trainee) writers progress their own careers at AMICULUM. Throughout my time at AMICULUM, I've been fortunate to work as part of some wonderful teams, with many very talented individuals. Our AMICULUM culture and our values of integrity, fairness, collaboration and enterprise are really important to me from both a personal development perspective, but also as a mentor, line manager and agency co-lead.

My career at AMICULUM has certainly been fast paced and hard work, but I have found a career in medical publications to be varied, compelling and ultimately very rewarding. I'm looking forward to continuing to explore the latest advances in publications and am highly motivated to help maximise the reach and understanding of scientific evidence to different audiences.

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Rachel Dodd

Cence, an AMICULUM agency

My entry into medical writing was typical in some ways. After completing my PhD, I found myself unsure of my next move. While I liked working in the lab, I also knew that some of my favourite parts of my research experience involved writing and communicating science. This was reinforced when I actually enjoyed writing up my thesis – an experience that was unusual among my lab colleagues! However, I hadn't really been aware of MedComms as an industry until I began exploring ways to combine my love of science and my enjoyment of writing.

I started working in MedComms in 2020 when I joined the team at Cence, an AMICULUM agency specialising in publications. Working as a writer across a large oncology account was a completely new experience and, while the initial learning curve was a challenge, I have been pleasantly surprised at the variety of projects and how much fun it has been working together with such a talented team to deliver projects ranging from manuscripts to congress presentations and posters.

In many ways, it was an interesting time to get involved in publications, as pharmaceutical teams and authors adapted to virtual congresses amid the pandemic, and digital content played an expanding role in communicating new research. While in-person events are now returning, it will be exciting to see progress continue in using digitally enhanced content to increase the reach of publications. It has also been great to work on an account where there is growing effort to expand

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however, it also pays to
be adaptable as priorities
can change quickly*

patient-focused communication, and I have appreciated the opportunity, as part of a recent initiative, to develop plain language summaries alongside standard congress materials.

At times, the job can be unpredictable. Organisation is key; however, it also pays to be adaptable as priorities can change quickly. There are ebbs and flows, and it is important to be able to juggle multiple

projects during busier periods. I really appreciate that I learn new things all the time; one of my favourite things about the job is the supportive team environment and the way everyone pulls together to deliver during busy periods like congress deadlines. Although writing might seem like a solitary thing to do, delivering a project is very much a team effort!

Ultimately, clinical research is about improving patient outcomes, and it is really rewarding to contribute to this on a day-to-day basis by helping to communicate potentially life-changing developments to patients and to healthcare professionals.



Gillian Keating

Cence, an AMICULUM agency

I trained in medicine and, after completing my medical registration and discovering it was not a career I wished to pursue, began exploring alternatives. Medical writing seemed a good way of combining my qualifications and interest in writing, and I joined a medical publishing company as a medical writer in a non-agency setting. I initially wrote single-agent drug reviews across a wide range of therapeutic areas. Over time, my role transitioned into training and mentoring new medical writers and upskilling experienced medical writers, as well as establishing standard operating procedures and a training and mentoring programme.

In 2017, it was time for a change and healthcare communications beckoned. I joined AMICULUM as a medical writer and have been part of the publications team since 2018.

So, what do I enjoy about being a publications medical writer within a healthcare communications agency? It is fast paced and combines multiple skills: data interpretation, data visualisation, writing and publications planning, as well as managing timelines and seeing complex projects from conception through to publication. It is also a constantly evolving field, with the COVID-19-induced shift to virtual congresses, a growing use of innovative enhanced content and increasing emphasis on plain-language material. There are always new skills to acquire and more to learn.

I am lucky to work with a fantastic team of knowledgeable, agile, adaptable publications professionals and I find the role strikes a good balance between autonomy and teamwork. You can take ownership of your projects and drive them forward, knowing you have a great bunch of supportive colleagues backing you up.

The role has also allowed me to continue training and mentoring new writers. Seeing new writers flourish as they develop their skills and grow in confidence is something I really enjoy.

After rapidly transitioning from one therapeutic area to another every few weeks in my previous role, it has been particularly satisfying to gain an in-depth knowledge of a single therapeutic area and have the opportunity to build good working relationships with both the client and investigators. I love working in this therapeutic area and am fortunate to have witnessed the transformation of the treatment landscape and patient outcomes. Assisting the client and investigators to effectively communicate the results of their practice-changing trials through the publication of abstracts, congress presentations, manuscripts and enhanced content has been very rewarding.

It is fast paced and combines multiple skills: data interpretation, data visualisation, writing and publications planning, as well as managing timelines and seeing complex projects from conception through to publication



Kristie Marchant

Cence, an AMICULUM agency

I graduated from Surrey University in 2013 with a BA in English literature with creative writing. I selected a degree that aligned with what I felt were my strongest skills and interests at the time: reading and writing. From the career prospects open to me, such as teaching, publishing and marketing, I opted for the latter. I joined a small, local agency that offered me a job while I was in my final year, subject to me achieving a 2:1 or higher. Mission accomplished. This agency had a portfolio of alternative finance and accountancy firms as clients. It was not an area

which interested me but it kickstarted my awareness of compliance processes and the restrictions imposed on companies operating within a heavily regulated industry.

Like the majority of people who enter a career in MedComms, I had never heard of this industry at the point that I was making decisions about my future; at sixth form, I would never have imagined myself taking this route, especially having no formal scientific education. However, after several roles within medical publishing and healthcare advertising agencies following my first graduate job, I became more aware and understanding of the career opportunities and pathways available in this broad industry. It was inevitable, continuing down this route and dabbling in different areas, that I would stumble onto the path of MedComms sooner or later, even if my background at one time was Shakespeare and literary theory!

I can honestly say that I continue to find publications to be interesting, challenging and rewarding

As a prolific writer of lists, with a keenness for organisation and a solid plan (plus backups), it was no surprise that I developed an affinity for project management, propelling me from the marketing department into client services and account management. My first role in a MedComms agency as a senior account executive introduced

me to the fast-paced nature of publications in the oncology and rare disease therapy areas. While I certainly needed to put in the extra work to bring myself up to speed with the terminology and processes due to my lack of medical education, there was a wealth of information available to support me in the form of background reading, published materials and endless questions to my knowledgeable colleagues – not to mention on-the-job experience. Before long, I felt I had a good understanding of the industry, its necessary processes and the general quirks and nuances that come with working on a busy publications account.

Fast forward another 3 years to my current role in Cence, AMICULUM's dedicated publications agency, and I can honestly say that I continue to find publications to be interesting, challenging and rewarding. The arguably cliché observation that 'no 2 days are ever the same' certainly rings true here. I have worked on a range of traditional publication types – abstracts, posters, manuscripts, review articles – and am excited to see how the landscape changes in the future, as we collaborate with pharma to experiment with plain language summaries, podcasts, video animations and other examples of enhanced or reformed layouts.



Beatrice Vetter-Cerioti

AMICULUM USA

During both my undergraduate degree in biochemistry and microbiology, and my PhD in synthetic biology, I was always attracted to extracurricular activities – so much so that I became involved with the European Federation of Biotechnology Section for Bioengineering and Bioprocessing as their communications officer. Realising that my joy tended to come from presenting my research at congresses and networking with other researchers versus spending long monotonous days in the lab, I knew that I wanted to look beyond academia for my next career step.

Like most postgraduate students, I was not aware of the extent of opportunities outside of academia until I attended my university's careers fair, where I first learnt about MedComms and I was immediately excited. Using these very FirstMedCommsJob career guides, I discovered that the skill set I had developed was indeed transferable, and I started my MedComms career as an associate medical writer straight out of the lab.

Five years later, I can happily say that I have never looked back. As an experienced medical writer at AMICULUM, I highly enjoy my varied work where no 2 weeks are the same. I have learnt to transform complex scientific data into a wide range of written and digital deliverables for different pharmaceutical audiences, including classic publications such as abstracts, congress presentations and manuscripts, but also interactive slide decks, symposia, training materials and much more.

...finding MedComms has led me to a fulfilling and rewarding career that allows me to use my passion for science communication to deliver a variety of projects ... that can help improve patients' lives

Given the variety of this job, a supportive learning environment is also essential for building a career in MedComms. I am very thankful to the wonderful mentors I have had the pleasure of working with over the years; I now enjoy being able to support and share best practices with colleagues. What I particularly love about the MedComms industry are the people and the supportive culture. Teamwork plays a vital role in delivering each project as every member collaborates with and supports colleagues and different specialist teams locally and internationally. The professional development tool we have at AMICULUM, called 'Curriculum', is a fantastic platform to further foster your skills and interests at every level and stage of your career.

Working across multiple therapy areas can be daunting at times but expanding my knowledge in different disease areas and in cutting-edge drug development, which can potentially transform people's lives, has been very rewarding. As I progress in my role, I enjoy having the ability to not only navigate challenges, such as my workload and competing timelines, but also to creatively solve problems and be a more strategic partner for my clients, enabling them to realise their goals and ultimately ensuring the dissemination of their important research to the right audiences.

My happy accident in finding MedComms has led me to a fulfilling and rewarding career that allows me to use my passion for science communication to deliver a variety of projects for our clients that can help improve patients' lives, all the while working with the most wonderful colleagues. If this sparks your interest, I highly encourage you to consider a career in MedComms.

Gonzalez JP. *Ensuring timely dissemination of research*. September 2022.

For more information about careers in MedComms, see www.FirstMedCommsJob.com



Cameron Ward

AMICULUM New Zealand

I began my career in science when I was 18. Pfizer's European research headquarters were near my hometown in the UK, and they ran a programme for local school leavers in which you could work in the labs at Pfizer while also going to university and studying for a part-time degree (almost like a science apprenticeship). After Pfizer downsized their presence at the site, I worked for various smaller pharmaceutical companies in the UK, before making the decision to move to New Zealand and work at the Auckland Cancer Society Research Centre, based at the University of Auckland. After working for some time in academia, I began to feel that my time in the lab was coming to an end and so I started looking for something different, which would also draw on my experience as a scientist. Luckily, I saw an advert for a role as a trainee medical writer at AMICULUM New Zealand, and the rest, as they say, is history!

One of my first projects at AMICULUM was supporting the development of a slide deck to be used by our client as an internal educational resource. It was a great introduction to the world of MedComms, and I found myself really enjoying developing this type of project. I also began supporting congress activities and developing manuscripts. I love developing presentations and posters that report data to large audiences, especially those which may directly affect patients.

It has been noticeable in the past 5 years how much medical education has changed, especially in regard to patient-focused materials. Congress presentations are now developed with a whole raft of additional educational material, including plain language summaries and animations for

patient use. AMICULUM works closely with clients when developing these materials, and I have been fortunate in being involved in a number of these projects. Adapting your writing to focus on patients instead of healthcare professionals can be a challenge, yet it is also gratifying knowing that you are directly communicating with people and potentially helping to improve their lives.

I would encourage anyone with a passion for science and education to pursue a career as a medical writer

Working at AMICULUM has provided me with the opportunity to work in a number of therapy areas and gain experience in different projects. As well as the previously mentioned educational resources and congress activities, I have also had the chance to develop literature reviews, attend advisory board meetings and support satellite symposia at international congresses. I have gained experience in account management and have really enjoyed forming and cementing relationships with clients.

I have now been working at AMICULUM for over 5 years, and as a more experienced writer I review colleagues' work and provide support for new writers where needed. Again, this aspect of my role is rewarding, and it's wonderful seeing people develop and become accomplished writers.

In summary, I have loved every moment of my career at AMICULUM. I would encourage anyone with a passion for science and education to pursue a career as a medical writer.



Natasha Webber

Cence, an AMICULUM agency

I graduated in 2020 with a degree in biomedical science and, like most 2020 graduates, found that COVID-19 threw a spanner in the works. My plan originally had been to study for an MSc in human genetics, an aspect of my undergraduate course that I found particularly interesting, and then travel the world for a year before settling back in the UK with a 'proper job'. However, the idea of spending another year studying online from my bedroom didn't appeal to me, and while travel restrictions made it impossible to leave the country I was forced to transition into the world of work a lot sooner than I had anticipated. This was particularly daunting

for me as I had absolutely no idea where to start. All I knew was that I wanted to use my science degree and make a real difference to people's lives.

With my very basic criteria, I managed to narrow my job search to the healthcare industry and ended up accepting a position as a catheterisation lab assistant in the cardiology department of a local hospital. While the job was rewarding and people were genuinely grateful for help, I soon realised that this was perhaps the wrong sector for a hypochondriac! I also found that the responsibility of having somebody's life directly in my hands was a bit too much pressure for my liking. I remember saying this to my line manager on my very first day here at Cence, to which she responded: "Tash, you'll definitely feel the pressure in this job, but don't worry, nobody's going to die on you!"

I began to refine my criteria by taking the parts of my Cath Lab job that I enjoyed, such as contributing to improve human health and

working closely alongside others as a multidisciplinary team. I also thought about what aspects my current job didn't fulfil. I knew that the scientist in me missed being at the cutting edge of research and that I got bored without variety. This was when I stumbled across MedComms, particularly publications, which seemed to tick all the above. I started applying for commercial roles, as these aligned with my personality and attributes best, and shortly after I was offered a position as an account executive at Cence!

I've now been working here for 8 months and I've already learnt so much! I've developed the necessary organisational and time management skills to keep each project progressing nicely against timelines, as well as financial knowledge so that I can budget, forecast and invoice for projects, and lastly the leadership skills that I need to make key decisions with the client and to push projects through to completion.

I think MedComms is a bit of an enigma – you will never truly understand the industry until you work in it yourself. But if you enjoy making a real difference and working closely with the latest advancements in medical research then publications could be a great fit for you. Never would I have thought that I'd end up in a job I didn't even know existed a year ago, but sometimes it's worth taking the risk and trying something completely new!

*If you enjoy making a real difference
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I work in publications management...

"I work in publications management because it gives me the privilege of using my clinical, research and project management skills to deliver vital clinical trial results to medical professionals, who utilise them to improve the lives of their patients. Publications management combines scientific rigour with creativity, and the projects are as varied and interesting as the people I work with to deliver them."

Callan Attwell at AMICULUM New Zealand

"I work in publications management because it gives me the opportunity to interact with a variety of amazing people who are standouts in the field of healthcare. There is never a dull moment, and I am constantly learning new things. I enjoy supporting the publication process and being involved with such important projects, gaining knowledge along the way. Seeing the final product at the end and knowing you've made a positive impact on the lives of patients is so rewarding."

Jen Gillman at AMICULUM USA

"I work in publications management because it allows me to work on a wide variety of projects across the lifecycle of products with talented internal and external teams for the benefit of all. My role helps me develop on a personal and professional level with colleagues and clients alike. I enjoy taking a detailed approach as I help ensure all the necessary pieces of the jigsaw are in place prior to the release of projects."

Stephan Bird at Cence, an AMICULUM agency

"I work in publications management because I love the fast-paced, exciting environment that comes with working on a wide variety of projects, including congresses, manuscripts and animated videos. The field of publications is always evolving to meet the needs of patients and healthcare professionals, which presents creative opportunities to explore new ways to share important data (e.g. podcasts or infographics), and there will always be something new. I think it is wonderful working in such a meaningful role and being able to collaborate with people across the world."

Megan Marr at Cence, an AMICULUM agency

"I work in publications management because I get the chance to communicate content that has a major impact on people's lives, whether they are patients, healthcare providers or the public. I thrive on the interactions between our writing team, clients and clinicians, and thoroughly enjoy determining the best way to present outcomes in a meaningful manner. Each day is a mix of scientific rigour, clear communication and creativity that keeps me coming back for more!"

Patrick Capon at AMICULUM New Zealand

"I work in publications management because I love collaborating with my team, authors and clients to bring medical data to life in a way that is meaningful and ultimately improves patients' lives. Working in publications is so much more than 'just' writing the publication – it means dynamically planning tactics, tailoring communications for different audiences and identifying the best channels to deliver those communications. With the digital age providing an increasing number of options for data dissemination, and an expanding focus on patient communications, I am more excited than ever to work in publications management."

Kirsty Millar at Cence, an AMICULUM agency

"I work in publications management because I've always looked for careers that blend science with business. What enticed me when I first started working in medical publications was the opportunity to support cutting-edge data – whether it be in writing or in project management, you have a hand in crafting a story around material that has not yet been in the public domain. Furthermore, a career in MedComms enables you to play an important role in communicating unbiased science and the impact is real."

Alison Dufour at AMICULUM USA

"I work in publications management because it provides me with the opportunity to learn and develop my scientific understanding on a daily basis. My role is intellectually challenging, highly rewarding and I really enjoy being part of such a collaborative, friendly and supportive team."

Abbie Newman at Cence, an AMICULUM agency

"I work in publications management because it allows me to utilise both the scientific and creative sides of my brain to communicate complex information to a variety of audiences, and ultimately (hopefully!) help bring new therapies to patients. The role allows for ownership of projects with the support of a fabulous team, constant learning and development, career progression and great job satisfaction."

Kara Filbey at Cence, an AMICULUM agency

"I work in publications management because I can combine my scientific background with my love of writing. I enjoy helping to communicate complicated data clearly and concisely. Working on publications can ultimately assist in the regulatory approval of much-needed novel therapeutics for patient benefit, which is very rewarding."

Emma Robinson at Cence, an AMICULUM agency

"I work in publications management to support scientific exchange that leads to patients obtaining access to life-changing new medicines."

Helene Wellington at AMICULUM New Zealand

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Good luck

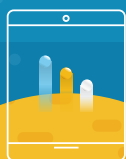
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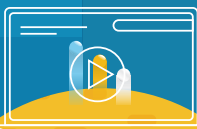


Citable evidENCE is the foundation of scientific exchange

At Cence, we strive to maximize the understanding of scientific evidence by complementing high-quality content with visually appealing materials



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Virtual and in-person meetings



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Strategic publication planning



Publication practice consultancy



Impact analysis