

FROM THE EDITOR & GUEST EDITOR

Communicating Science

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These are good times to be a medical communicator! Science keeps growing and so does the number of scientific publications. In the life sciences, the number of publications increases over 5% every year and the total number of publications doubles every 14 years.¹ This reflects the growing number of scientific articles intended for fellow scientists and peers. With the increasing involvement of medical writers in the preparation of manuscripts, this growth provides a multitude of opportunities for professional medical communicators. Thus, medical writers are part of a larger voice of researchers, medical practitioners, educators, and journalists who are conveying advancements clearly and objectively.

The audience many medical writers may primarily serve is the scientific/medical community. However, there is a growing demand of society at large and of patients in particular that the science they support with their taxes and with their out-of-pocket expenses is explained to them. They want to know what scientists work on and what relevance their work has. They want to understand why a new drug that comes at a higher price is apparently better than established cheaper products. With the growing demand of informing nonspecialists and the public comes an additional responsibility for medical communicators. We need to continue finding and defining best practices in communicating science to nonexpert audiences.

Although science is growing, there is a concerning percentage of society that mistrusts scientific expertise. Bubbles have emerged in which misinformation is spread, and opinions are presented as facts, particularly via social media. In this situation, medical communicators need to lend themselves to the struggle for objective and honest content and presentation. Communicating to the public needs to be embedded in a framework of sound ethical principles.

At a practical level, as medical communicators, we must continue to do our part by valuing the scientific method as the path toward advancements in our understanding of



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medicine, holding ourselves to high ethical standards, being mindful of potential personal biases while relentlessly striving toward objectivity, and ensuring our written contributions are always clear, precise, and complete. This applies whether our audience is a medical researcher or practitioner, student, regulatory body, patient, or the public at large.

In recognition of the growing importance of our role as medical communicators in conveying factual scientific information to our varied audiences, the theme for the summer 2022 issue of *AMWA Journal* is Communicating Science. In this issue, we tackle several topics relevant to our role in communicating science to our audiences, including

- the value of generating plain language summaries of scientific publications to help patients and other non-specialists to understand the potential implications of clinical and medical research,
- the making of good lay summary practice guidance to help the public understand the results of clinical trials, and
- a proposed systematic approach to writing a scientific manuscript to increase the likelihood it will be used to further advance biomedical knowledge.

We are hopeful you will find the information in this issue helpful to you in your ongoing role in communicating science.

Reference

1. Bornmann L, Haunschild R, Mutz R. Growth rates of modern science: a latent piecewise growth curve approach to model publication numbers from established and new literature databases. *Humanit Soc Sci Commun.* 2021;8(224):1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-021-00903-w>