

FROM THE GUEST EDITOR

Publications of Biomedical Research: Evolving Landscape and Constant Themes

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The field of biomedical research publication has undergone significant changes in the last few years. The COVID-19 pandemic catapulted forward an era of virtual scientific conferences, for which technological tools were quickly developed and established to enable the display of conference presentations and posters on digital platforms. Although conferences have returned to in-person attendance, most still use a hybrid format, enabling virtual participation and on-demand access to digital conference materials. On the front of biomedical publishing by scholarly journals, there is a similar trend toward digital content beyond the traditional 2D format. Many journals have embraced digital enhancements of journal articles to extend their reach to a wider audience. Examples include video or audio abstracts, infographic summaries, plain language summaries, and social media posts, to name a few.

Tied to the evolving format and types of publications is the evolving audience of biomedical research data. In the current digital environment and with more open access available, scientific publications now reach a much wider audience all around the world. For publications of biomedical research, especially clinical studies, the readers are no longer only the clinicians and researchers in the field. They can include investors and funders of research, payors of health care, and patients and their families. In this new publication environment, medical writers often embrace the task of completing multiple deliverables for one publication, which often means shorter timelines and more complex review and approval cadence.

The scope and depth of publications are increasing as well. Besides the traditional phase 1 to 4 clinical studies, medical writers now also work on publications of real-world data research, health economics and outcomes research, biomarker and other translational research, and preclinical research. Also, publication teams nowadays can be larger and more complex, including authors and contributors from more parties or functions (eg, academic institutions, sponsors, contract research organizations, alliance partners, and patients). With these changes, medical writers often find themselves learning new topics and collaborating with more people.

Are there constant themes in this backdrop of a rapidly evolving landscape? My answer is a definite “yes.” One constant theme is the need for good medical writers who can step up to the challenges and contribute to successful publications, fulfilling authors’ visions and meeting readers’ needs. A good medical writer



is masterful at the art and craft of medical writing. They have solid command of scientific research principles and methodologies, they understand authors’ intent and readers’ needs, they know journals’ guidelines and requirements, and of course, they possess writing skills that deliver concise and precise prose, logical flow of information, and effective visual representation of research data. This package of knowledge and skills will always remain a core competency of any medical writer working on scientific publications, regardless of research topic or publication type. A good medical writer is also masterful at driving a project and collaborating with authors, contributors, and many other people involved in the publication process. Last, a good medical writer is a lifelong learner. Through continued education and professional development (eg, activities run by professional societies such as AMWA, the European Medical Writers Association, and the International Society for Medical Publication Professionals), they strive to keep up with advances and changes in the field and define and reflect on our evolving roles and responsibilities.

In this special issue of the *AMWA Journal*, I reflect on the rapidly evolving landscape of biomedical publications and the constant theme of achieving medical writing excellence. Two featured topics correspond with these 2 strands of thoughts.

The first featured topic is the latest Good Publication Practice (GPP) guidelines—the GPP 2022 update. First published 20 years ago, the GPP guidelines have become a cornerstone of principles and standards for publications of company-sponsored biomedical research. The latest

iteration was published in August last year. For those who are relatively new to the latest 2022 GPP guidelines, an overview article provides a summary of key updates, a quick tour of the much-expanded document, and a discussion of changes relevant to medical writers and editors. An accompanying piece on this topic is an interview with Dikran Toroser, a coauthor of GPP 2022, on his insights into the changing field, key updates of GPP, roles of medical writers and publication professionals, and uptake of GPP guidelines.

The second featured topic is a practical guide shared by a seasoned writer, Monica Nicosia, for working on clinical research manuscripts for submission to peer-reviewed medical journals. This article offers perspectives, insights, and practical guidance on various aspects of working on a clinical research paper: how a medical writer contributes to the project at various process steps, the essential knowledge and skills, how to get started on a project, how to develop the first draft, how to avoid common pitfalls, and how to work with difficult people. Early career writers benefit from insights from experience medical writers, and as the author recognized, “our practice and ongoing learning are critical for success.”

This *AMWA Journal* issue also includes summaries of 3 publication-themed open sessions from the 2022 Medical Writing & Communication Conference. These topics—“The New Normal in the Medical Publication Sector,” “The Backbone of Manuscripts: Supporting Your Writing with Storytelling,” and “Journalistic Approach to Writing Better Abstracts”—further add to our reflection on the evolving landscape of the field and enduring essentials of medical writing.

Editor’s Note: In our Spring 2023 issue of *AMWA Journal*, the author of “Common Grantsmanship Hurdles of Early Career Clinician-Scientists and How a Medical Writer Can Help” noted that they were missing grant information in their Acknowledgments. The individual PDF for that article and the full issue PDF galley were updated on 7 April 2023 in order to add this information.

I welcome your feedback for this special themed issue on publications. The *AMWA Journal* recently created a section “Publication Progress” that we hope will become a forum for sharing updates, experience, insights, and ideas for those who work in the publication field. As the Section Editor for “Publication Progress,” I encourage your contribution to the *Journal* and look forward to continued reflection about our profession in an evolving landscape.

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MACROEDITING

Ensure a clear message with credibility and clarity.

Macroediting helps an author speak with credibility and clarity. The process works to ensure a clear message with congruent parts, coherent information, and a unified focus. Create high-quality scientific documents with the essential components of macroediting and gain the “bird’s eye view.”



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