

AMWA NEWS

2023 Harold Swanberg Distinguished Service Award Recipient Joan Affleck, MBA

Abbie Miller, MWC / 2022-2023 Chair, Member Awards Recognition Committee

Named in honor of one of the founders of AMWA, the Harold Swanberg Distinguished Service Award is given to an active member who has made distinguished contributions to medical communication or rendered unusual and distinguished services to the medical profession.

This year’s award goes to Joan Affleck, MBA. Her contributions to the field of medical writing have impacted not only AMWA but also organizations and individuals around the globe.

Joan is an associate vice president at Merck & Co, Inc, where she leads the Medical Writing Department. She earned her MBA from Columbia University in New York, where she is a Lang Center Innovation Fellow and a regular guest lecturer.

Over the past 25 years, Joan has built several medical writing departments from the ground up in the United States, Europe, Asia, South Africa, and South America. These experiences in pharma, biotech, and contract research organizations give her a broad and international perspective of medical writing. Beyond the influence of her skills on organizations at large, her leadership and interpersonal skills have supported, encouraged, and molded many individual medical writers in their professional journeys.

Joan has used her adaptive global leadership experience to help support AMWA’s strategic planning, development of innovative solutions, and prioritization of key needs. As chair of the Executive Council from 2018 to 2021, Joan led medical writing leaders to develop Executive Forum events and projects. In 2019, upon Joan’s recommendation, AMWA formed a Workforce Training Committee to identify the educational content needed to prepare and develop the careers of medical communicators in pharmaceutical and biotechnology settings and to provide guidance on the development of new educational content. In 2020, Joan received the AMWA President’s Award, and she has been a member of the Board of Directors since 2021. Joan was



also instrumental in conceiving and implementing the Value of Medical Writing Work Group. This group has worked diligently to define and quantify the value of medical writing, producing numerous peer-reviewed publications in support of the medical writers’ role in the industry.

Joan has had an active role in shaping the evolution of medical writing over the last 2 decades, and her leadership has extended beyond AMWA and her employers to help the field at large. She has served as an advisor to the Healthcare Businesswomen’s Association and is a member of the University of Virginia Darden School of Business Leadership Communication Council.

Join AMWA in congratulating Joan when she receives her award this fall at the Medical Writing & Communication Conference in Baltimore, MD.

The Member Awards Recognition Committee members were Abbie Miller, MWC (chair); Loretta Bohn, ELS (Board of Directors liaison); Elizabeth Brown, MS, PMP; Joanne McAndrews, PhD; Christina Barnes, MSN, RN, CPNP-PC; Jerm-Day Storms, PhD, MWC; and Susan Aiello, DVM, ELS. Diane Noland served as staff liaison, and Susan Krug, MS, CAE, served as ex officio.

Author declaration and disclosures: *The author notes no commercial associations that may pose a conflict of interest in relation to this article.*

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