

MEDICAL WRITING

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MedComms Career Event

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My take on “Medical writing”




How I got started

- First degree in Pharmacology (Glasgow University)
- PhD in Pharmacology (Queens' College University of Cambridge)
- “Enjoyed” writing my thesis but *knew* research wasn't my calling
- Wanted a job:
 - Marrying scientific understanding with communication, marketing and language
 - With variety of focus
 - Still in realm of drugs and therapeutics

My career path: the start

First job – Medical writer with small agency outside Cambridge (1 year)



Next step – Medical writer in special projects team - trade newspapers and journals (Doctor, Hospital Doctor) (2 years)



Taking a chance – My boss and a business partner ask me to be their first member of staff in a new venture in Medical Communications.....
the Colwood Years begin...

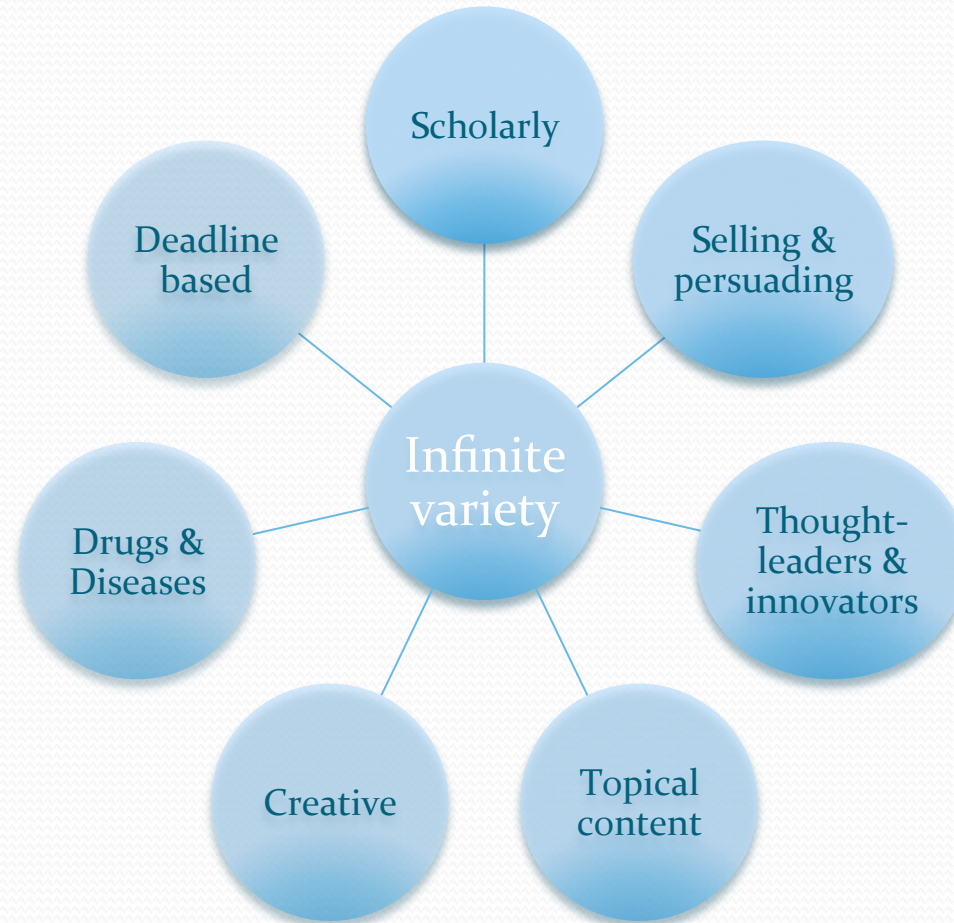
My career path: the middle



My career path: the recent past

- Colwood is sold
 - The process is slow and disruptive
 - New boss is nice...but...an old client gets in touch... would I like a job at her company?
 - 2 years at a new agency - I find my skills are transferable
- Scratching an itch....
 - In 2002 I decide to risk going freelance
 - 12 years on....I have a set of clients who know me and my work...and I enjoy being my own boss

Day to day work of a medical writer





Career options for Medical Writers

- A core skill in Medical Communication agencies
- Springboard and platform for progression
 - Account management
 - People and team management
 - Professional relations
 - Work in pharma
 - Freelance working (own boss)
 - Establish own agency

Traits & Key skills

Willing to write as a SERVICE
rather than for personal kudos

Written
articulacy

Analytical,
enquiring &
scholarly



Able to
work to
deadlines

Able to
assimilate
briefs
and data

Accurate &
thorough

Snapshot of typical work

- Technical writing
 - Original manuscripts, reviews, feature articles, posters, abstracts, product monographs, disease management books, health technology appraisals
- Journalistic writing
 - Congress and meeting reports, news story writing, meetings highlights, advisory board minutes
- Educational work
 - Slide-lecture sets, programme development, training materials, e-learning
- Marketing
 - Internal communications, marketing workshops, training materials
- Patient
 - Patient booklets and materials, web copy

Case example: Congress Reporting



- The Medical Writer's Brief
 - Attend CIRSE 2-6 October 2010 (Valencia, Spain)
 - Produce a Highlights Report within 2 days of meeting
 - Focus of Report - A competitor review
 - Client interested in news and reports of treatments and interventions that compete with / are alternatives to their drug therapy
 - Will the client's drug be mentioned and if so – how will it be portrayed?

Case example: Congress Reporting

Saturday

- Get to Valencia in time to register and meet client
- Attend 2 hour session – notes, photos and audio required
- Copy selected posters
- Write up Saturday's copy

Sunday

- Only scheduled to attend 1 hour session at 4pm.....maybe some sightseeing?
- Client rings at 8am – wants me at an advisory board
- Back to congress to attend session
- Client rings – they may have overlooked a key session today – can I cover it?

Monday

- 3 sessions to attend and write up and Sunday sessions to write and file
- Track down presenter of “missing” Sunday session and interview – client will be pleased
- Hotel internet connection too slow for uploading audio files – but slide copy filed

Tuesday

- Two sessions to attend starting 7.45am
- Travel home, writing final sessions on plane and uploading once “home”

Case example: Manuscript



- The Medical Writer's Brief
 - Attend expert meeting
 - Work with faculty to develop a White Paper on the need for newborn screening for SCID across Europe
- Rare disease
 - Treatable/curable if diagnosed at birth

Case example: Manuscript

Feb 2013

- Attend 2nd meeting of European JMF group
- Faculty of clinicians, scientists, lobbyists
- Minute meeting

- Faculty consider there is a need for a European White Paper detailing the need for NBS for SCID
- Faculty need a dedicated writer/editor to pull together the evidence and arguments in a format suitable for non-expert readers

- White Paper used in European Parliament and UK lobbying to have SCID included in the NBS battery
- Faculty consider there is a need for a clinical article on the case for SCID NBS

May 2014

- Manuscript published
- Gaspar HB, Hammarstrom L, Mahlaoui N, Borte M, Borte S. The case for mandatory newborn screening for severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID). *J Clin Immunol* 2014;34:393-7.