From academic to medical writer

A guide to getting started in medical communications

Written by Dr Annick Moon
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Acknowledgements
Many thanks to the numerous members of the MedCommsNetworking.com Community and, in particular, to the sponsors of FirstMedCommsJob.com, who have contributed their thoughts and comments during the development of this publication. If you have any feedback please let us know.

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Printed copies of this guide are also available if you contact the publishers – support@nextpharmajob.com

From academic to medical writer: a guide to getting started in medical communications
New edition published March 2018 by Burntsky Ltd
First published March 2009 by NetworkPharma Ltd
Magdalen Centre, Oxford Science Park, Oxford, OX4 4GA, UK
Tel: +44 (0) 1865 784390
©2018 Burntsky Ltd

Production/editorial: Gill Gummer, Proactive Editorial Services Ltd – proactive@cusbuster.co.uk;
Designed by: Julie Stevenson – julie.creative@btinternet.com; Printed by: Holywell Press Ltd – www.holywellpress.co.uk

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Foreword to 2018 edition

In the 10 years since we first published this annual careers guide about medical writing in MedComms, the global business has evolved significantly but the basics remain the same. MedComms agencies are looking for individuals with:

- a genuine enthusiasm for science and its application to the world of medicine
- the ability to work independently within a small-team environment.

MedComms can literally take you all over the world and provides attractive long-term career pathways.

Starting with the first edition of the guide in 2009, we’ve built up a comprehensive, free information service at www.FirstMedCommsJob.com where you can now find extensive insights into working life in MedComms along with information about our regular careers events and networking activities. We’ve been proud to play our part in supporting so many people in finding their entry-level position. We’ll continue to update the information provided here on an annual basis and we welcome your feedback.

Peter Llewellyn

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

About the author

Annick is a freelance medical communications consultant and writer, living and working in Oxford. After gaining a degree and doctorate in physiology from Newcastle, she undertook post-doctoral research at Oxford and Manchester. During her time as an academic, she was an editorial committee member for the Physiological Society’s magazine. Annick started her first job in medical communications in 2001 and worked at various agencies until she set up her freelance business in 2006 providing consultancy and writing services to the pharmaceutical and biotech industries. She has been a regular participant in careers events over the years, talking about the role of the medical writer in MedComms.

Annick Moon

For more information see: www.moon-medical.com

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Introduction

After years of hard work, you finally got your doctorate. Or maybe you’ve done a few post-docs. Lectureships are hard to come by and as one short-term contract begins it’s time to start looking about for the next. Sound familiar? Time to leave academia, but feel like you’ve occupied a narrow scientific niche for so long that you’ve specialised yourself out of the job market?

Leaving academia doesn’t mean turning your back on science. Your vast scientific knowledge, and your research and analytical skills are truly valuable – ever thought about a career in medical communications?

What is medical communications?

No…

♦ Journalism
♦ Academic publishing

Yes…

♦ Providing consultancy services to the pharmaceutical industry to help raise awareness of medicines

Medical communications provides consultancy services to the pharmaceutical industry to help raise awareness of medicines

About this guide

This guide focuses on medical writing careers in medical communications, in particular in MedComms agencies. The MedComms industry provides consultancy services to pharmaceutical companies, and the role of the medical writer is to use science and language to deliver these services successfully, while working to the highest ethical standards and adhering to industry regulations and guidelines.

The aim of this guide is to give you the information you need to decide if you are suited to the role of medical writer, and to provide the insider knowledge you need to excel at interview.

Please see the profiles provided by people working in MedComms later in this booklet for more insights into working in the industry.

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

www.FirstMedCommsJob.com
The pharmaceutical industry

A medicine starts out as a new chemical entity which, after many years of basic research, has emerged as a potential treatment for a particular disease. To put this in context, consider that from 10,000 promising new chemical entities, if one makes it to the first stage of a clinical trial, the R&D department is doing well. The new chemical entity must then undergo many years of clinical development, and must fulfil many criteria before eventually being approved for use as a medicine.

Getting a drug from the laboratory through all of the necessary clinical trials and regulatory administration, and approved for release on the healthcare market represents a major triumph for a pharmaceutical company; indeed, developing a drug can take up to 15 years and the cost can run into the £billions – but the story doesn’t end there. To get doctors to prescribe the medicine, you have to tell them about it, which usually involves marketing and communications activities: ensuring that doctors are well informed about a new medicine is essential if it is to be used appropriately and ultimately improve the health of many thousands of people.

To appreciate the scale of the ‘from bench to bedside’ process, it is first necessary to consider the phases of clinical development.

Pre-clinical

Before a new drug can be tested in people, it must undergo rigorous pre-clinical testing, both in vitro and in suitable animal models; also known as non-clinical testing. During this phase, important pharmacological data are obtained about drug dosing, and potential hazards and risks are identified. This allows the regulatory authorities to make a risk assessment and consider the drug’s suitability for testing in humans.

Phase I

Once approved for testing in humans, Phase I can begin (sometimes known as ‘first-time-in-man’ studies). Phase I studies typically involve a small number of healthy human volunteers in whom the chemical toxicity and the clinical side-effects of the drug are investigated. Volunteers receive various doses of the drug, and the aim is to determine the drug’s pharmacokinetic and pharmacodynamic profile in humans.

Phase II

After the initial safety testing in human volunteers is complete, the drug can be tested in patients. The aim of a Phase II trial is to provide ‘proof of principle’ and to assess the clinical benefits of the drug, in addition to the side-effects, sometimes in comparison with placebo. The benefit/risk profile of the drug is then used to plan the next phase of development.
### Phase of clinical development

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Phase of clinical development</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-clinical</td>
<td>Testing in vitro and in suitable animal models</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase I</td>
<td>Testing in healthy human volunteers</td>
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<td>Phase II</td>
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<td>Phase III</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase IV</td>
<td>Post-marketing surveillance following the launch of the drug</td>
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### Phase III

If the Phase II study shows the drug to provide a good clinical effect without producing unacceptable side-effects, then a larger Phase III study can begin. A Phase III trial must compare the new medicine with the current standard treatment for the disease or with placebo if there is no suitable active comparator. A Phase III trial is designed to show a statistical difference between the new drug and the comparator, and to establish its therapeutic benefit and side-effect profile.

If efficacy is established in Phase III trials, then all data are submitted to the regulatory agencies who will decide whether the drug can be marketed based on the strength of evidence.

### Phase IV

Phase IV trials are often referred to as post-marketing surveillance studies – following a successful Phase III trial the drug will have been approved and marketed, so a Phase IV trial is used to gather information in large populations to assess the optimal use of the drug and any side-effects that may not have been identified in a clinical trial setting.

### Why does the pharmaceutical industry need external consultants?

It makes financial sense for a pharmaceutical company to outsource certain activities to external partners. From running a clinical trial to manufacturing a box for the medicine, the pharmaceutical industry is supported by organisations and agencies, each with specialist expertise.
What is MedComms?

Agencies servicing the pharmaceutical industry provide expert consultancy on anything from producing regulatory documentation to fulfil legal requirements to devising campaigns to help market a drug. For most pharmaceutical products, a communications and publications programme will run alongside the clinical development process, and will then support the launch of the drug and ensure that the drug remains on the clinical radar for the duration of its patent (also known as its lifecycle).

Types of agency

There are many types of agencies offering a range of differing services to the pharmaceutical industry and it can be confusing trying to figure out which agency does what, especially as the terminology is often used inconsistently. Some agencies concentrate on publications and medical education (generally called MedComms or medical education agencies) – the focus of this booklet; others on legal and regulatory documentation or advertising. Some agencies offer a full range of consultancy such as medical education, public relations, market research and advertising, whereas others focus on a niche area.

Many of these agencies are part of a global group with sister-agencies covering the range of healthcare communications and marketing services, and there are also many small independent specialist agencies.

Whatever the service offered, the objective is always the same – to educate and inform stakeholders such as doctors, patients, nurses and hospital managers about innovations and perspectives in healthcare.

| Regulatory affairs:          |
| Clinical trial documentation (Clinical Trial Applications and Investigational New Drug Applications); Marketing Authorisation Applications; New Drug Applications |

| Health economics:           |
| Materials to support cost-effectiveness messages |

| Public relations:           |
| Materials to communicate with the media; issues management |

| Medical education:          |
| Support of publication activities, including: journal manuscripts and conference presentations; advisory boards |

| Advertising and branding:   |
| Trade press; consumer adverts; sales aids; direct mail; exhibition stand materials |

Moon A. From academic to medical writer. March 2018.
For more information about careers in MedComms, see www.FirstMedCommsJob.com
MedComms agencies

MedComms agencies have their roots in medical education, and traditionally produce materials such as journal manuscripts for peer review, learning resources, slide kits, and posters and presentations for conferences. However, the boundaries are often blurred, and MedComms agencies may also touch on media materials at the public relations end of the spectrum, or more promotional materials at the commercial end of the spectrum (i.e. brochures, leaflets and animations). MedComms agencies also advise the pharmaceutical industry on how best to educate and inform their customers (i.e. doctors, nurses, hospital managers, pharmacists, patients) about the benefits and risks of the therapy using clinical and economic data. All materials should comply with best practice guidelines, as issued by bodies such as the European Medical Writers Association and the International Society for Medical Publications Professionals (further details are available on page 15).

Why join a MedComms agency?

When it comes to getting broad writing experience, a MedComms agency is a good place to start your career. One day you’ll be writing a highly technical document and using all of your scientific and research skills, and the next you’ll be using your creative powers to summarise the entire document in one diagram. Also, in a MedComms agency, it is possible to find a job that suits you: some people prefer the more scientific, educational element of the job and are happy to write nothing but technical manuscripts and may focus very specifically on narrow therapeutic fields, whereas others enjoy the challenge of a new therapy area every week. Other people prefer the more creative element of writing a range of materials, or prefer to be out of the office talking to clients.

Which job?

As well as medical writing, there are numerous different roles within a MedComms agency, many of which require a scientific background.

### Account Manager
New media agency
You will manage a diverse range of projects including on-line disease awareness and patient education websites, interactive...

### Medical Editor
Healthcare Communications Agency
Proofing copy to the highest standard for a full range of medical education and communications materials including scientific abstracts, papers, posters, oral presentations, print items, and multimedia; professional liaison with pharmaceutical industry key contacts; managing and co-ordinating materials through design.

### Editorial Project Manager
Medical Education Agency
Are you an energetic, ambitious and passionate individual with the desire and potential to join one of the largest healthcare communications agencies in the UK?

### Medical Writer
International MedComms
Suitable candidates will ideally have at least 18 months relevant writing experience with a background in Medical Communications, Clinical Research, Academic Research or Publishing. A life science degree is preferable. You will display excellent organisational skills and acute attention to detail.
Medical writing

A medical writer is part of a team of people who develop a communication strategy to help deliver an effective campaign – what are you going to say? Who are you going to say it to? When are you going to say it? As a medical writer your job is to write high-quality, scientific copy for the wide range of materials that a MedComms agency produces. Your role will also involve keeping an eye on developments in any given scientific field, recognising the big players in the therapeutic area, assessing the strategies used by your clients’ competitors by monitoring their activities, and identifying opportunities to communicate your client’s information.

Attending conferences, and advisory board and standalone meetings is a large part of agency life, so if you like travelling, this is a definite perk. Most medical writers have visited a few of the major conference venues of Europe, such as Prague, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Paris, Barcelona, Berlin, Munich, Nice, Rome and Milan, and also popular global venues such as Cancun, Toronto and Sydney. However, although you may find yourself staying at a nice hotel, you might not get much sleep.

External experts

Medical writer

Pharmaceutical client

• Writing and strategic development
  • Primary papers
  • Reviews
  • Case studies
  • Conference materials
  • Newsletters
  • Monographs
  • Websites
  • Videos
  • Slide kits

• Build relationships

• Liaise with designers, writers, editors, account managers, project managers

Medical editing

Many agencies combine the role of writing and editing. In such agencies a medical writer is not only expected to produce original articles but also to be able to ‘edit’ other writer’s work – checking it for scientific accuracy, and grammatical and editorial errors. Some agencies split this role, employing both medical writers and editors. In such agencies, medical editors tend to have a wider function, adding proofreading and print production skills to their editing role. In terms of entering an agency as a trainee, agencies more commonly recruit writers than editors. Trainee editors are often known as editorial assistants.

Account/project management

For more information see our other careers guide: The business of medical communications by Lindsey Heer, available from www.FirstMedCommsJob.com

An account/project management team is responsible for making sure that projects are delivered on time and on budget. This role includes tasks such as preparing cost estimates, tracking projects, liaising with internal team members and external suppliers, negotiating with clients and...
preparing invoices. Usually, account managers progress to become account directors, a position that may additionally involve looking for new business opportunities and promoting the agency to potential clients (although some agencies employ dedicated sales staff). Account managers often have a scientific background, but it is not essential.

**Event management**

Attending conferences, and advisory boards and standalone meetings is a large part of agency life. Events managers are involved in all aspects of event management, including the production of materials to promote the events, sourcing venues, programme development, and booking flights and hotel rooms for attendees. A scientific background is not essential for this role, and many people come to the job from a background in hospitality or event management.

**Entry requirements**

A PhD in life-sciences is the usual entry requirement for a medical writer joining MedComms, and many applicants have post-doc experience, although candidates with any relevant post-graduate qualification may be considered. If you have a science degree or other health-related degree (e.g. nursing, physiotherapy), but no post-graduate qualification, work experience in the publishing or pharmaceutical sectors will probably be needed.

**Career progression**

A new medical writer will largely be trained 'on the job', your work being reviewed during this period by a more senior writer. Many agencies also have structured training programmes and you may get to attend external courses. For most new medical writers it will take about a year to lose the 'trainee' status (regardless of your job title when you start). After about 6 months of being a trainee, it starts to become frustrating (and sometimes horrible) having your work picked-apart; however, it takes a few years to gain experience and to learn how to plan and produce a range of materials, and it is worth being patient and establishing a good foundation.

Whatever position you choose as a starting point, once in the industry there is scope to change direction and to progress in various ways. The editorial route leads from medical writer to senior writer; beyond this, job specifications tend to vary between agencies, offering the opportunity to define and develop your career according to your strengths. Some writers choose to focus on writing in roles such as principal writer and editorial team leader; others do less writing, focusing more on managing and directing accounts.

**Earning potential**

Starting salaries vary between agencies, and depend upon your experience. Trainee writers leaving academia with a PhD or another higher degree, or with post-doc experience, can expect a ballpark of £25–30K. It is often a source of frustration to trainees with post-doc experience that they have started on a similar salary as someone straight out of their doctorate; don’t be disheartened. If you are a bit older, with more experience and knowledge, it is likely you will progress more quickly than someone younger. For older people with many years of academic experience or for professionals from other relevant backgrounds (e.g. healthcare or publishing), starting salaries may be higher than a trainee rate. However, starting salaries are no indication of career progression and earning potential, and the rate at which your salary increases depends on how you progress. Experienced MedComms professionals are in demand, particularly those with extensive writing skills – it is not unknown for a writer to go from being a trainee to running their own department, or even their own company, within a few years.
So you want to be a medical writer...

There's an equation to describe medical writers:

Likes science × likes writing = medical writer

Training to be a medical writer is hard work as, despite your scientific background and your extensive publication record, there's still a lot to learn.

Common characteristics of a medical writer in no particular order

**Established scientist**
A doctorate and post-doc experience will be advantageous when applying for a job as a writer. The basic entry requirement is a science degree.

**Enjoys writing**
You are the type of person who enjoyed writing your thesis rather than seeing it as a necessary evil.

**Good listener**
Whereas in academia your opinion about your research area was valued, in MedComms, although you'll be expected to have a good knowledge of numerous therapeutic areas, your opinion may not be asked for. You will be required to listen to the client and the medical experts, and to communicate their opinions.

**Excellent research skills**
You will be expected to learn numerous new clinical fields very quickly. Although it's always nice to get a project that is related to your research background, this doesn't happen very often. For example, your existing knowledge may be in microbiology, but you may be expected to become an expert in psychiatry. You will have to be able to research new areas and to discuss the diseases with confidence in a variety of situations. This may seem like a daunting task, but you'll be surprised at how far the research skills you developed during your doctorate can carry you.

**Pedantic**
If the use of an apostrophe in a plural word makes your blood boil, or if you have ever told someone that it is '10 items or fewer' not '10 items or less' then you are a true pedant. This type of pedantry is often called attention to detail.

Moon A. *From academic to medical writer*. March 2018.
For more information about careers in MedComms, see [www.FirstMedCommsJob.com](http://www.FirstMedCommsJob.com)
Comfortable with statistics

You don’t have to be an expert in statistics, but presenting data and making them easy for doctors to understand will be part of your job. Medical statistics are a far cry from the odd t-test you had to do for your doctorate, and whereas you won’t be expected to number crunch, you will have to produce evidence-based arguments based on clinical data. A basic understanding of the analyses used in clinical trials will be essential, and you should find that you quickly learn various statistical concepts that are commonly used in clinical research.

Thick-skinned

It may seem like a step backwards going from being a respected scientist to being a trainee, and learning to be a writer will be tough to begin with. You will hand over a piece of work on which you have spent hours, only to have it covered in comments by a senior writer. Nevertheless, if you stick with it, you will gradually develop a set of much sought-after skills. Once you become an experienced writer, this still doesn’t mean that people will love every word you write – many a beautiful piece of work has been picked apart by a client – so you have to be able to deal with it, and re-write it numerous times if necessary.

Applying for your first medical writing job

Preparing a good CV is essential when applying for any job, but when applying to be a writer, editorial accuracy is extremely important. Unlike other sectors, your CV and covering letter will be assessed by a panel of editors who will spot grammatical errors, spelling mistakes and clumsy sentences, and these things will not be forgiven. Also be careful about posts on social media that are in the public domain. Joining forums relevant to the job may be viewed favourably, but your posts will be scrutinised. Even posts that have no relevance to medical writing may be used to see if you are a suitable candidate, and whereas offensive comments attributed to you in the public domain are obviously going to be disadvantageous, even seemingly harmless posts may reveal your inability to construct a sentence.

Writing experience outside of your academic work will help get you noticed

Additional experience

Writing experience outside of your academic work will help get you noticed and will show that you have a genuine interest in communications. Getting published is easier than you think. Many of the academic societies produce a publication for their members and the editor will be happy to consider your contribution. For example, the Physiological Society produces Physiology News, a quarterly magazine, and the Genetics Society produces Genetics Society News, a bi-annual newsletter. Or if you are feeling really ambitious, you could enter a science writers’ competition.
Transferable skills

When leaving academia it is very easy to understate your skills and experience. Something you may consider to be a mundane everyday task may represent a valuable skill to a potential employer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Doctoral thesis, peer-reviewed manuscripts, slide presentations, conference posters/abstracts, grant applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation skills</td>
<td>Transfer talk, conference presentations, journal club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project management</td>
<td>Designing experiments and scheduling resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project leading and mentoring</td>
<td>Mentoring project students, teaching/demonstrating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Liaising with colleagues and collaborating with other research groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussing science with experts</td>
<td>Confidently discussing complex issues with leading experts (e.g. in the pub on a Friday night)</td>
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The writing test

As part of the interview process, you will be asked to do a writing test. Sometimes this will be before you are invited to interview, and sometimes after your first interview. There is no industry standard for the test. Examples of what you may be asked to write include:

- an abstract for a poster or a manuscript
- a mini review based on a small number of papers that have been supplied
- a news article based on a conference report, manuscript or other background documents
- a conference report based on a slide presentation and abstract book.

Whatever the task, it is important that you prepare properly. Even if your writing skills are excellent, you are unlikely to be an expert in drafting clinical documents or on the rules of writing marketing copy for a medicine. Don’t worry though, because the reviewers will not expect you to be an expert, but they will be looking for:

- attention to detail – avoid spelling mistakes and grammatical errors
- structure and flow – provide a well-structured document with a logical flow of ideas
- simplicity – don’t overcomplicate the project by doing extensive background research about the disease; it is unlikely that a writing test will need this, and the test nearly always involves reporting the information you have been given.

The agency will probably give you a guide to how long the test should take. You may find that it takes quite a bit longer, but this is fine and is often the case. If you go over the suggested time by days, rather than hours, maybe consider other roles within the agency.
Using your initiative can make all the difference when it comes to getting through the writing test. For example, if you are asked to write a newsletter aimed at nurses, buy a copy of Nursing Times to get an idea of pitch and tone. Also, there are many guides to medical writing available, which are definitely worth a read before attempting the test. *How to Publish in Biomedicine*, by Jane Fraser, gives excellent advice and tips (further details are available on facing page).

However, sometimes using too much initiative can be an applicant's downfall. If you already know someone who is a medical writer, it is fine to ask for advice, but do not ask them to do the test for you. The people reviewing your test will know what standard to expect based on the experience outlined on your CV. If you get offered the job based on dishonesty, you will be found out when the work you produce on your own falls below the standard of your test.

As well as a writing test, you may be asked to complete an editing test to assess your eye for detail. If you use standard editing marks, this will be viewed favourably, although this is not what is being tested so it is fine to mark-up the mistakes using whatever method suits you.

### Editing test

The following editing test contains 20 editorial errors – these include errors of spelling, punctuation, grammar, consistency or meaning. For fun, how many can you spot? (Answers on page 15.)

Over a median followup of 8.4 years, 64 patients (9.7%) experienced disease recurrence (median time to recurrence 5.6 years). The 5, 10- and 15-year recurrence-free probabilities were 0.93, 0.87, and 0.81, respectively. Using time-to-event estimates to adjust for differences in follow-up between groups, radiotherapy was found to reduce tumour recurrence in patients who received a sub-total resection (p<0.001) but not in those undergoing gross-total resection of the tumor (p=0.63). Multivariate analysis identified cavernous sinus invasion (hazard ration 3.6, 95% CI 1.5-6.4, p<0.001) and STR without radiotherpy (HR 3.6, 95% CI 1.4–14, p=.01) predictive of an increase in disease recurrence. Median follow-up for overall survival was 14.0 year. The 5-, 10-, 15- and 20-year estimates for overall survival were 0.91, 0.81, 0.69 and 0.55, respectively. Mortality was higher in patients who underwent radiotherapy with or without SRT than would have been expected in the general USA population.

### The interview

Most agencies select candidates based on one short interview, or perhaps two. I’ve never heard of MedComms agencies running day-long interviews, or asking candidates to undergo tests not directly related to writing. By the time you have been invited to an interview, you should have passed the writing test, although some agencies may ask you to complete another short writing test when you attend the interview. If this is the case, they should let you know before what to expect. You may be asked to give a presentation, but again, you will be told what you need to prepare before the interview.
Further information

Useful books

Getting Research Published, An A-Z of Publication Strategy
Third Edition.
Available from www.crcpress.com
ISBN-13 9781785231384

David Moher (Editor), Douglas Altman (Editor),
Kenneth Schulz (Editor), Ivetta Simera (Editor),
Available from www.wiley.com
ISBN-13 9780470670446

How to Publish in Biomedicine: 500 Tips for Success
Third Edition.
John Dixon, Louise Alder, Jane Fraser,
Available from www.crcpress.com
ISBN-13 9781785230103

Careers support

FirstMedCommsJob –
www.firstmedcommsjob.com

NextMedCommsJob –
www.nextmedcommsjob.com

Professional bodies


European Medical Writers Association – www.emwa.org

Healthcare Communications Association – www.hca-uk.org

International Society for Medical Publication Professionals – www.ismpp.org

Society for Editors and Proofreaders – www.sfep.org.uk

Pharmaceutical industry news, views and information

MedComms Networking –
www.medcommsnetworking.com

PharmaFile – www.pharmafile.com

pharmaphorum – www.pharmaphorum.com

PharmaTimes – www.pharmatimes.com

Pharmaceutical Executive –
www.pharmexec.com

PMLiVE – www.pmlive.com

The Publication Plan –
www.thepublicationplan.com

Moon A. From academic to medical writer. March 2018.
For more information about careers in MedComms, see www.FirstMedCommsJob.com
Hannah Birchby
Senior Medical Writer
Ashfield Healthcare Communications, part of UDG Healthcare plc

When meeting someone for the first time, a standard topic of conversation is what you do for a living. The response you get when you tell someone that you are a medical writer is usually something along the lines of, “What is that?”, “I have never heard of that” or “How did you get into that?” (along with a slightly puzzled expression!).

So, how did I get here? When studying for my BSc in biology (major) and psychology (minor) at Oxford Brookes University, my dissertation supervisor asked me if I had heard of medical writing. I said I hadn’t, so he sent me this actual careers guide (well, an older version!). I read the document and was definitely interested! I went on to complete an MSc at the University of Leeds, with the aim of becoming a medical writer. Fate intervened. As it happened, one of my tutors had previously supervised a PhD student who went on to become a medical writer. I couldn’t believe my luck and was put in contact with someone who I can now say is a colleague. We met for a coffee and discussed all things MedComms – I was keen to learn more about this weird and wonderful world!

Following graduation, I immediately began to look into associate medical writing vacancies and was delighted to learn that Ashfield were recruiting. After completing a writing test and being invited for an interview, I was thrilled to be offered a job. I have now worked for Ashfield for 4 years. Those 4 years have flown by and have involved working with numerous clients and across a variety of therapy areas, supporting the delivery of a whole host of projects. From manuscripts to medical education initiatives and from symposia to standalone meetings (and everything in-between!), I am proud of each of the projects that I have worked on and how far I have come – being promoted to medical writer and then senior medical writer along the way.

So far, my MedComms journey has been challenging, but unbelievably rewarding! Ashfield have supported me every step of the way, from when I started and was able to take full advantage of the many training courses on offer (now available as part of the new and exciting Allegro programme!), to my recent relocation (the business allows me to work from home more regularly and across offices). This flexibility, as well as the wonderful people and the huge variety of work, really makes Ashfield a great place to work!

I would say that if you love to learn and be challenged, and have a passion for science and writing, this could be the career for you too.
It was a true lightbulb moment; suddenly I knew exactly what I wanted and where my career would lead.

Contrary to popular belief, it is not essential to hide away in labs completing a PhD before moving into medical writing, provided you can demonstrate that you have the potential to develop the essential skillset of a writer. After completing my undergraduate degree, and before I knew it, I was given a great opportunity and started as a junior medical writer, getting my first taste of MedComms agency life. Several years on, I now have the great pleasure of being a medical writer at Lucid Group.

It has been almost exactly 2 years since I joined the industry-leading team at Lucid. Being a part of such an experienced, motivated and pioneering agency has provided me with incredible development opportunities, both personally and professionally. The projects we deliver cover almost every aspect of medical education, and while they may vary in terms of scope and objective, they all share one crucial component: the desire to create magic for clients, taking what they think they know about what a MedComms agency does and redefining it.

A conversation familiar to almost all medical writers is explaining to friends and family just what our job entails. It seems that despite supporting one of the world’s largest industries, MedComms is still a relatively unknown and niche field. As a result of this, I am often presented with one question: “But what does a medical writer actually do?”.

There is no such thing as a standard day in the fast-paced life of an agency medical writer. The role is rarely straightforward or simple – but that is exactly the draw. That challenge is precisely what drives us to be better, to innovate and to keep on delivering magic.

If you have an eye for detail, a passion for medical science and a strong creative streak, then medical writing could be a perfect fit. I would strongly encourage anyone with the desire to get started in medical writing to seek out those who have made their way and make that conversation happen. Demonstrate your passion, drive and ambition, and the opportunities will come, PhD or no!
Hannah Greenwood
Senior Medical Writer
Fishawack Group of Companies

After years of focusing on a PhD, and I don’t just mean the 4 years it takes to gather enough numbers together to write a thesis, I mean the years of revision and exams to get the grades and qualifications before you even start, what do you do when it’s all done?

That’s the situation I was facing 4 years ago, thesis in hand and a bit unsure of what exactly I wanted to do next. I decided on a 2-year post-doc taking my research forward into a clinical trial; this was the next logical step, and my love of science was a given. As I got to grips with the new challenge, one of my additional responsibilities was to head out into the local community to promote science and research. This soon became my favourite part of the job and it started taking over my spare time too. I spent more and more time doing public engagement activities, I became a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) ambassador and also got involved in initiatives such as ‘I’m a Scientist Get Me Out of Here’, the Access Project and Pint of Science. When my post-doc was coming to an end, I was back to wondering what I wanted to do, but this time I knew my interests lay in communication and not practical science. After some research I found MedComms and, well, the rest is history – 2 years after graduating with my PhD, Fishawack gave me a job as a medical writer and I haven’t looked back!

Now, my days are very different: there’s a lot of sitting down, which took some getting used to, but also a lot of really great opportunities. I was able to get stuck in on day one and although the learning curve has been steep, it’s been challenging, engaging and, most of all, great fun! I’ve had the opportunity to write abstracts, posters, manuscripts and presentations, run advisory board meetings with leading medical experts, take the lead on account development and so much more. I’ve worked on my own and taken sole responsibility for a project, but also collaborated as part of a bigger team to deliver large-scale projects to seemingly impossible timelines. I’ve travelled, worked from home when I’ve needed to and supported team members remotely. It’s safe to say that no 2 days are the same.

Fishawack have always made me feel welcome, and a valued member of the team. As a company, they are incredibly supportive and have given me a voice when it comes to both personal and professional development.

Leaving academia was a big step – it was all I’d ever known at that point – but there is a world outside academia and, it turns out, it’s a pretty good one.
Jessica Hardy

Associate Medical Writer
Oxford PharmaGenesis

As I approached the end of my degree in biochemistry, a PhD seemed the obvious next step, and I was keen to start out on an academic career path. However, while I’m definitely glad I did my PhD, I soon realised that I couldn’t see myself as an academic in the long run. I was concerned by the limited job stability, lack of permanent positions, irregular working hours and stress associated with regular grant applications. What’s more, while I still had a keen passion for science, I was already a bit tired of laboratory work and fed up of feeling disheartened by failed experiments.

I started thinking about alternative careers and, when a friend pointed out a local MedComms networking event, I realised that medical writing might be the ideal option for me. It was great to hear that there was a career path out there that really valued the rigorous scientific training and communication skills gained while performing doctoral research, but that provided job stability, clear career progression and an opportunity to work on projects close to the interface with pioneering medical treatments. The writing, presentation and communication aspects of my PhD had always been my favourite parts, and getting involved in a few writing projects outside of my own research confirmed my desire to make the move into a writing career.

Having spoken at length with several people working at Oxford PharmaGenesis, they were my first-choice company, and I actually sent my application 8 months before the end of my PhD! The process was very efficient and, after completing a writing test, I was invited for an interview. I met several people at different career stages in the company and enjoyed the fact that it was very much a two-way discussion with ample opportunity to ask questions. When I was offered the position, I was given the flexibility to suggest a start date after the completion of my PhD, and the company didn’t mind waiting. It was great to be able to focus on writing my thesis, knowing that I had my position secured.

I’m incredibly happy with my decision. I was apprehensive about the culture change, moving from working independently on a self-driven project to working in a team-based, client-facing service role, but I’ve received excellent training and support, and have quickly gained confidence. I was made to feel welcome from the start and have found that the sociable and people-centred atmosphere makes this a great place to work. I love the diversity of my work and have already developed congress materials from scratch, worked on several manuscripts, prepared slide decks and minutes for publication meetings, and even led a conference call, which is something I would not have been able to do a couple of months ago! I’m still very much using my scientific training, working with data every day, and it’s been stimulating to learn about new therapy areas completely unrelated to my PhD topic. Looking ahead, I’m enthusiastic about the opportunities to come, including the prospect of travelling to congresses and working on new types of communication materials, and I’m excited to see how my career here will develop!
Sally Hassan

Medical Writer
Envision Pharma Group

To date, I have been a medical writer at Envision Pharma Group with a focus on publications in rare diseases for 2 years and 3 months. This is my career transition story.

In the new millennium, when the robots were predicted to take over, I went to University College London (UCL) to study biochemical engineering with bioprocess management (a discipline that translates life-science discoveries, such as new therapies, into a manufacturing and commercial reality). Having the opportunity to publish a short communication paper in my final-year project encouraged me to do a PhD in the same field at UCL.

My collaborative PhD project focused on therapeutic monoclonal antibody (mAb) production in transgenic tobacco plants. Due to a love of research, I did post-doc research at UCL, concentrating on optimising plasmid DNA production for gene therapy. Following this, I worked as a scientist at a contract manufacturing organisation in Slough, purifying mAbs in preparation for late-phase clinical trials. However, I soon decided that I wanted a non-laboratory-based role and so returned for a second post-doc at UCL where I co-developed an economics decisional tool for cell therapy manufacturing. By then I had co-authored 10 peer-reviewed articles, presented at national and international conferences, and accumulated 10+ years of experience in bioprocessing-related research.

When my second post-doc ended, however, I soon realised that I needed a break to rethink my career options rather than rush into the next job. After several months, I decided to take a more proactive approach to my search – I knew that although I loved research, I couldn’t be a post-doc on a short-term contract forever; only 10–20% of people get tenure-track positions in academia, and a successful academic career would then be dependent on positive grant application outcomes. I knew I loved writing and science but needed to find out more about different career options. This prompted me to attend the Nature Careers Expo in London. As a delegate, I spoke to representatives from Envision Pharma Group and was immediately struck by the ethical and fulfilling nature of MedComms within this company. In a surreal but interesting turn of events, I returned as an employee of Envision the following year to encourage others to apply, and greatly enjoyed the experience.

My personal approach and philosophy throughout my career has been led by a passion for helping to advance cutting-edge therapies and a love of learning within inspiring teams.

One of the most satisfying goals within medical writing is... gaining the latest information about a therapy area

One of the most satisfying goals within medical writing is quickly getting up to speed on accounts and gaining the latest information about a therapy area. Although my academic experience in publishing was useful, I have now learnt about good publication practices and gained an insight into publication strategy, and there is still a great deal to learn. A career in medical writing versus post-doc research roles in academia offers greater stability and a more attainable career trajectory. Let’s hope the robots don’t replace medical writers anytime soon.
Emma Prest

Medical Writer
Aspire Scientific

Medical writing is something I hadn’t even heard of when I started my degree in medical biochemistry. So, how did I get here?

When I look back, I think the first step on my path to medical writing was placed when I undertook a placement year with Cancer Research UK. It was during this year that I discovered my love for the translational side of science, and this led me to apply for a PhD at the Cancer Research UK Manchester Institute. I was very lucky; I joined a lab of wonderful people, had a great supervisor and a really interesting project. So, what was the problem? I quickly realised – despite knowing I’d made the right choice in embarking on a PhD – that I didn’t want to commit to lab life in the long term. The instability of a career in research was not a sacrifice I was willing to make, and I found the repetitive nature of lab work (and disappointment of failed experiments!) extremely frustrating. However, I earned a reputation in the lab for my pedantic spreadsheets and very much enjoyed presenting my research – both to colleagues and to a lay audience at public open days.

I spent a great deal of time thinking (OK – panicking!) about what I would do when I finished my PhD. I decided to be proactive and get involved with numerous CV-building opportunities outside of the lab. I also attended careers events, and it was at a MedComms Networking event in Manchester that I finally felt some of the weight lift. Here, I heard from lots of like-minded people and realised that medical writing aligned perfectly with my skills and interests. I also met Rick Flemming – Director of Aspire Scientific – and decided to apply to join their academic freelance team to gain some experience. I derived a great deal of satisfaction from working on my assigned projects in my spare time and soon knew that this was the career for me. Then, in the final year of my PhD, I was lucky enough to be offered a permanent position as a medical writer at Aspire Scientific, an offer which I very happily accepted!

Five months in and I can honestly say I love my job. First and foremost, Aspire Scientific is a fantastic company and I am very much enjoying being a member of a small but extremely friendly and supportive team. Now, unlike during my time in the lab, I feel I am achieving something and moving forward in my projects every day. I’ve already been given real opportunity to get stuck in and have helped to develop clinical trial manuscripts, reviews and slide decks in a diverse range of therapy areas. I’m treating each project as a learning curve and absorbing everything I can for the next. I’ve also been able to work on articles for Aspire Scientific’s online news resource, The Publication Plan. The icing on the cake is the flexibility offered by Aspire, which enables me to work from home 2 days a week – something my dog Alfie appreciates since I substitute my driving time for nice long walks!

Overall, I am so pleased that I followed the path to medical writing. The work is everything I’d hoped for: interesting, challenging and rewarding, with the opportunity to learn and strive for quality every single day.

Moon A. From academic to medical writer. March 2018.
For more information about careers in MedComms, see www.FirstMedCommsJob.com
Sometime in my mid-teens, my father asked that dreaded question, “What do you want to do with your life?”. Of course, I didn’t have a clue. I loved both English literature and biology, but beyond going to university I was entirely unsure about what career path either subject could lead me down. One day, my father mentioned that a friend’s wife was a medical writer, and it seemed like the perfect job for me. So, I did my research and while I didn’t come across a wealth of information on how to get into the profession, what I did find made it clear I would need a PhD and a lot of luck.

In fact, I only needed one of them in the end.

I chose to study biology at the University of York and was convinced that I had my career plan all figured out. However, a lot can change at university, and as my lab books filled up with experiments that didn’t quite go the way I’d planned, I began to realise that perhaps research just wasn’t for me; so perhaps a PhD wasn’t right for me either. Four years passed and the next thing I knew, I was walking out of my final exam and asking myself the very same question my father asked me all those years ago, “What am I going to do with my life?”. I started looking at PhD programmes, but nothing excited me enough to forget about the years of sitting on uncomfortable stools trying to figure out why on earth my western blots had failed again.

Now on to the luck part.

While browsing recruitment adverts I found a project manager internship at highfield:communication. I thought that while I probably wouldn’t be writing much at least I would be in close proximity to medical writers. To my surprise, because highfield:communication is a small agency, I was working directly with medical writers and could see on a daily basis exactly what the job entailed. Not only that, but because of the supportive and encouraging atmosphere, I gathered the confidence to ask if I could work on some writing projects to gain relevant experience.

My first writing task landed on my desk. It was small, but enough for me to know that this was what I wanted to do. My work made a good impression and led to more writing and editorial tasks, which progressed to larger responsibilities such as author liaison, playing a key part in client discussions, travelling to congresses across the globe and, ultimately, working with world-renowned experts on manuscripts that have been published in high-profile journals. I’ve now been at highfield:communication for nearly 4 years, and I am excited about what the future holds as I work towards a senior writer position.

I won’t deny that having a PhD could give you a head start in medical writing – but don’t be put off if you don’t have one. My advice would be to apply to lots of companies, no matter how big or small, and who knows – you too could find your lucky break with a wonderful agency that will help fulfil your writing dream.

Jessica Sampson
Medical Writer
highfield:communication

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Olga Stelmashenko
Delta Kn, an AMICULUM agency

How can I get a job in healthcare communications?
Well, you’re on the right track by reading this guide! It has plenty of useful information and great tips to help you land that first job in the industry. Medical writers generally have a scientific background, but we all have a different story of how we got here. I got my BSc and PhD in pharmacology from University College London, followed by three post-doc positions in Manchester and Singapore. I enjoyed hopping around fields such as neuroscience, dermatology and diabetes, but academia just didn’t quite fit. A friend working in healthcare communications saw my struggle and suggested I try out medical writing. I haven’t looked back since.

I’ve written a thesis and journal articles; how different will healthcare communications really be?
While your thesis is undoubtedly a great achievement and shows your ability to put your mind to it and write, it’s not necessarily useful in this industry. Unless you get a job on the publications side of medical writing, it’s likely that your writing will need to be far more concise. You need to be able to adapt your style for different projects and clients. At Delta Kn, my work also involves a great deal of creativity, using impactful visuals and technology to develop some really innovative materials. You might be shocked at how quickly things get done – the pace is so fast that it makes academia seem glacial in comparison.

Will I be working in isolation?
It may sound clichéd, but working at Delta Kn has shown me the meaning of teamwork – getting projects completed to tight deadlines requires everyone to work together like a well-oiled machine. There’s no sabotaging of Petri dishes going on here; we’re all working towards the same objective. As a writer, I have constant interaction with project managers, clients, designers, editors, the technical team and other writers. Needless to say, it’s not so quiet in our office!

A writing test sounds scary… I don’t know anything yet!
After getting over the initial panic that I had no idea what a storyboard was, I got engrossed in the writing test and had so much fun that I knew I would love the job.

So, remember, there is no need to be scared – it’s a chance to see whether you enjoy medical writing and it’s likely to be representative of what the agency does. Your approach and attitude are as important as your research and writing skills; no one is expecting you to know everything at this stage.

Will I miss the lab?
While I would love to do some cell culture for an afternoon, I don’t for a second regret this career move. Over the past year, I have collected many ‘firsts’ and the list is always growing – this job is so varied that you can never really know it all. I’m approaching a year as a medical writer and every day I’m still excited to come to work. Doesn’t that say it all?
Jenny Szkolar
Seques, an AMICULUM agency

I have been working in MedComms for 10 years, and am currently the scientific lead for the newest AMICULUM agency, Seques, which focuses on genetically informed healthcare. Over the past decade I have gained in-depth knowledge of the pharmaceutical industry and a range of therapy areas, including oncology, rare diseases, genomic medicine and women’s health. Working in therapy areas, such as genomic medicine and oncology, presents unique challenges because each patient journey is very different; this means that there is no one-size-fits-all approach and every client requires a bespoke communications strategy.

I love the fact that there is always something new to learn and that I work in an environment where you are challenged to think differently every day. It has been said before, but no 2 days are ever the same, so flexibility is key. I really enjoy the challenge of unravelling and communicating difficult concepts to make them accessible, informative and memorable. Additionally, my role requires me to develop strong client and team relationships. I believe in identifying and harnessing the strengths and expertise of the team around you and allowing people to tailor their roles accordingly.

Our industry tends to be divided into two distinct career streams: Scientific Services/Editorial and Client Services/Commercial. While most people in our industry remain in one of these respective streams throughout their career, some find that their skills and interests are better suited to the other path; companies such as AMICULUM will, where possible, support transitioning or even moving into a ‘hybrid’ role. Regardless of how each job role is defined, it is important to appreciate that the success of a project is based on the different skills that all individuals contribute, and to recognise that one person cannot be an expert in everything: the key is to find great people with complementary skill sets.

Embracing a new opportunity

When a new challenge was presented to me in the form of setting up Seques, I jumped at the chance to join. At Seques, I work with pharmaceutical and biotech companies to enhance knowledge of life-changing medicines among healthcare professionals, patients and carers. I’m fortunate to be able to collaborate with experts at the forefront of their fields to gain insights into diseases that in turn help us to create unique and impactful communication programmes for our clients.

I’m currently based in AMICULUM’s newest location, Brighton. Having commuted to London for the past 6 years, this has been a very welcome change! My co-lead for Seques is based in Cheshire, so we are certainly embracing this new era of flexible working, and video conferencing has become a business essential.

MedComms is a fast-paced, dynamic industry. While it is hard work, I have had the opportunity to work with some fantastic people, and it has been very rewarding. When I started out as a junior medical writer, I never would have predicted that I would now be setting up a new agency. I would recommend taking advantage of all the opportunities that are put in front of you, because you never know where they might lead!
Let’s get you started

We’re here to help you learn about careers in MedComms and then, if you decide it’s of interest, to help you get your first job!

Good luck

- Audio interviews
- Videos
- Webinars
- Agency showcase
- Jobs
- Careers events
- Careers guide
- News
- Specialist recruiters
- Email alerts

visit www.FirstMedCommsJob.com
I work in MedComms... 

"I work in MedComms because I love language and science. You have a unique opportunity to bridge the gap between pharmaceutical companies and healthcare professionals through a variety of materials. As such, there is always something new to learn and the job remains vibrant on a daily basis. When you're involved in your first conference or symposium, you won't look back."

Jonathon Ackroyd, Medical Writer at inScience Communications

"I work in MedComms having just finished my PhD, and love that I am still involved in scientific research. It's great to learn about the latest advances in biomedical science, whilst having an impact on patient care."

Caroline Anderson, Associate Medical Writer at Envision Pharma Group

"I work in MedComms because whilst I love science, I quickly figured out that post-doc life wasn't for me. I heard a whisper of 'medical communications' and investigated it further – since then I haven’t looked back. I have found enjoyment in medical writing through being immersed in science without spending my days by a microscope. The work we do has the potential to have an impact on patient lives, advancing the care they receive and supporting development of new treatments."

Jennifer Badger, Senior Medical Writer at Leading Edge (part of Lucid Group)

"I work in MedComms because it's a challenging and rewarding career! It drives me to advance my medical science knowledge, effectively communicate complex information and improve patients’ lives."

Richard Barry, Senior Medical Writer at Lucid Group

"I work in MedComms because I could not think of a more fulfilling career that enables you to see first-hand the potential impact of the pharmaceutical industry on improving patient-related healthcare and quality of life. This role is fast paced and challenging but certainly rewarding and I would recommend it to anyone passionate about effective communication, writing and science!"

Emily Bailey, Associate Medical Writer at Envision Pharma Group

"I work in MedComms because the grass is greener here. I was languishing in a career in tech while my friends who worked in MedComms were still passionately engaged years after joining the industry. Now that I’m on board I understand why: the environment is fast-paced and dynamic, and I learn something new every day."

Erica Cave, Senior Medical Writer at Porterhouse Medical

"I work in MedComms because I wanted a career where I could use my skills to help people."

Robyn Bradbury, Associate Medical Writer at Adelphi Communications

"I work in MedComms because it allows me to use my creativity and passion for science to engage audiences and improve lives."

Katie Buxton, Allegro Associate Medical Writer at Ashfield Healthcare Communications

"I work in MedComms because I love the variety of subjects and working across lots of disease areas with a wide range of outputs. I enjoy communicating science, including tailoring the outputs to the audience by taking on large amounts of information and carefully filtering it so it suits the reader’s knowledge base. Plus, I enjoy the flexibility of being able to work anywhere, at any time (this is key for me!)."

Stefanie Chuah at AMICULUM Asia

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Ed Childs, Associate Medical Writer at Adelphi Communications

"I work in MedComms because I get paid to continuously learn about subjects I am passionate about – what’s not to like?"

George Damoulakis, Senior Medical Writer at Elements Communications

"I work in MedComms because I love science and I love learning about new scientific discoveries. I have always been interested in studying and understanding human disorders and now I have the opportunity to learn about a wide range of diseases and treatments."

Eliana D’Araio, Medical Writer at mXm Medical Communications

For details of careers events, plus much more, visit: www.FirstMedCommsJob.com
“I work in MedComms because I enjoy the combination of creativity and science, helping to communicate sometimes difficult concepts, the opportunity to always be learning and the variety – it’s rare to have such a thing as a ‘typical day’!”

Sarah Davies, Senior Medical Writer at Nucleus Global

“I work in MedComms because I am passionate about science and about writing, and I enjoy working on such a variety of projects.”

Christian Eichinger, Senior Consultant at PharmaGenesis London

“I work in MedComms because it provides the perfect blend of detailed scientific insight and creative flair. I enjoy the fact that I can combine complex scientific concepts with fresh creative ideas, bringing innovative and valuable programmes to clients and patients alike.”

Jason Foreman, Associate Medical Writer at Lucid Group

“I work in MedComms because it allows me to learn more about current, real-world challenges that the healthcare industry faces. I am excited to continue work in this field because the work I do is always interesting to me and varied from day-to-day.”

Alex Fower, Publications Assistant at Cello Health Communications

“I work in MedComms because I love science and have a passion to write about it. In a world where we are more connected about writing, and I enjoy working on such a variety of projects.”

Mel Francis, Allegro Associate Medical Writer at Ashfield Healthcare Communications

“I work in MedComms because I love the fast-paced, diverse and challenging environment that MedComms offers. I have enjoyed learning about new therapy areas and working closely with experts in these fields on a range of materials. I find the day-to-day work interesting and varied, and I am able to be innovative and creative in my role as a senior medical writer.”

Rebecca Furmston, Senior Medical Writer at CMC, a McCann Health Company

“I work in MedComms because my job is challenging, diverse and fast-paced, with numerous opportunities for personal development and career progression. At Porterhouse Medical, we have a great team of people who make work enjoyable.”

Lisa Gallacher, Senior Medical Writer at Porterhouse Medical

“I work in MedComms because I enjoy the challenge of translating complex scientific data into clear, impactful messages that can directly influence patient treatment and prognosis.”

Paul Glacken, Allegro Associate Medical Writer at Ashfield Healthcare Communications

“People in the job – in their own words”

Gillian Hancey, Senior Medical Writer at Porterhouse Medical

“I work in MedComms because it combines my personal interest of understanding the newest, most promising developments within medical science, whilst allowing me to communicate this innovation effectively to the audiences that need it most.”

Danny Hawker, Allegro Associate Medical Writer at Ashfield Healthcare Communications

“I work in MedComms because I love the challenge of learning about diverse diseases and the approaches taken to find new treatments. I also love communicating data about products that will make a real difference to patients’ lives.”

Helen Hefron, Medical Writer at InterComm International

“As medical editors, we like that we don’t need a scientific background to be able to enjoy the variety and challenges that MedComms brings to us, yet our careers that started in publishing, marketing, literature and translation provide a solid platform from which to progress in this field.”

Elizabeth Jennings, Editorial Manager at HealthCare21 Communications

“I work in MedComms because I am able to be involved in medical innovations and the latest science while not being lab-based anymore! I love the variety of projects and that these span across different therapy areas, which means I am constantly being challenged and developing new skills. MedComms also allows my creative side to come out and play!”

Zoe Kelly, Medical Writer at InterComm International

“I work in MedComms because I feel I make a difference to healthcare, always looking for new ways to communicate evidence to decision-makers, and I thoroughly enjoy working in an industry of smart, interesting people.”

Tim Koder, Communications Director at Oxford PharmaGenesis

“I work in MedComms because I love making science make sense. I work with amazing inspiring people on exciting cutting-edge research, I learn something new every day and I know that my work helps to improve people’s health – it is very rewarding.”

Katerina Kumpan, Medical Writer at Caudex, a McCann Health Company

“I work in MedComms because it gives me the chance to apply my scientific background to a more creative and diverse role. There is great variety in the therapy areas I work on and clients I am involved with. Furthermore, you will rarely perform the same type of work on a day-to-day basis.”

Jurgen Lika, Associate Medical Writer at integrated medhealth communication (imc)

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I work in MedComms...

“I work in MedComms because it combines my interest in medical research with my love of writing. Scientific concepts can often be confusing, and I believe it is important to make them clear and accessible so that informed decisions can be made. Working as a medical writer allows me to do this.”

Sean Littlewood, Medical Writer at inScience Communications

“I work in MedComms because every day is different! When I started as a medical writer after my PhD, I never thought that I would be in the same industry almost 10 years later. I feel fortunate that my job allows me to carry on using my scientific mind, learn, travel, meet new people and work with a great team.”

Anisha Mehra, Head of Scientific Services at Cello Health Communications

“I work in MedComms because it’s an awesome job. I learned something new every day. I work on different projects from week to week, and I get to be creative and have fun in all sorts of ways. There are not many roles out there that provide this level of variety, and I would go as far as to say that this is my dream job.”

Liz Meredith, Senior Medical Writer at Nucleus Global

“I work in MedComms because I fell into it rather by accident! Long after an English and History degree, I took the MPhil in publishing studies at Stirling, and my first real ‘break’ happened to be in medical publishing. At the start, I was far from sure my face would fit; but more than 20 years later, I think it looks as if it did. I still haven’t got a clue what erythropoietin is, but by gosh, I know how to spell it!”

David Morgan, Copy Editor at Nucleus Global

“I work in MedComms because I love learning. Even though no longer in the lab, I can keep up-to-date with the latest developments in science and clinical research, while the variety keeps work interesting.”

Leigh O’Connor, Medical Writer at Fishawack Communications

“I work in MedComms because I work in MedComms because I love learning. Even though no longer in the lab, I can keep up-to-date with the latest developments in science and clinical research, while the variety keeps work interesting.”

Leigh O’Connor, Medical Writer at Fishawack Communications

“I work in MedComms because it allows me to continue to use my scientific mind, learn, travel, meet new people and work with a great team.”

Anisha Mehra, Head of Scientific Services at Cello Health Communications

“I work in MedComms because it is a varied, flexible and rewarding career that provides an opportunity to be involved with the latest medical research. Working through the challenges that arise when communicating complex data to various audiences is very satisfying and I like that it requires both a scientific and creative way of thinking.”

Emma Mycroft, Medical Writer at Helios Medical Communications

“I work in MedComms and love that no 2 days are the same. As a medical writer, I have the challenge of turning complex scientific data into clear and concise communications for a range of audiences. The knowledge that, as a team, we produce materials that can impact the lives of patients, is extremely rewarding.”

Hayley Mukherjee, Senior Medical Writer at Fishawack Communications

“I work in MedComms because it allows me to continue learning and to use my science knowledge to develop innovative and valued programmes in numerous therapy areas (no 2 days are the same!).”

Katie Pillidge, Senior Medical Writer at PharmaGenesis London

“I work in MedComms because of a range of reasons. I like science. I like words. I like the intelligent people I work with and the creative solutions that we come up with as a team. But most of all, I work in MedComms because I want to make a difference. My work ultimately helps to improve people’s lives, and that’s a great feeling to have at the end of every working day.”

Claire Price, Senior Medical Writer at Vivid MedComms (part of Lucid Group)

“I work in MedComms because it is a varied, flexible and rewarding career that provides an opportunity to be involved with the latest medical research. Working through the challenges that arise when communicating complex data to various audiences is very satisfying and I like that it requires both a scientific and creative way of thinking.”

Emma Mycroft, Medical Writer at Helios Medical Communications

“I work in MedComms because I am passionate about science and how it can provide significant benefits to people’s health and quality of life. I enjoy working to communicate clinical data accurately and effectively, and I am fortunate enough to do this alongside colleagues who are supportive, enthusiastic and consistently deliver to high standards. The opportunities for skills development and career progression have confirmed to me that my decision to move away from academia and into MedComms was an incredibly positive step.”

Jodie Penney, Associate Medical Writer at Helios Medical Communications

“I work in MedComms and no 2 days are the same; the publication types and the therapy areas vary from project to project. I am always learning, never bored and free to use my creativity to communicate scientific information to many different audiences. It’s challenging, entertaining and very rewarding.”

David Pertab, Associate Medical Writer at CMC, a McCann Health Company

“I work in MedComms because it combines my interest in medical research and clinical research, while the variety keeps work interesting.”

Joanne Redfern, Senior Medical Writer at InterComm International

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“I work in MedComms because in my role as a clinical hospital pharmacist I felt that there was a lack of communication in healthcare – from inside the multidisciplinary team and the access to exceptional educational material, to the continuity in a patient’s journey through the healthcare system. MedComms allows me to support initiatives that help to bridge these gaps in innovative, creative ways, while remaining at the cutting edge of medicine.”

Amelia Reed, Associate Medical Writer at Healthcare21 Communications

“I work in MedComms because it is an intellectually stimulating environment that allows me to use and expand my clinical and scientific knowledge. MedComms offers PhD graduates and post-docs a highly rewarding career with a clearly defined progression – I’m glad I took the leap from academia to medical writing!”

Khalida Rizi, Medical Writer at mXm Medical Communications

“I work in MedComms because I work in MedComms because the work is interesting and varied. There is a real mix of project types and you get to learn about a variety of therapy areas and work with leading physicians.”

Natalie Roberts, Medical Writer at Adelphi Communications

“I work in MedComms and I enjoy the fast-paced environment. Every day presents a different challenge and the opportunity to learn something new.”

Emma Robinson at Comradis, an AMICULUM agency

“I work in MedComms because while I was writing my thesis the thought of returning to the lab was unappealing, but writing about science – that seemed alright! As a medical writer, I am involved in the large-scale distribution of world-class research that often has a direct impact on people’s lives. MedComms fulfills my desire to learn about new, interesting therapies and to deliver that information in a much more creative environment than that of academia.”

Vicky Sherwood, Associate Medical Writer at Envision Pharma Group

“I work in MedComms because I get paid to be at the forefront of medical advancements and support the pharmaceutical industry in improving patients’ lives.”

Sushma Soni at AMICULUM USA

“I work in MedComms because I’m interested in biomedical science and like writing about it, it’s a great application for my science and business education, and I enjoy a good puzzle (such as figuring out the best way to word something or hunting through data tables for an elusive piece of information).”

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“I work in MedComms because I believe that the value in medical research is realised through accurate and effective communication.”

Victoria Steele, Allegro Associate Medical Writer at Ashfield Healthcare Communications

“I work in MedComms because I enjoy being able to develop my understanding of new innovations, while getting to engage with a diverse array of people as part of it. Additionally, I enjoy the good progression in responsibilities and opportunities that come as part of my development.”

Peter Tran, Associate Medical Writer at Adelphi Communications

“I work in MedComms because it offers a rare opportunity to work at the cutting edge of scientific discovery in multiple therapy areas while also allowing me to exercise the creative part of my brain on a daily basis.”

Chris Watson, Editorial Manager at mXm Medical Communications

“I work in MedComms because I love the opportunity to work with some of the finest medical minds, to help to educate about rare diseases and because it allows me to exercise my mind on a daily basis. Working in MedComms has also allowed me to see the world and to work where I choose. It is a fantastic career.”

Keri Wellington at AMICULUM New Zealand

“I work in MedComms because scientific discovery without communication is merely a good idea.”

Emma Winter, Allegro Associate Medical Writer at Ashfield Healthcare Communications

“I work in MedComms because of the variety of work, the chance to develop my scientific knowledge in a wide range of therapy areas and the opportunity to work on multiple types of projects. In my time as an associate medical writer, I have worked on publications, slide decks, interactive pdf and congress deliverables, to name but a few! It is an exciting career which allows you to develop your scientific expertise and work in a dynamic environment with a different challenge for every day.”

Louise Wright, Medical Writer at Adelphi Communications

“After working as a doctor for 15 years, I changed to a career in MedComms. I enjoy the varied, stimulating work, and that my previous career enables me to make a real difference to my colleagues, as well as clients, in this field. I enjoy working in an environment which continues to challenge me, while being incredibly supportive and friendly at the same time.”

Beth Wynne-Evans, Associate Medical Writer at Porterhouse Medical
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Quote from a former member of our team, now working for a medical communications agency:

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The European Medical Writers Association (EMWA) is an association committed to representing, supporting and training medical communication professionals. It has more than 1,000 members from over 40 countries in Europe and beyond, representing all sectors of medical writing. Members work in the pharmaceutical, biotech and medical device industries, medical communications agencies, journal publishing, medical translations, and elsewhere. Members are predominantly employed or freelance medical writers, editors or translators.

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EMWA’s main conference takes place in May each year; a shorter meeting is held in November. EMWA conferences provide extensive, cost-effective, professional training in the form of small group workshops, forums for networking and active discussions. During Spring conferences, a one-day Symposium is organised to address a ‘hot topic’. The Symposium blends podium presentations and panel discussions to ensure free flowing dialogue between speakers and panellists and allows ample opportunity for audience questions. In addition, EMWA conferences offer an excellent opportunity to benefit from the experiences of other medical communication professionals. The conferences have a relaxed, friendly atmosphere that is ideal for networking and that enables attendees to meet colleagues at all stages in their careers.

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