A career in medical communications

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Agenda

- Introductions
- Medical communications and the pharmaceutical industry
- The role of the medical writer
- Application process and career progression
- Discussion
A route in: Chris

Medical communications

BA and DPhil in Biochemistry

Overland expedition

Management consultant
A route in: Jonathan

- BSc in Pharmacology
- PhD in Medical Biochemistry

- Medical communications
- Answering job adverts
- Test and interview
Medical communications and the pharmaceutical industry
Drug development: from bench to bedside

- Target validation and drug discovery
- Preclinical
- Phase I
- Phase II
- Phase III
- Phase IV
- Launch
A good product alone is not enough

- It costs > $1 billion to bring a drug to market
- For every ground-breaking drug that succeeds, there is another that fails
- Increasing pressures on the industry make effective pharmaceutical marketing ever more important
Betamax vs VHS

Betamax
High definition
Innovative
Lost

VHS
Lower definition
Copycat technology
Won
Apple vs Microsoft

Apple Macintosh
Innovative
Reliable
Lost

Microsoft Windows
Copycat technology
Crashed a lot
Won
Selected disasters of pharmaceutical marketing

Exubera (inhaled insulin)
2006–2007

Eminase (anistreplase)
1985–1995
Marketing: not just a post-launch activity

Target validation and drug discovery

Preclinical

Phase I

Phase II

Phase III

Phase IV

Launch

PharmaGenesis
What sorts of things do agencies do?

- Branding and positioning
- Help doctors to write publications for peer review
- Educational materials for doctors and patients
- Materials for congresses
- Medical communications agencies
- Event organization
- Regulatory materials
Are all agencies the same?

Differing

- Sizes
- Structures
- Jobs on offer
- Types of work
What role could I have in an agency?

- Medical writer
- Medical editor
- Account manager
- Event organizer
- Business development
The role of the medical writer
A day in the life of a medical writer

- Reading scientific papers
- Internet research
- Writing text (Word or PowerPoint)
- Editing and proof-reading
- Meeting colleagues to discuss timelines, costs and resources
- Phone calls with clients or authors
- Reading and sending e-mails
Different models = different benefits

- **Departmental model**
  - Account manager takes the lead with client and project management
  - Writer focuses on writing
  - Sales people are responsible for business development

- **Team model**
  - Writer manages own project from proposal to invoicing
    - writing
    - client/author liaison
    - design
    - approval
    - business development
What it is really like – advantages

- Being at the forefront of medical science
- Applying scientific understanding in a commercial environment
- Working with the leading experts in their field
- Having opportunities for travel
- Enjoying a variety of projects

Meeting experts in the therapy area
What it is really like – disadvantages

- Demanding clients
- Egotistical ‘opinion leaders’
- Commercial processes
- Commercial slant
- Timesheets and invoices
Application process and career progression
What an agency is looking for

- Able to write clear and concise English
- Interested in application of science
- Structured thinker
- Intelligent and flexible
- Personable and polite
Getting in

Use the university contacts database

Speculative applications
- Network Pharma
- www.pmlive.com
- www.inpharm.com

Respond to job adverts
- New Scientist
- Guardian on Mondays
- www.emwa.org

Writing test

Interview 1

Interview 2
What would the ideal test look like?

- Attention to detail (spotting and avoiding data inconsistencies and misspelled words)
- Well-structured text and unambiguous sentences
- An appropriate and readable writing style (including flexibility to write manuscripts, newsletters, slides and marketing materials)
- Appropriate background research, including an ability to bring out the key points from both clinical and commercial perspectives
- Ability to follow a brief (word count, structure and target audience)
- Evidence of enthusiasm and creative flair
Questions to ask at interview

- Will I have direct client and author contact?
- Will I have control over my own projects?
- How varied will the writing be?
- Will I get the opportunity to work in different therapy areas?
- Can I specialize if I wish?
- Is there the opportunity to travel?
- Is there a bonus scheme?
Opportunities for career progression

● Staying put
  – Changing job title
  – More responsibility
  – Greater independence
  – More money
  – Contribute more to strategic projects
  – Management involvement
  – Training new writers

● Moving on
  – Other agencies
  – Industry positions
  – Freelance
Why medical communications?

● It offers the chance to:
  – use your scientific training
  – learn about science as applied to medicine
  – see how the commercial world works
  – work with like-minded colleagues
  – have a stable and rewarding career
Thank you!