What is medical communications?

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What is medical communications?

- Journalism? ✗
- Academic publishing? ✗
- Regulatory writing? ✗

Medical communications provides consultancy services to the pharmaceutical industry to help raise awareness of medicines via education and promotion.
What does a MedComms agency do?

• Essentially advises pharma companies on how best to educate and inform their customers about the benefits and risks of [new] therapies, supported by clinical and economic data.

• Provides strategic counsel to brand teams on how to maximise dissemination of data to all relevant target audiences in a variety of formats and media:
  – Scientific and commercial communications to increase anticipation around the therapy and differentiate it from competitors, supported by clinical and economic data.
Average R&D cost of a new medicine up to launch >$900 million

Year 0

Final patent application
Investigational new drug application

3

Development research

Regulatory review
Post-mktng devel

Discovery research

Synthesis Biological testing & pharmacological screening

Phase I
50-100 voluns

Phase II
200-400 patients

Phase III
3000 + patients

Phase IV

Marketing approval
Product launch

9

11
Only \( \approx 30\% \) of launched medicines earn revenues that exceed their lifetime costs.
Many different agency services… and a lot of jargon

- Regulatory documentation
- Positioning
- Professional relations
- Branding
- Publications
- Advertising
- Medical education
- Health economics
- Public relations
- Market access
- Market research
- Consultancy
You’ll hear the term ‘full service agency’ a lot!

• There are good reasons for this:
  – Success in one activity potentially opens doors
    • Access to different budgets

  – Therefore many agencies:
    • Have specialist divisions that deliver many or all of these services, or
    • Align themselves with, complementary, agencies, or
    • Are owned by global giants
Medical communications

- Strategic communication planning
- Publication planning
- Medical writing support
- Stakeholder engagement programmes
- Meeting & congress support
- Print production & creative services
- Logistical support

Pan-EU CME

- Full service educational programmes for grant funding
- Bespoke accredited live educational events
- International & national accreditation
- Distance learning programmes
- Independent medical educational systems

Interactive and digital services

- Web & online services incl. SEO
- Interactive learning tools
- Video
- MOA animation

Market access

- Strategic consultancy
- Bespoke market access programmes
What does this look like?

• Develop materials such as:
  – Journal manuscripts [with authors, for peer review]
  – Congress posters and presentations for new data
  – Learning resources [internal & external]
  – Scientific slide kits and animations

• Also:
  – Commercially focused materials, e.g. brochures, leaflets for use by sales reps, or, e.g. at congress booths
  – Media materials to support PR
  – Affiliate materials for local adaptation/translation
Role of medical writers

• Write high-quality, scientifically accurate copy
• Keep up to date with new developments in therapy area, competitors
  – Reading scientific literature
  – Attending scientific congresses
  – Online learning
• Build relationships with clients, colleagues, other agency teams and opinion leaders (external experts)
• Contribute to strategy for commercialisation of drug and identify opportunities to communicate relevant information to relevant audiences
Role of medical writers

- Ultimately...

Ensure new therapy is added to the prescriber’s “mental formulary” and remains on his/her radar during its lifecycle
The typical agency team

**Client Services Director**
Leads project team responsible for coordination of delivery timelines and financial management

**Scientific Services Director**
Leads medical writing team and responsible for scientific consistency and accuracy

**Strategic Counsel**
Senior management ensuring programme is optimal for client needs

**Project Managers**
Responsible for managing budgets and project delivery

**Medical Writers**
Responsible for developing scientific content and liaising with external experts

**Editors**
Review all content to ensure quality control. Liaise with studio on layout

**Creative Services**
Manage all creative elements including design, print, digital

**Meeting Support**
Provide logistical support to core team as appropriate

**Compliance Officer**
Independent signatory to review all material for regulatory compliance
Why join a MedComms agency?

• Broad experience to be gained
• Fast paced and deadline driven
• Career progression: scope to progress rapidly
• Opportunities for change in direction within agency
  – Editorial & creative
  – Client services
  – Event management
  – Interactive/digital specialism
• Opportunity to work in a range of therapy areas
• Opportunity to work with global experts in their field
Think about whether you like travel

In the past 18 months Darwin has…

Organised…
- 8 large (250+ pax) standalones
- 15 satellite symposia
- 50+ advisory boards
- 12 steering committees
- 4 MDT meetings

By working with…
- 10+ logistics companies
- More than 15 AV suppliers
- 8 creative agencies
- 12 client teams
- 8 purchasing departments

In doing so we have…
- Worked with over 200 speaking faculty
- Created more than 50 presentations, edited more than 80 others
- Produced more than 10 supplements, 60 reports / minutes
- 15 electronic minutes and 10 newsletters
What makes a good medical writer?

- Established scientist – PhD is highly advantageous
- Enjoy writing – thesis is not ‘necessary evil’
- Pedantic – aka attention to detail
- Good listener – knowledge, not opinion
- Excellent research skills
- Able to absorb new concepts rapidly
- Comfortable with statistics
- Take feedback well!

Deliver what the clients want, not what you think they should want
Writers should be well rounded

- Expertise and knowledge
- Planning and performance
- Commitment and drive
- Effective communication
- Working with others
- Client responsiveness
- Market awareness
- Practical and creative solutions
- Highest ethical standards
Adopt the highest ethical standards

- Those directed at pharmaceutical companies (and their agents)
  - OIG guidance – treated as statutory in US
  - Pharmaceutical Association guidelines (voluntary, regional)
  - ICMJE Clinical Trial registration
  - FDA Amendment Act
  - Good Publication Practice

- Those directed at journal editors
  - e.g. ICMJE Uniform requirements
  - WAME, COPE and CSE guidelines

- Those directed at authors
  - e.g. ICMJE Uniform requirements, individual journal instructions
  - The Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT)

- Those directed at professional medical writers
  - AMWA (US) and EMWA (Europe) guidelines
A typical day for a Darwin medical writer

- Teleconference with client and authors of publication to take direction from author on content
- Finalise core slide deck for use by physicians in national educational meetings
- Prepare CME accreditation application for a satellite symposium on behalf of faculty
- Brainstorm ideas and prepare presentation to client for salesforce training programme and assessment

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A typical day for a Darwin medical writer

- Review another writer’s work and provide feedback
- Research new disease area and prepare slides for pitch presentation
- Check content and links on website following live event
- Attend planning meeting at client offices to discuss national roll out of pilot nurse education programme
- Eat jaffa cakes!
Resources available
http://www.medcommsnetworking.co.uk/startingout