

Acting President's Message

Catherine Magill, PhD



Happy 2010 to all! I hope you were able to enjoy relaxing holiday times with friends and family. I'm also hoping that 2010 is a better year than 2009, with lots of professional and personal growth.

I have just returned from the National AMWA Executive Committee meeting which was held in Tampa, FL from Jan 22-23. I am fortunate to be serving on AMWA's Executive Committee as Annual Conference workshops coordinator. My responsibility is working with prospective workshop leaders to develop new workshops for our expanded Certificate Program.

I hope you have all seen the messages from HQ describing the curriculum reorganization that aims to enhance the value of our Certificates by incorporating an ethics component and creating a more meaningful set of Certificates. We have already established the Science Fundamentals curriculum, which now includes an array of workshops, including molecular biology, chemical equilibria, and the basic body systems from anatomy to the renal system.

Our next step to develop workshops on disease states. While these workshops are not equivalent to full university level courses, they fill the gaps that inevitably arise as we work on projects that focus on a particular topic but leave closely related areas untouched. Feedback has been very positive and we are looking forward to covering more disease states as well as treatment and diagnostic topics related to disease.

We are also expanding selections in the areas of Research/Regulatory and Business. The EC feels that creating more workshops in these two

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areas will provide expanded learning opportunities for all members.

Our profession has recently come under scrutiny as it relates to ghostwriting and writing for pharmaceutical companies. There are valid and ethical reasons for working with industry, but it is incumbent upon us to defend our contributions and demonstrate our value and our integrity. It is with these thoughts in mind that we are incorporating ethical discussions throughout the workshop curriculum. An ethics workshop is required for all new certificates and every workshop now includes a brief discussion of ethics. These are positive steps that AMWA is taking to support medical communicators.

I am honored to be helping to enhance our educational opportunities. One of my missions beyond helping potential workshop leaders develop their workshops is to undertake a complete review of our offerings to make sure they still cover the material that they were originally intended to cover. I am also identifying areas in which we need to create more workshops.

I, and the rest of the AMWA Executive Committee, take our educational commitment seriously and we want to hear from you. If you have thoughts or comments, don't hesitate to let me know — I will make sure your ideas are passed to the Education Committee and discussed.

Finally, I am happy to say that we have a number of chapter programs already scheduled for this winter and spring, which you will see described in the "Coming Events" section. We are taking registrations for what is sure to be an outstanding Asilomar conference (Pacific Coast Conference 2010), from Apr 18 to 21, which is also described in more detail elsewhere in this newsletter.

I hope you believe, as I do, that AMWA is actively providing many opportunities for professional growth—you just need to join us! Come to meetings and to the Pacific Coast Conference, take workshops, earn a new certificate, and, most of all, participate in the chapter. You will be glad you did — I certainly am.

Coming Events

The chapter started off the year with a private tour through an Egyptian mummy at the Palace of the Legion of Honor at the end of January. And that was just the beginning of a busy spring. Here's a preview of chapter events over the next few months.

March 20 – Eileen Gambрил, PhD, UC Berkeley, at the Pyramid Alehouse in Berkeley, from 10:30-1:30. Eileen Gambрил has been studying Social Anxiety Disorder, an illness created by a public relations firm, and how the medical community has accepted the diagnosis without question; very interesting topic! Details and registration will follow by email.

April 24 – Best selling medical writer Mary Roach will spend part of an afternoon with us to give a presentation on her most recent work and answer our questions about her research methods or anything else you'd like to ask. This will be in Oakland at a place as yet to be determined.

Late May – Adobe will present information on their software for medical imaging. More details will follow later.

AMWA Pacific Coast Conference Registration Open

The Pacific Coast Conference at Asilomar is back!

Registration for the the conference is open and registrar Laura Singer reports our space is filling. Highlights for the 2010 conference include two keynoters, speakers, five workshops, and an array of open sessions.

The list of less formal activities is even longer, with three nights of open forums, a festive banquet, wickedly satirical medical theater, and stomping the beach in search of bioluminescence.

Conference dates: Sunday April 18 to Wednesday April 21, 2010

Conference location: Asilomar Conference Center, Pacific Grove, CA

When to register: Now until March 10, 2010 – Early registration is strongly advised!

How to register: Option 1: Complete both pages of the registration form (available for download at www.amwancal.org/pcc) and mail it with a check to the address shown on the form.

Option 2: Visit <http://pcc2010.eventbrite.com> to complete the registration form and pay online with a credit card. Eventbrite adds a service charge.

Keynote Speakers

Mark Plotkin, PhD, best-selling author of *Tales of a Shaman's Apprentice: An Ethnobotanist Searches for New Medicines in the Amazon Rain Forest*,

will discuss his work to preserve indigenous cultures and forests with the Amazon Conservation Team.

A key innovation is reciprocity for indigenous peoples' native plants and medicinal know-how from the pharmaceutical companies who develop new drugs from these valuable resources.

Robert Urban, PhD, Executive Director of the Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research at the Massachusetts Inst. of Technology, will discuss recent innovations emerging from the collaborative research of Koch Institute scientists and engineers with practicing physicians.

Learn how advanced technologies in nanotherapeutics, tumor detection and monitoring, personalized medicine, and tumor immunology are being applied to the detection and management of cancer in investigational settings—and are providing hope for new oncology solutions in the future.

Credit Workshops for AMWA certificate

- Tables and Graphs, Editing version [ES/G]; led by Howard Smith, MA
- The Author-Editor Relationship [CP/EW/FL]; co-led by Dan Liberthson, PhD, and Susan Eastwood, EL
- Basic Immunology for Medical Writers and Editors [SM/SBS]; led by Michael Petrarca, PhD
- Risks and Ratios [ADV]; led by Thomas Lang

Open Sessions

- Autoimmune Diseases—Immunity Gone Awry—Why? Matthew Frankel, MD
- Nanomaterials for Regenerative Medicine; Tejal Desai, PhD
- Global Product Development—A Regulatory Perspective; Suzette Dowling
- Palliative Care: Navigating the Crossroads of Chronic and Progressive Illness; Erin Crawford, MSN, FNP
- Writing Clinical CTD Summaries for IND and Marketing Applications

Educational 3-Hour Sessions

- Writing Clinical CTD Summaries for IND and Marketing applications; Nancy Katz, PhD (preregistration and workshop fee required)

- Introduction to Statistical Concepts and Practices for Non-Statisticians; Robert Hoop, MA, MPH (open attendance, no additional fee)

Extras!

- On-site BELS exam (separate registration and fee)
- Open forums for discussion of freelance issues and avocations
- Annual Beach Stomp in search of bioluminescence and enjoyment of the extraordinary natural setting of Asilomar

For additional information, contact Kristen Mayo, PCC 2010 Conference Director, at kmayo2222@comcast.net

2010 Frances Larson Memorial Award Open for Entries

The annual Frances Larson Memorial Award for excellence in writing a medical article is now open for entries.

The award, sponsored by AMWA's Pacific Southwest Chapter, was established to recognize medical writing of the quality represented by Ms. Larson's work. A long-time member of AMWA, Ms. Larson held many positions in the Pacific Southwest Chapter, including president. She served as managing editor of *Hospital Topics* magazine and as medical editor of *Audio-Digest*.

Articles submitted for consideration must be received by May 1, 2010 and must adhere to submission criteria listed below. The recipient of the award will be announced on the Pacific Southwest Chapter's Web site (www.amwa-pacsw.org). The winner also receives a \$100 honorarium and a plaque.

Submission Criteria

- The competition is open to all members of AMWA.
- The entry must be written by an AMWA member.
- Entries must be a medical article or essay written for either a lay or a professional audience. Research articles (journal format) will not be considered.
- Entries must have been published during 2009.
- Submissions are limited to 1 entry (article or essay) per entrant.
- Four copies of each entry must be submitted.
- Entries must be postmarked by May 1, 2010.

The entry form is available online at www.amwa-pacsw.org.

Questions about the award may be sent to Heather S. Oliff, PhD at holiff@sciongroup.com.

Education on the Fly with Podcasts

Mitch Gordon

Doesn't it seem that there's so much to learn, and so little time? I certainly feel that way. The biomedical industry is complex and multidisciplinary. Success in your particular field often requires a solid understanding of multiple unrelated subjects. How do you acquire the knowledge you need when you have limited time because of your job, family life, and other responsibilities?

One helpful strategy I've adopted is to listen to podcasts while I'm driving. A podcast is a recording, typically in MP3 format, that you download from the internet. Podcasts can be downloadable audio or video files, but I find the audio files more useful.

There are at least 3 ways to listen to podcasts that come to mind:

(1) You can burn podcast files on a CD-ROM and play them on the CD player in your car, if it plays MP3 CDs (data CD-ROMs that have MP3 files burned on them); if your car's CD player doesn't play MP3 CDs, you could replace it with one that does.

(2) You can play podcasts with your MP3 player (eg, iPod).

(3) You can play podcasts on your computer using iTunes or another player.

There are thousands of good podcast lectures available at little or no cost on a wide range of useful subjects. You can also buy more expensive lectures, if you need the material badly enough to justify the expense.

If you want to save money, search the web for free podcasts before buying them. Here are three great podcast sources that have been very useful for my self-education on the go:

University of California at San Diego: <http://podcast.ucsd.edu>

This podcast site at the University of California at San Diego is amazing. UCSD's policy is to record and podcast all of the lectures in a growing number of undergraduate classes, especially in the biology department. The biology courses for the current quarter include one lower-division class and 15 upper-division: Nutrition, Genetics, Cell Biology, Endocrinology,

Biostatistics, and Mammalian Physiology I and II, to name a few. The chemistry department podcasts their inorganic and organic chemistry sequences, and the psychology department offers some good neurobiology courses. A typical podcasted UCSD course consists of 20 to 30 lectures, each lasting roughly one hour.

If you don't have a strong life sciences background, or you need a good review, the UCSD course podcasts are a terrific way to build up your scientific knowledge. You become a virtual medical biology undergraduate at a reputable university, and it costs nothing but your time. The instructors are excellent, and it's a pleasure to listen to them. Of course, you don't get to see what gets written on the whiteboard or shown on slides. But you can compensate for the missing visuals with a good used textbook. Also, note that the UCSD podcasts are typically removed just after the end of the quarter when the course was offered, so you need to download them before the end of the course. All in all, you can't beat the UCSD podcast site for giving you a basic medical biology background without going back to school. I've listened my way through about 10 of these courses, and I still have plenty to go. Thank you, University of California!

Grammar Girl's Quick and Dirty Tips: <http://grammar.quickanddirtytips.com/>

Another podcast site I recommend is Grammar Girl's Quick and Dirty Tips for Better Writing.

As professional writers, many of us still have less-than-perfect grammar and punctuation knowledge. Grammar Girl, aka Mignon Fogarty, has recorded over 100 short (5- to 10-minute), entertaining talks on correct word use, punctuation, and sentence structure. You won't get as complete a grammar education here as you might from studying the Chicago Manual of Style, but you'll have more fun and it's free! To get to the list of Grammar Girl podcasts on the site, click the "Listen or Read" button, then select either "iTunes" or "Podcast RSS" under the "Subscribe" heading. Mignon Fogarty also has Grammar Girl audiobooks and grammar tip books in print.

Association of Clinical Research Professionals (ACRP): <http://www.acrpnet.org>

Using this great podcast site requires your membership in the Association of Clinical Research Professionals (ACRP). If you plan to do any medical writing related to clinical trials, whether protocols, investigator brochures, or study reports, you really should belong to ACRP. We have an especially active ACRP chapter in Northern California; I find their meetings very informative, and the members are a real pleasure to know.

The podcasts I have in mind are located on the ACRP website, at www.acrpnet.org. ACRP has podcasted the entire proceedings of the 2009 ACRP conference, and sells the entire set to members (including PDF files of the slideshows) for \$49. There are about 150 talks, on subjects such as how to manage clinical study sites; recruit and retain subjects; conduct clinical trials in India, Argentina, and Australia; understand HIPAA; and implement electronic data capture. There are also two or three panel discussions with FDA representatives. If you want to learn what clinical trials are all about from the perspective of the people who make them happen, this is an extremely worthwhile set of lectures. And if you drive as much as I do, it won't take long to finish all 150 podcasts!

There you have my three favorite podcast sites. Search the internet to find your own preferred sources of podcasts that meet your continuing education needs. If you spend much time commuting, you'll find listening to educational podcasts to be a really valuable use of your time.

This article was previously published in The BioTech Ink Insider, www.biotechink.com, Volume 3 Number 2. Mitch Gordon is at <http://www.mitchgordonwriter.com>

PCC 2010 Registration Update

Have you already registered for the Pacific Coast Conference? You may need to update your registration.

If you are planning to take the non-credit workshop by Nancy Katz, PhD, *Writing Clinical CTD Summaries for IND and Marketing Applications*, please remember that the session requires both pre-registration and a fee. The good news: There is no homework.

Registration for this non-credit course is included in the conference brochure at www.amwancal.org/pcc/ and on our online registration page at <http://pcc2010.eventbrite.com/>. If you have already registered for the conference and want to attend Dr. Katz' workshop, please contact registrar Laura Singer at pcc@amwancal.org.

This workshop will present techniques enabling the creation of concise, compliant, and effective summary documents required for Module 2 of the Common Technical Document (CTD) and discuss the implications of electronically filed CTDs (eCTDs) for writers and reviewers of these documents. The focus of the workshop will be on the clinical and nonclinical subsections of Module 2. However, general principles for creating the quality subsections of Module 2 will be addressed.

Slide Show, FAQ Explain Expanded Certificate Program

A new slide show and FAQ about the expansion and changes to AMWA's certificate program has been posted on AMWA's Web site. The slide show was used in discussing the changes at the October 2009 Board of Directors meeting. It outlines the new Essential Skills track that will replace the older "core" program and the four new Specialty tracks..

For those who are already enrolled in a Core Certificate program, both the original Core and the new Essential Skills programs will be running concurrently during the transition period)

In the FAQ, AMWA headquarters has anticipated some of the questions that might arise from the November 30 message to members about the expansion. A copy of that message is also posted. In addition, The AMWA Advantage membership brochure and the Education Programs brochure are being updated to reflect the new information.

Watch for detailed information about the expanded educational program and certificate offerings in the March 2010 AMWA Journal! Although some additional work is still needed, you can now access your individual curriculum records.

December Meeting Report

Mimi Wessling, PhD

Although several antiviral drugs have been developed in the past decade, the market is dominated by only one—oseltamivir, better known by its trade name Tamiflu—because the others have minimal effectiveness against seasonal flu variants or have severe side effects. Unfortunately, seriously ill persons infected with the current pandemic H1N1 virus remain asymptomatic for 24 to 48 hours after their initial infection. At that point, Tamiflu is powerless against the damage that has been done. On December 5, 2009, Dr. Daryl Faulds of Gemmus Pharmaceuticals showed us why.

The presentation was fascinating, thorough, and elicited a roar of laughter from the audience when he described immunology as "just basic biology." But it was the molecular biology that made the crucial points: how the influenza virus lives in avian hosts, finding its way into swine and then humans, and how successive onslaughts of the virus gain lethality and elude vaccines. Inside the viral capsid, there are 8 strands of RNA. The lethality of the virus comes largely from the ability of the RNA strands to mutate through a process of reassortment as it passes from one host to the next. Reassortment can produce new viral forms within 4 hours of infecting a new type of host.

The 2009 outbreak in Mexico resulted from a triple reassortment. The early wave of that H1N1 virus took its toll rapidly, but somewhat selectively. It was not as lethal among older persons as among the young and among pregnant women. Although some patients went through a miserable period and then recovered, a subset who seemed resistant to Tamiflu often developed a primary viral pneumonia, then a secondary bacterial pneumonia, went into shock, and died.

Dr. Faulds and his business partner were well-positioned by education and good fortune that grew out of something we usually think of as bad luck: the takeover of a company we're working for. When that happened to Daryl Faulds, the new owners gave him patent rights to drugs in which he was

the principal investigator. One of those drugs was GP1001, a compound that had languished since failing clinical trials for its original indication. Beyond scientific ambition, what motivated the Gemmus partners was the realization that their children might be among the young victims of H1N1.

The critical realization was that the drug needs to treat the way that that body reacts to the invasion of the H1N1 virus, not the virus itself. Infection raises a kind of perfect storm caused by the body's defense mechanisms, resulting in the aptly named "cytokine storm", inducing overwhelming inflammation that wreaks havoc first on the lungs, then on the kidneys and liver.

Mouse trials have shown that BP1001 in combination with Tamiflu prevents at least 80% of the expected deaths among severely infected lab animals. Thanks to this presentation, we can follow further testing and clinical trials at Gemmus Pharma's website, www.gemmuspharma.com, with a great deal of appreciation of what lies behind the success of GP1001.

Free Adobe Seminars

Adobe is offering free "learn on your own time" online seminars, including the following. For details, visit <http://direct.adobe.com/v?xPHWTnnEnllJqIJP>

Training Webinars 101

Find out what you need to consider before implementing webinars to deliver training and education for employees, partners, or customers.

Security and Collaboration: Are Sensitive Documents Kept Safe? (Pt 1)

The Great Knowledge Working Challenge: Efficient Collaboration (Pt 2)

According to a commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Adobe Systems, knowledge workers still rely heavily on traditional collaboration tools like e-mail and telephone calls. To enable faster and more efficient communication, enterprises must deploy new tools that embrace and refine current work habits. In this two-part seminar, Forrester Research Analyst Sheri McLeish reviews key

findings from the study.

30 Super Tips and Tricks for using Adobe Acrobat 9

In this recorded webinar, Adobe Acrobat experts demonstrate tips and tricks for using Acrobat 9 software, including how to set preferences to streamline workflow; how to get the best conversion from PowerPoint files; and how to reduce the size of PDF documents.

Word Witch

Tips for the Transition to Word 2007

Maggie Norris

This is the week for me to transition to Word 2007. I've been dabbling with 2007 for a while, but I now have to work fully in 2007. In this item, I will share a few things I've learned during the transition.

Transition Tip #1: Check the Office Button



The Office Button displays in the top left corner of the Word 2007 document window.

The Office Button appears in the top left corner of the Word 2007 screen. It more or less replaces the File menu in Word 2003.

Click the Office Button to open a tab with 3 sections:

- a menu of commands on the left, most of them fairly familiar
- a list of recently opened files on the right, and
- two tools at the bottom: **Options** (more or less equivalent to the **Options** dialog box in 2003 (**Tools | Options**)), and **Exit Word**.

Transition Tip #2: Understand Compatibility Mode

When you use Microsoft Office Word 2007 to open a file that was created in Microsoft Office Word 2003 or earlier, the file opens in "Compatibility Mode." In Compatibility Mode, all editing features of the earlier version are active, but none of the new or enhanced features of Word 2007 are available. When

you execute a Save command in Compatibility Mode, the file retains its name and “doc” extension.

You can work in Compatibility Mode or you can convert your document to the Word 2007 file format (which has “docx” extension). The Convert command (**Office Button | Convert |**) clears the compatibility options so that the document layout appears as if it had been created in Word 2007. This allows you to access the new and enhanced features of Word 2007. However, people who are using previous versions of Word may be unable to edit or format certain portions of the document that were created using new or enhanced features in Office Word 2007.

Tip #3. Learn to enjoy hide-and-seek

I’m sure Microsoft had good reasons for rearranging the menus. I have not yet figured out what those reasons are. Patience will be required while learning the new locations of some of our best-loved commands.

As it happens, Sheetal Pandya, an AMWA Northern California member, has published a list of frequently used commands and their new locations on her blog. Go to <http://medwrite.wordpress.com> and check her blog entries titled MS Word 2003 vs MS Word 2007 Parts 1, 2, and 3. Thanks, Sheetal, for saving us all a lot of time and making the transition to Word 2007 a lot easier.

MD Consult Still Free to AMWA Members

Catherine Magill, PhD

Having trouble getting journal articles? Check out AMWA’s online access to *MD Consult*.

The best part: Our subscriptions are available for all members to use free of charge.

There are many journals available through *MD Consult* that you would have to purchase otherwise, and I have been using it regularly over the past few months. It is one of those things that it is easy to forget that we have access to, so here’s a reminder to check it out.

Just go to www.AMWA.org (login) > Members Only >

Publications and Resources > MD Consult. We have two subscriptions so if you can’t get on, just try again later. It may be that there are already two users on line.

GPP2 GUIDELINES PUBLISHED

“Good Publication Practice for Communicating Company-Sponsored Medical Research” (“GPP2”) has just been published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ). AMWA was among several organizations tapped for key input at the draft stages of this document. Our Code of Ethics and Position Statement are cited among the references and recommended resources.

GPP2 is a timely and authoritative resource for medical writers, authors, and publication professionals alike. Please review the document online and consider providing reader input. BMJ offers a rapid response mechanism by clicking the link at the upper left of the article.

2010 Northern California Board of Directors

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