

President's Message

Catherine Magill, PhD



Back-to-School! Three words I was really looking forward to this year!

It was nice having the two teenaged kids around for awhile, but it is really nice to have my house back so I can get some work done.

I had a pretty quiet summer this year, and I hope that you all had a chance to get out and enjoy all that our glorious Northern

California has to offer. We did a bit of camping and had a lovely long weekend houseboating on Shasta Lake with a big group of friends, and I enjoyed the summer weather that finally graced us into October.

Finally, I'd like to close with a mention that we have an exciting fall program that started with a chapter meeting on Sept 26th at Michael's at Shoreline in Mt. View, where our very own Chapter Board Secretary Joan Brodovsky discussed Writing a Consulting Proposal. You can find the link to the online registration materials for future meetings on our website – www.amwancal.org

As usual, I will close with an encouragement to come to meetings whenever possible, we really try to keep the costs down and rotate them throughout the Bay Area so that you don't always have to travel too far. I also encourage you to participate and volunteer - being active in AMWA allows you to contribute in a way that can enhance your career. We are also looking for people who are willing to participate on the Board in a variety of positions. It truly doesn't take much time and in my experience is well worth every moment that I have spent on it, both professionally and personally. Don't hesitate to contact me or any other Board member with questions or ideas of somehow you'd like to contribute.

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A Salute to Sunny

Most people who have been involved with AMWA know that finding people to serve as chapter officers is difficult. Members are overloaded with work, family, and other obligations and unwilling or unable to make a yearlong commitment, even though serving on the board takes at most a few hours a month. Sunny Bishop is a rare exception.

Until her resignation in July, Sunny had been Treasurer of the Northern California chapter for 7 years. Even after she made the decision to leave the board, she postponed her resignation to ensure that the 2010 Pacific Coast (Asilomar) conference accounts were reconciled and that her replacement, CeeJay Holzhr, was up to speed.

Living in the Sacramento area and taking care of a sick family member meant that Sunny wasn't able to attend our chapter events; however, because she saw value in being involved with AMWA, she volunteered to serve on the board. Now Sunny is "moving on to greener pastures." Since she has not been doing medical writing for some time, she has decided to put her volunteer efforts into an area that she is actively pursuing.

As treasurer, Sunny was an excellent, organized and prepared manager of the chapter finances. She was extremely thoughtful and reliable, and always had the chapter financial reports ready whenever we needed them or AMWA headquarters requested a copy. Said Program chair and Acting President Catherine Magill, "Unfortunately, I have never met her, although she participated in many teleconferences for Board activities. Although we've found an excellent replacement, whom Sunny has taken the time to train, I am very sad to see her go and hope that our paths cross again sometime very soon!"

Sabotaged Bubblewrap!

Lou Lippman, Western Washington University

Preliminary intelligence indicates that a plastics plant in a remote country, where supervision is lax, has exported over 100,000 bolts of plastic packing materials to the United States since June 2004. This packing material consists of air-filled plastic impact cushioning pockets often referred to as

“bubblewrap” or “bubble packing” by the general public.

Taking advantage of the lack of controls, suspected terrorists have contaminated the bubbles with either some type of biological agent (perhaps spores), or a gas that induces swelling and itching, red eye, and acute respiratory agitation. This form of red eye cannot be cured by even the most advanced digital cameras.

The terrorists involved in the manufacture of this product are well aware that Americans have an uncontrollable urge to manipulate the wrapping after use, popping the little bubbles. Hence, this is an excellent delivery mechanism for causing widespread and random exposure of the American public to harmful substances. Citizens should take care to keep the bubble-wrap intact when removing items from shipping cartons, and to keep it away from children, who have an especially difficult time resisting the urge to jump on it and pop the bubbles.

Pentagon spokesperson Dr. Amy Silvester stated “These terrorists will stop at nothing to harm the American public. The intelligence necessary to know that these materials would be sent to America suggests an organized, well-funded consortium of terrorists. This strange pursuit of harming the American public has not been seen since the height of the Cold War.”

Victims exposed to the harmful substances should immediately seek medical attention.

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Secret Order

Sharon Kim

It’s always a challenge for a writer to get the audience to relate to a message. For those who make it their mission to communicate science and medicine, the task is much more daunting. Medical writers have to engage an audience without diluting the depth or breadth of research.

Bob Clyman makes an earnest attempt to do just that in his play “Secret Order,” which made its regional premiere at the San Jose Repertory Theatre in October under the direction of Chris Smith.

In this “biomedical thriller,” Dr. William Shumway (James Wagner), a naïve researcher from the Midwest with a fresh perspective, believes

that he “may have figured out how to cure cancer.” It doesn’t take long before his work grabs the attention of Robert Brock (Robert Krakovski), a Nobel Prize-minded, Big Pharma-friendly administrator at a major New York City research institute. Aggressive and unstoppable, Brock sweeps Shumway off his feet with promises of unlimited funding and resources – every young scientist’s dream.

The young genius’ promising search for the cure is thwarted as his success threatens the establishment. One establishment representative is Saul Roth (Julian López-Morillas), an older researcher at the institute, who is on the verge of getting edged out into his retirement, which would free up additional resources for Shumway. The seemingly dormant yet surprisingly malignant Roth isn’t about to go down without a last fight.

Meanwhile, perhaps pushed by the urgency of the predicament his research placed him into, Shumway chooses to make a compromise which ultimately contributes to his demise. The plot is further complicated when Shumway gets involved with, and confides in, a garrulous research assistant from Harvard, Alice Curiton (Kathryn Tkel). As Shumway gets sucked into producing results at all costs, Alice remains the sole voice of reason in his conscience.

Clyman accomplishes making science palatable and entertaining by using several methods. First, he keeps it simple. He eases his audience into the science of cancer by using a layman’s language without going into too much detail.

Second, the fictitious scientific concepts Clyman creates are plausible. He introduces a novel yet credible concept he named the “R cells” which makes the cancer “turn against itself.”

Third, the writer works within familiar dramatic elements such as a missing father figure in Shumway’s childhood and the hint of a romantic attraction between Shumway and Alice. This shows the audience that yes scientists are human and as a result, the pursuit of science is subject to human flaws. Clyman’s script is very realistic and “rings true” without the myriad artifices or hyped hypotheses that plague most science or medicine-based scripts.

Finally, he concludes the play with the suggestion that there is really no separation between science and human drama. Wherever there is human involvement, be it science or anything else, humans fail to resist projecting their own imperfections and selfish motivations onto it. The play ends up being both a tragedy of morals as well as an open-ended statement of ethics in a results-driven research environment.

Designing the Future of Cancer Research at the Koch Institute of MIT

Catherine Magill, PhD

Speaker: Robert Urban, PhD, Executive Director, The Koch Center for Integrative Cancer Research at MIT and Keynote Speaker at The AMWA Pacific Coast Conference, Asilomar, April 18, 2010

Dr. Robert Urban gave a riveting keynote lecture at this year's Pacific Coast conference, held at the Asilomar Conference Grounds from April 18-21, 2010. Dr. Urban discussed how the Koch Center for Integrative Cancer Research at MIT is approaching its goal of creating a highly collaborative environment where scientists and engineers work together to lengthen lives by controlling cancer.

To set the stage for this discussion he gave an overview of the difficulties associated with the problem of cancer, in particular the projected growth of the number of cancer patients in the developing world. Then he gave a brief introduction to the biology of cancer and spent the rest of the time discussing how the Koch Center is set up to maximize the interactions between investigators, each using different approaches and all aimed at helping to discover drugs, treatments and diagnostics that will improve the treatment options for people who are diagnosed with cancer.

MIT was selected as the site for The Koch Center for several reasons. One is the fact that cancer research falls in the top three institutional priorities of MIT, along with education and energy. MIT already has a world class reputation in cancer biology, with significant groundbreaking research having been done in the areas of oncogenes and tumor suppressors, and the identification of the molecular targets for the first approved targeted therapies against cancer, Herceptin and Gleevec.

The main thrust of the Koch Center is to provide a place that fosters integrated, interactive, multidisciplinary research between biologists and engineers. The approach is to drive first-rate cancer science,

using top tier technology and scientists and engineers and encouraging the results to be greater than the sum of their parts. The aim is to hire 25 scientist and engineers into the new Koch Center who will be charged with looking outside the normal confines of their collaborative research into other disciplines, most notably engineering, thereby inventing new ways to look at problems and create cross-disciplinary solutions. These intramural scientists will be encouraged to collaborate widely with extramural researchers at MIT and other institutions and will be lead by a Leadership Council of Biotech, Clinical investigator and Advanced Science Center leaders. The Swanson Biotechnology Center actually resides within the Koch Center building, which will allow close and continuous interaction between their personnel.

A specific aim is to maximize the use of genetically engineered mouse models of cancer to study developmental and pathway processes using genomic technology, advanced technologies such as high-end proteomic analyses and novel imaging methodologies, to create new drug classes that will be developed into novel therapeutic agents. A key to using the mouse models is to use "conditional" mutations that can be "turned on" to drive a cancer after the normal developmental process, within which they often participate, have ceased. They will use sophisticated analytical technologies such as micro computerized tomology equipment that can image the growth of tumor(s) in small animals. Obviously, all the most wonderful research in the world will not lead to rapid advancements in treatment options without the integrated involvement of clinician scientists, many of which have been recruited either in-house or through collaborations with existing clinical investigation programs.

The focus will be in five key areas of high impact research: nano, detection/monitoring, metastasis, pathways and immunology. In the area of nanotechnology work is being done at the Koch Center that aims to develop drug delivery methodology that will allow the direct delivery of drugs to tumors, thereby lowering toxicity and increasing the potency.

Very small, implantable sensors are also being developed, which contain a chemical accessible through a semi-permeable membrane, whose properties would change in the presence of tumor-derived marker; this change being detectable with a handheld scanning device. Other types of diagnostics being investigated are fluorescent probes which bind to tumor cells thereby helping the surgeon determine whether the entire tumor has been excised by way of a handheld imaging device.

Another area of great interest for the Koch Center is the area of tumor immunology and finding ways to harness the patient's immune system to fight cancers. One of the immunological approaches that Dr Urban presented was using immune cells to target drug-tagged nanoparticles to prostate tumors, which gave a durable remission in a mouse prostate cancer model.

The Koch Center has already helped foster collaborations that have resulted in a variety of clinical trials being conducted at both the Dana-Farber Cancer Inst and the Massachusetts General Hospital Cancer Center: gold nanorods in ovarian cancer and sarcoma treatment; nanotherapeutics for lung cancer; molecular characterization of colon metastasis to liver; controlled release of cisplatin in treatment of ovarian cancer; siRNA-mediated treatment of ovarian cancer and Novel Cancer Vaccine for Melanoma.

The focus of the Koch Center's educational program is on teaching "team" science and encouraging inter-disciplinary projects. Collaboration is encouraged throughout MIT, between clinical centers, with the NIH/NCI and other funders and with partners to aid in the translation of new discoveries into treatment options.

If you are interested in finding out more about the Koch Center and the work that they are doing to improve the options for cancer patients, sign up for their free newsletter "Cancer Solutions" at <http://web.mit.edu/ki/news/newsletter/index.html>.

The Interactive Commands Finder in Word 2007

Maggie Norris

This item shows the transitioning user how to find commands familiar from Word 2003.

The next Word Witch seminar (details TBA) will be called "Ten Things we hate about Word 2007 And What We Can Do About It." I encourage anyone with a pet peeve to tell me about it so we can discuss it during the seminar:

Please email me at Fine_Print_Services@mac.com.

The most frequent complaint I've been hearing is the appearance of the document window. The Ribbon takes up too much screen space. The tabs are garish and distracting. Some users are even confessing that they miss old-fashioned pull-down menus. There are a few little adjustments we can make, but, for the most part, Word 2007 seems pretty inflexible.

The next most-frequent complaint is that some of the commands writers are accustomed to using in their documents have disappeared. This one we can do more to solve.

I'm grateful to a new friend, Bruce Hicks, a medical transcriptionist, for bringing an interesting feature of Word 2007 to my attention. The Office Interactive Commands Finder can ease a multitude of complaints.

First of all, reassurance: All commands from Word 2003 are available in Word 2007 (at least, all the ones writers are ever likely to use). Those of us who use keyboard commands much of the time are in luck. Any key command from 2003 also works in 2007.

Procedure for Locating Commands in Word 2007

Before you start, you must first install the Help files. Strangely, the default installation of Word 2007 does not include the Help files. In a previous item, we talked about how to download the Help files from the Word 2007 web site and install them in your copy of the application. After the installation is complete, there is a Help tab in the top-level tabs menu (Home, Insert, et cetera) at the top of the document window. (If you don't see the Help tab, please drop us a note and we'll send you your own personal copy of the How-To item.)

Find Commands

Now we're going to look at the tools on the Help ribbon that specifically assist you to find those missing Word 2003 commands .

- Activate (click) the Help tab. Take some time to look at the tools (buttons) on the Help ribbon, just so you know what's available. here

- Click Find Commands from Office 2003. The pull-down toolbar has two tools:“ Office 2003 Interactive Commands Finder and Office 2003 Command map.
- Click the Interactive Command Finder button. This calls up a replica of the Word 2003 document window. This tool is a nifty Flash screen built into the Help files. It is an interactive replica of the Word 2003 document window, with a functioning Main Menu. (It is functional, but does not function in the same way as in an actual Word 2003 document window.)
- Click an item on the Main Menu. The menu opens out, looking exactly as it does in Word 2003.
- Find information about the location of a command in Word 2007
 - * Rest the pointer over a command on the submenu. A tip box pops up.
 - * Alternatively, launch an animated demo showing how to locate the command: Click the submenu command. Return to your document, activate the tab, and click the command.

Beyond the Basics

Now that you have located the command on its ribbon, are you going to remember where it is the next time you need it? Here are a few tips.

If it's something you use often, like Spelling & Grammar, memorize its location or use the key command (F7).

Take some time to get familiar with the tab the command is on and the other commands on that tab. The designers of the Word 2007 interface put some time and effort into grouping commands logically. After a while, you'll be thinking, "Track Changes. That's probably on the Review tab," and "Cross-references. I bet that's on the References tab."

Add the command to the Quick Access toolbar. To get instructions for customizing the Quick Access toolbar: on the Help tab, click Quick Access to Commands.

Option To Switch Certificate Programs

Members in the Core, Science Fundamentals, or Advanced certificate programs will still be able to complete those certificates within their enrollment timeframe. Workshops are being offered with multiple designations to accommodate all certificate programs. However, if you wish to change from Core or Science Fundamentals to the new Essential Skills certificate or a specialty certificate such as Concepts in Science and Medicine, you can do so at no additional fee. Contact Dane Russo at AMWA headquarters (dane@amwa.org).

Like What You See? Want to Make it Better?

The Pacemaker, our Northern California chapter newsletter, is your publication. We need your help, your opinions, and your contributions! Send your suggestions and submissions to *Pacemaker* editor Fred Gebhart, pacemaker@amwancal.org.

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