



PACEMAKER

Winter 2019

Highlights

- Letter From the President
- Letter From the Past President
- New 2018-2019 Board of Directors
- Word Witch
- Book Nook
- Chapter Member Profile
- Welcome New Members

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Letter From Our Chapter President

Greetings to all members and many thanks to those continuing (or stepping up) to serve in the AMWA Northern California Chapter (NorCal) 2018 to 2019 Board of Directors (BOD)! Barbara Arnoldussen (as Secretary), Nancy Katz (as Immediate Past President, replacing Caren Rickhoff), and I (as President, replacing Nancy) will continue as BOD members; Andrea Johnson (as President-Elect, replacing me) and Rose Tomey (as Treasurer, replacing Catherine McGill) will join the BOD.

Many thanks also to those performing other chapter functions:

- Maggie Norris, who is assuming the Program Committee Chair (replacing me)
- Nancy, who has been the Communications Committee Chair and will continue to lead the efforts to update AMWA NorCal's bylaws using AMWA national's new template
- Snehal Mohile, who is assuming the Communications Committee Chair
- Caren, who is continuing to distribute AMWA NorCal membership-wide emails about chapter events, elections, and, as Jobs List Administrator, jobs
- Suzanne Canada, who is continuing as Membership Committee Chair and LinkedIn group administrator and continuing to distribute membership-wide event and election emails (backing up Caren)
- Nicola Gillespie and Michele Anderson, who have been Co-Editors of this newsletter (*Pacemaker*), and Michele, who is continuing as a Co-Editor
- Barbara, who is continuing (for now) as the Chapter Advisory Council (CAC) Representative from AMWA NorCal; this Representative serves in an advisory role and as a liaison between chapter leaders and AMWA national

We are seeking a *Pacemaker* Co-editor to replace Nicola; Nominating and Outreach Committee Chairs; and, should someone want experience with other chapter leaders and want to make connections with AMWA national, a CAC Representative. For more information about these roles, please do not hesitate to [contact me](#).

On September 27, we had an online educational offering; Clarivate representatives presented its medical writer tools EndNote, Web of Science, and Cortellis. At least 18 people called in for this telecon. Caren subsequently found out that AMWA national offers discounts on EndNote for AMWA members. For information, check the AMWA national's affiliate partner discounts at https://www.amwa.org/page/Member_Discounts?&hhsearchterms=%22affiliate+and+discounts%22.

PACEMAKER WINTER 2019

On October 6, we had a social at the Oakland Museum of California. Our group of 14 split up into 2 groups, and each was led by a museum docent on a private, 45-minute tour of the Gallery of California Natural Sciences. Many of us then had lunch in the museum's café and got to know one another. The AMWA NorCal chapter covered the museum admission and tour costs. Thanks, AMWA NorCal chapter!

From October 31 through November 3, AMWA national held its 2018 Medical Writing and Communication Conference and preconference events in Washington, DC. I was able to attend. There were dozens of events (because several events were often held at the same time); of those that I attended, highlights included:

- Our AMWA NorCal Chapter dinner, attended by 16 people, which was really fun
- A presentation about Harold Swanberg, AMWA national's founder (and a very interesting person)
- Nancy's overview of the electronic common technical document (eCTD) (an outline/format for investigational new drug [IND], new drug application [NDA], and biologics license application [BLA] submissions to regulatory agencies)
- A session on targeted cancer therapies
- A session on *AMA Manual of Style* updates; a new edition of this manual is to be published in 2019

This year's known upcoming events are presentations on Continuing Medical Education writing on January 26 by Joshua Schechtel and on EndNote (beyond that presented by Clarivate) by Maggie on March 24 (details to follow). Events under discussion are a hike in the Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve to be led by Catherine (who is a preserve docent), and presentations on traumatic brain injury, pharmacology, and regulatory document quality control.

We hope that some of our future events can be free and, because of the large area covered by our chapter, some can be virtual.

With the other BOD members, committee chairs and members, and others, I look forward to helping to make AMWA NorCal participation fun, rewarding, and useful. Should you have ideas related to these objectives or want to help, please contact any of the chapter board members or chapter leaders [here](#).

Sincerely,
Sandra (Sandy) Ruhl

Letter From Our Immediate Past President

Looking Back/Looking Ahead

I've been reviewing the programs our chapter sponsored in 2018, and this is what I find: Our chapter is making a concerted effort to connect with ALL medical writers, regardless of what type of medical writing they practice.

Looking Back

On February 17, 2018, we held a Symposium on Regulatory Medical Writing at the Delancey Street Restaurant, San Francisco, CA. Richard Daley, Caren Rickhoff, Sandra Ruhl, and Nancy Katz presented on the challenges and satisfactions of writing documents (Summary of Clinical Efficacy, protocols, Investigator Brochures [IBs], and clinical study reports [CSRs]) included in regulatory submissions. Caren also presented a special section on the similarities and differences between regulatory medical writing and other types of medical writing.

On April 19 and 20, 2018, we hosted the Pacific Coast Conference (PCC) at the Asilomar Conference Center. It was a joy to be back at our old stomping grounds. Well, this conference covered just about every aspect of medical writing. I took an AMWA workshop on "Understanding Sample Size and Power" led by Bart Harvey. I've taken several workshops from Bart and always marvel at the way he makes statistical and epidemiological concepts easy to understand. Other presentations or workshops were:

- "Statistics for Medical Writers and Editors," also presented by Bart
- "Advanced Writing" and "The Mechanics of Writing," presented by Helen Hodgson
- "Changes in the Medical Publications Environment," presented by Donna Simcoe
- "Global Medical and Regulatory Updates That Affect Medical Communicators," presented by Natalia Shunmugan
- "Building Effective Medical Writing Teams," presented by Holly Zoog
- "An Introduction to Health Economics and Outcomes Research for Medical Writers," presented by Tim Peoples and Marcia Reinhart
- "Interactive Session for Freelance Writers With 10+ Years of Experience," presented by Alisa Bonsignore

We also had a fantastic keynote presentation by Juli Maxworthy entitled, "Healthcare Simulation ...What Does It Mean for the Consumer and Medical Writer?"

On June 2, 2018, Barbara Arnoldussen presented "Developing Resource Materials for Clinical Professionals," at Michaels at Shoreline Restaurant in Mountain View, CA. This presentation was about a facet of medical writing new to many of us. Barbara explained how she negotiated with prospective clients regarding projects and used Amazon.com as a marketing tool. Ingenious and fascinating!

On August 8, 2018, Joshua Cooper, CPA, founder and president of Tax Lovin' presented a free teleconference entitled "Tax Savings for Freelancers: What YOU Need to Know About 2018 Tax Reforms." Suzanne Canada moderated the teleconference, asking Joshua questions that chapter members had sent in prior to the event. Thirty-five people signed up, and we all learned that the current tax law does indeed have some benefit for almost everyone. But we were advised to take advantage of this right now, as it appears that some parts of the law may have to change back to the way they were.

And finally, note that this edition of the *Pacemaker* contains two new features:

- 1) a *Book Nook*, with reading recommendations from your fellow chapter members, and
- 2) a web freebies feature, directing members to free resources.

Looking Ahead

Our socials are opportunities for members to relax and get to know one another; they're also great networking opportunities. You never know who someone in our chapter knows who might lead you to your next job or consulting opportunity.

What are YOU looking for that will make our AMWA chapter a true community for you? Do you want more telecons? More face-to-face events? More free events? Please let us know.

Are you interested in learning the nuances of AMWA governance? Our chapter will be revising its bylaws. For anyone who wants to help in this effort, you can find chapter board members' contact information [here](#).

Nancy

Nancy R. Katz, PhD, MWC

Immediate Past President, AMWA Northern California Chapter

Chapter Board of Directors and Chapter Leaders 2018-2019

Elected Officers	
President	Sandra Ruhl, RN
Immediate Past President	Nancy Katz, PhD, MWC
President-Elect	Andrea Johnson, BA
Secretary	Barbara Arnoldussen, DBA, MBA, RN
Treasurer	Rose Tomey, BA
Programs Chair	Maggie Norris, BSc, ELS
Programs Committee	Barbara Arnoldussen, DBA, MBA, RN; Viviana Bhatia, PhD; Barbara Boughton, BA; Nancy Katz, PhD, MWC; Caren Rickhoff, BA; Sandra Ruhl, RN; Joshua Schechtel, MD, MPH; Leslie Kowitz, MA, ELS
Communications Chair	Snehal Mohile, MBBS, MD (candidate), CPhT
Communications Committee	Suzanne Canada, PhD; Mimi Wessling, PhD; Myrna Faulds, PhD; Nicola Gillespie, DVM; Michele Anderson, BA, JD; Rashmi Gupta, PhD; Abe Jellinek, Sandra Ruhl, RN
<i>Pacemaker</i> Co-Editors	Nicola Gillespie, DVM, and Michele Anderson, BA, JD
Membership Chair	Suzanne Canada, PhD
Jobs List Administrator	Caren Rickhoff, BA, MWC

Letter From the Editors

Happy winter! This issue of *Pacemaker* provides an update on chapter activities by way of letters from our Chapter President and Immediate Past President. We also have great tips from our Word Witch, Maggie Norris. And please be sure to check out our Chapter Member Profile to learn about our new Chapter President, Sandy Ruhl.

This month, we are pleased to present *Pacemaker's* newest feature: Book Nook. If you have a book to recommend, please reach out to [Michele Anderson](#).

Sadly, this will be my last edition as Co-Editor. Michele has graciously agreed to take the helm and continue working to bring *Pacemaker* to chapter members, but she would love to have another Co-Editor to help keep *Pacemaker* going strong. This is a fantastic opportunity for a chapter member who is looking for more experience writing and editing or an experienced member who wants to give back to AMWA.

Kind regards,
Nicola and Michele

Upcoming AMWA Events

Northern California Chapter Events

CME Writing Opportunities — Joshua Schechtel, MD, MPH

Delancey Street Restaurant

January 26, 2019

(watch for ticket information in your email inbox)

All About End Note — Maggie Norris, BSc, ELS

March 24, 2019

(details to follow)

AMWA Events

2019 Medical Writing and Communication Conference

San Diego, California

November 6-9, 2019

Free AMWA Resources

Did you know that **AMWA Online Learning** has many on-demand videos and articles available to members? The best part is that many of these resources are available for **FREE** to members!

Below are just a few of the complimentary resources available:

- Best Practices for Writing CME Needs Assessments
- CORE Reference: A Medical Writer's Guide to Preparing CSRs in an Evolving Context
- Connecting Constructively on LinkedIn
- Creating Your Own Podcasts
- Discover Google+ and Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

To see all the complimentary offerings, check out the online course catalog [here](#).



Check out our Northern California LinkedIn Group!



Contact our Membership Chair, [Suzanne Canada](#), with questions

Word Witch Tutorial — Maggie Norris, BSc, ELS

Hide Text From Spellcheck

Part of the fun of leading the Word Witch seminars is revealing useful but hidden features and commands in Word to my medical writer colleagues. Here is another one some users may find handy: a tool available from the Review tab that lets the user hide text from spellcheck.

Basics

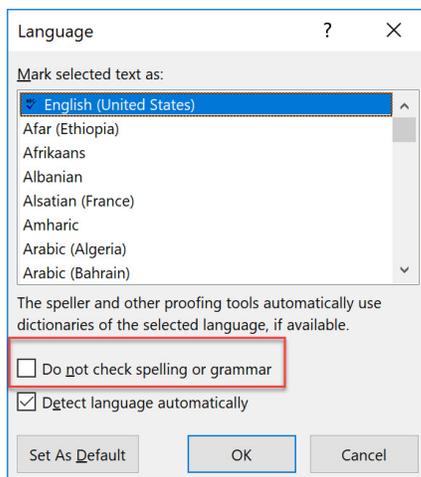
Writers and editors are, generally speaking, grateful for the Spelling & Grammar tools on the Review tab. But it is an annoying waste of time to spellcheck certain content elements, like boilerplate text and a generated reference list. Here's how to tell spellcheck to skip those sections.

Procedure: Do not check spelling or grammar

Select the passage to be hidden from spellcheck. You can include text and graphics in the selection.

Call up the Language dialog box

Review | Language | Set Proofing Language.



Activate the feature “Do not check spelling or grammar.”

The checkbox for this feature is located below the selection list of languages. Click in the checkbox to activate.

To restore Spelling & Grammar on the passage, repeat Steps 1 to 3. Clicking in the checkbox deactivates the feature.

The procedure above is a form of “direct formatting,” very similar to applying bold character formatting by selecting a word and

clicking the Bold tool on the Home tab. A formatting specification is added to the paragraph style of each of the selected paragraphs: the formatting specs from the template (dot-dotx file) are still fully in effect; and another spec has been added.

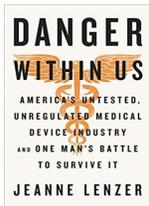
Book Nook — Michele Anderson, BA, JD

Medical writers and editors deal with science and other techie stuff all day on the job, and maybe into the evening and weekends, too. Soooooooo, would med folks want to stray far from workaday topics — the FDA regs, Crispr issues, genomes, the ontology of oncology, and such — and read things like *Fifty Shades of Grey*, *Fear*, or *Don Quixote* instead?

Nah. Well, not entirely.

Welcome to the inaugural column, “Book Nook.” In it, we will highlight what this *Pacemaker* Co-Editor and fellow bookworms at [Goodreads](#) believe are fun, good, or edifying reads worth at least a couple of hours of your time. Hey, some books might even turn out to be page-turners.

Here’s one that’s worth a look, IMHO



[The Danger Within Us: America's Untested, Unregulated Medical Device Industry and One Man's Battle to Survive It](#), by Jeanne Lenzer

[Did you know](#), so say the good folks at *Goodreads*, that:

- Medical interventions have become the third leading cause of death in America.
- An estimated 10 percent of Americans are implanted with medical devices — like pacemakers, artificial hips, cardiac stents, etc.
- Most high-risk implanted devices have never undergone a single clinical trial.
- The FDA lets device manufacturers decide whether to report serious complications or deaths that may have been caused by their products.

Yikes!

Warns *Goodreads*: “In ‘The Danger Within Us,’ award-winning journalist Jeanne Lenzer brings these horrifying statistics to life through the story of one working class man who, after his “cure” nearly kills him, ends up in a battle for justice against the medical establishment.

“His crusade leads Lenzer on a journey through the dark underbelly of the medical device industry, a fascinating and disturbing world that hasn't been written about before. What Lenzer exposes will shock readers: rampant corruption, elaborate cover-ups, shameless profiteering, and astonishing lack of oversight, all of which leads to dangerous devices (from artificial hips to pacemakers) going to market and into our bodies.”

Read this and weep?

Chapter Member Profile: Sandra Ruhl, RN



What type of medical writing or editing do you do? Mostly writing and doing quality control (QC) reviews of regulatory documents (such as clinical protocols, clinical study reports [CSRs], investigator brochures, safety narratives, new drug application [NDA] clinical summaries)

What career path led you to your career in medical writing or editing? I had wanted to write since I was a teen but took a long detour and became, sequentially, an RN, Cancer Research Coordinator, Clinical Research Associate (CRA), and Clinical Operation Manager. As a CRA and Clinical Operations Manager, I was able to write protocol amendments and instructions for clinical site personnel (such as Case Report Form

Completion Guidelines) and work on a CSR; so, I found a way to write and use what I knew. I have been a medical writer full time since 2007 as an employee and, then, since August 2017, as a contractor.

What advice would you give someone who is just entering the medical writing and editing profession? If not yet in the profession, learn and gain as much experience as much as you can, such as by:

- Connecting with medical writers (such as other AMWA members) and QC reviewers and find out about what they do and about the life of a medical writer/QC reviewer (doing QC review can be good preparation for medical writing)
- Taking courses, such as those available from AMWA, as needed; about writing in general; and about the specific types of documents you hope to write/edit
- If applicable and possible, letting a current employer know you are interested in gaining knowledge about and experience in writing while in your current position
- Offering to assist with writing or doing QC review of documents in your current position
- Gaining knowledge about and experience writing outside of a current position, such as by submitting articles for publication (such as in AMWA NorCal's *Pacemaker* and the *AMWA Journal*)
- Considering positions that include some medical writing and/or QC responsibilities in addition to other responsibilities
- Seeking someone, preferably (and, if possible) to report to, who will be good mentor to you

If already in the profession:

- Find good mentor(s)
- Gain as much understanding about a project's requirements up front and during the work on it as possible from the correct decision maker for the project so as to not head down the wrong road too far
- If writing/editing for a client, obtain written documentation of and/or document in writing yourself the specifics of what you agree to for a project and obtain agreement in writing from the client
- Anticipate impediments and suggest possible solutions to them
- Reveal actual impediments encountered and suggest possible solutions to them
- Reveal your mistakes (the coverup is worse than the crime) and suggest possible ways to correct them
- Be dependable; if unable to deliver on a commitment, if possible, make alternative arrangements and confirm that these arrangements are acceptable
- Keep learning and advancing your skills
- Take care of yourself; if, for example, you are sleep-deprived, have no personal life, or have a wrist injury from mouse use, you will not be a good writer or editor for long

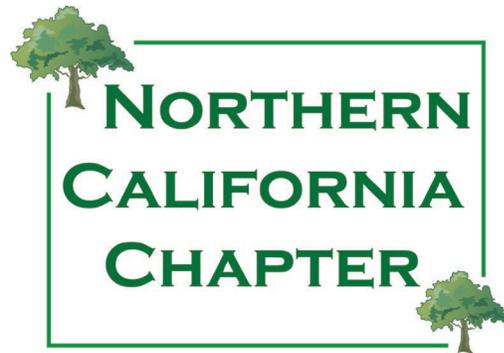
What do you value most about your AMWA membership? The opportunity to meet and work with others (such as when arranging AMWA NorCal events), advance my knowledge about topics related to what I write and write about (such as statistics), and learn about what other medical writers are doing

What do you like to do for fun when you aren't at work?

- Cook
- Try new restaurants with friends
- Do needlework
- Go to concerts and museums
- Watch PBS and movies (mostly period pieces, mysteries, and documentaries)
- Listen to NPR podcasts
- Read (though I have been neglecting this lately)
- Do nature, architectural, and abstract photography (though I have also been neglecting this lately)

What is your favorite book or movie? It is hard to pick just one; the book *Memoirs of a Geisha* and all of Malcolm Gladwell's books are favorites.

Welcome New Members!



Meghna Pant	Elizabeth Faye	Anastassia Gomez	Snehal Mohile
Nadia Tavitian	Caroline Dombrowski	John Trepanowski	Kerry Kneeland
Kathleen Naughton	Sarra DeValence	Stephanie Benjamin	Naila Javaid
Nisha Nair	Limin He	Stephanie Miranda	Pramod Joshi
Nancy Tojais	Tiffany Clark	Laura Ellerbe	Maya Shehayeb
Sarah Juhn	Roopsha Sengupta	Indra Newman	Jessica Henry
Laura Moye	Melanie Ellis	Johanna Lackner	Karishma Amin
Erin Schaefer	Shalaya Yazdi	Christina Bhattacharya	Preetika Gupta
Elizabeth Clarke	Deeksha Gambhir Chopra	Randall Mann	Sreejith Ramakrishnan
Paul Butler	Srinivas Pisharath	Vrushali Mangale	Kristen Grossman
Christian Small	Kanupriya Sharma	Sana Mujahid	Will Pass
Liz Highleyman	Elizabeth Trujillo- Adams	Hugh Wilson	Megan French
Laura Moye	Trina Slabiak	Heather Moore	Karen Craig
Greeshma Mohan	Vasu Seralathan	Bridget Mazzini	Rohan Mendonca
Michael Magallanes	Daniel Heller	Ilana Murphy	