

SEX*

DRUGS, AND WRITING ADS

Position available – Creative Copywriter

Applicant must have the following skills:

- Ability to write creatively in promoting clients' new pharma products
- Ability to understand and subsequently adhere to the letter of the ABPI guidelines (UK only)
- Meticulous eye for detail – thousands of people will see your work; you need to pick up the clangers no-one else but a writer will see
- Able to understand enough science to spell "therapeutics"

In addition, the applicant must be prepared:

- For long, drawn-out meetings over drinks discussing the nuances of split-infinitives and oxymorons, yet keep a sane overview of the needs of your client's product
- To appreciate the merits of not churning out clinical reports and front-loading protocols
- For the frustrating times, when the work at hand seems to be a grind and the concepts simply aren't flowing, or the words don't seem to stick together goodly

The Package

Does not include wading through thousands of tables, figures, or listings. No need to have ICH E3 guidelines memorised, or know about the Common Technical Document. Will give greater understanding and appreciation of the advertising around you. Ever wondered why sex sells? Did the headline above draw your attention?

OK, you saw through it. This isn't a job advertisement, it is supposed to be an article of types touching on one of the many different avenues available to writers. I have, possibly haphazardly, thrown some ideas together on the differences between copywriters and science writers; not that, by any means, being a copywriter is a bed of roses!

There are many aspects to writing copy for medical advertisements. From conception stage, where the basic miasma of ideas start to form, to writing the heavy-weight medical education pieces for GPs, consultants and hospital staff; setting the scene for future product demand (i.e., your client's product).

As such, your writing skills need to target many different audiences, and adaptation of style is an often-necessary talent; you can't use the same language for a consultant oncologist as you would for a patient leaflet on chronic back pain.

If there is one major difference I have experienced between clinical writing and medical advertising, it's the variety of work available to copywriters. There are probably four areas integral to the medical copywriter:

- Creative thinking – sales lines that reflect the product's strengths

Working without the facts can only mean the end result is fiction.

- Images – reflect the "feeling" or "focus" of the product: how serious is the treatment area? Is humour inappropriate?

Often, fewer words say more.

- Science – there is plenty of science in copywriting. The product is nothing without a solid scientific foundation; your job is to investigate, clarify, and highlight the important clinical messages.

I have found that I'm required to have a greater scientific knowledge in copywriting than when I was a medical writer. This reflects both the broad and in-depth scientific understanding required when dealing with a client's high-cost national or global campaign.

- Attention to detail

How many positions are there where this is not a prerequisite? To be a professional writer is itself a certification for attention to detail.

In the end, the two questions you need to ask are: "Why will you remember this advertisement?" and "Can you do better?"

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Insert photo of Allan
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Prescribing information:

This is the column that usually contains the drug information, listing most adverse events, drug administration and dose, presentation, the disease state, contraindications, how to prescribe, how much it costs, susceptible patient groups, product licence number, and the name and address of the pharmaceutical company.

An eye for detail is mandatory for this type of print. The copywriter is required to check all this small print that no-one else will read. And if you think that this is not enough detail, check out the references; no-one ever reads these, but it will be your job to ensure that they are accurate and pertinent to the claims.

References: 1. Tutenkhamun, P. What I have found is that none of these authors is called Smith or Jones. *Egypt Archives* 250BC; 12(1): 1-67. 2. Stiltskin, R. All of the authors seem to have unpronounceable names that have to be checked meticulously each time they are used. *Obscure Journal that has been out of print for 20 years*. 1943; 1512: 1189-1354. *Sex is not guaranteed. Past performance is not an indication of future performance; interest in sex may go down as well as up.

