

The Changing Face of EMWA

Results from the questionnaires: 1997 – 2000

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*This article is the second in a series reporting the results of the great 2000 EMWA membership survey. The first article, describing what members found best and worst about EMWA as an organisation, were reported in *The Best and The Worst of EMWA*, TWS 2001; 10: 32-33.*

It has been almost 2 years since we ran one of these and EMWA has changed beyond all recognition: we now have a fully fledged and functioning educational programme, we have attained membership numbers that we could only dream of in the early days (currently about 500 members), and of course, TWS has pictures on the cover! And so, what are the members like in this new era? Well, looking at the table on the next page, one is immediately struck by what value-for-money EMWA apparently still provides; 98% of the members are satisfied with the membership fees! One usually sees numbers like that only in North Korean elections.

It would appear that very little has changed with regards to members' backgrounds and their desires from EMWA membership. Members still come mostly from backgrounds in research, the pharmaceutical industry or publishing and are looking for education, networking, information, and social contacts (although I was thrilled to see that my challenge in a previous article (TWS 2000, 9 (1): 6-7) to increase our efforts at reaching out to new members at the meetings must have borne fruit with an increase from 9% to 31%. Good work everyone, keep it up!

Another very interesting and encouraging sign is that the percentage of non-native English speakers has markedly increased. Of course, from this little survey we cannot know whether this is due to more non-native English speakers working as medical writers in Europe, more joining EMWA, or more responding to surveys (or fewer native English speakers responding!), but whatever the reason, it certainly is an encouraging sign to see so much participation. As avid followers of TWS will know, increasing the participation of this group of members has long been a goal of mine and I'd like to think that the focus of articles and an entire issue of TWS dedicated to this theme might have helped play a role.

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Another interesting trend is the percentage of responders who claim to be freelancers. This percentage has steadily increased from 16% in 1997 up to 38% last year. Again, interpreting these figures is difficult, but if taken at face value as representing EMWA membership, it suggests that a fundamental demographic change is going on in EMWA and that freelancer concerns should be much more prominent in what we do.

Summary of the responses for each year (where meaningful)

Category	97	99	00
Response			
Total number	41	93	75
Rate (approx.)	50%	40%	-
Satisfied with EMWA costs (answered "just right" or "what a bargain")			
Membership	84%	89%	98%
Conferences	57%	75%	82%
Workshops	87%	83%	79%
Prior background			
Research	50%	37%	51%
Pharma. industry	28%	31%	28%
Publishing	13%	7%	14%
University	13%	9%	4%
Biometrics	3%	0%	3%
First heard of EMWA			
Colleagues	54%	62%	67%
AMWA	17%	18%	6%
Literature	10%	4%	3%
Other	19%	16%	25%
English non-native speaker		19%	31%

Category	97	99	00
Membership			
Duration	2.9 yr	3.0 yr	3.1 yr
New member	29%	25%	29%
EMWA provides (multiple answers possible, % of all responses)			
Education	26%	30%	29%
Networking	26%	24%	26%
Information	25%	30%	29%
Social contacts	16%	9%	31%
Freelance work	7%	7%	6%
Other	0%	3%	1%
Previous meeting attendance			
Average (no.)	2.2	2.1	2.3
First meeting that year	23%	33%	51%
EMWA website			
Visited	61%	70%	94%
No access	15%	17%	0%
Unaware	22%	13%	3%
Job status			
Industry	84%	63%	54%
Freelance	16%	27%	38%
Consulting	0	8%	2%
Academic	0	2%	5%

The fact that the number of EMWA members to have visited our website is now close to 100% is good evidence that the internet truly has arrived in Europe (it was only 61% in 1997) and access among well-educated medical writers is now practically universal. Another interesting item is the very low number of members who heard about EMWA through AMWA, considerably decreased from previous surveys (from 18% to 6%) suggesting that independence has unfortunately brought a severing of communication as well. Perhaps the EC should consider some way of opening up cooperation with our colleagues across the pond (although it might just mean that EMWA has already poached all the European AMWA members that were interested in joining).

Finally, one last big change was in the number of members attending their first meeting that year. This probably doesn't mean that much, the explosive growth of EMWA over the last two years is probably the reason for this increase, but it goes a long way towards explaining all those fresh new faces we old-timers have been seeing at the meetings lately. Of the 75 responders to the survey, only 4 (5%) had never been to a meeting. I'm not sure that this reflects the real percentage of truly silent members, but it did provide at least a small way for these members to communicate their concerns. Any of you out there who read this are very welcome to write to TWS and express your views on anything relating to EMWA. Remember, EMWA is an organisation of the members for the members and for it to serve you better, you must speak out about what you want.