



Message from the President

by Julia Forjanic Klapproth

Progress is made one step at a time. And we continue to strive to move EMWA forward step by step. In September we furthered our improvement of the EMWA website by adding a new “wikipedia-like” functionality that allows people to write online articles, as well as edit the articles of other contributors. This means that, within the members only part of the website, not only can members write blogs and contribute to ongoing discussions in the discussion forum, but they can also contribute to an online encyclopaedia that is sure to become a valuable resource for our profession. The aim is to provide a website that promotes and enhances ongoing dialogue between medical writers, as well as acting as a repository of information that reflects the combined expertise of the EMWA membership. Of course, a tool like this only serves a function if used, so I encourage you to log on to the website and try it out. Create your own article, or add to one of the existing articles, and let’s find out how this can help us all glean from our shared knowledge base.

The recent conference in London also had many new features. One was a conference workbook, which provided the conference programme and social events, a place to write notes and store workshop handouts, details on EMWA, its committees and workshops leaders and useful information about the location of the event. By having this all in one convenient booklet we hoped to make this information more readily accessible and to make your conference experience easier and more effective. If you attended the conference and have seen the workbook, I would be very pleased to receive any suggestions you may have on other useful information that you think would be helpful for participants to have at hand.

In addition, many members have requested that we make our conferences more environmentally friendly. And we have been listening. The conference bag at the London conference was both recyclable and degradable and the badge neck straps were also recyclable. At the end of the conference, badge and neck straps were to be dropped into one of the collection boxes provided so that they can be re-used for future conferences. Again, this is the first step to making our conferences greener, and any other ideas on areas that we can improve the environmental impact of the conference are always welcome.

Progress is also being made in an area outside of EMWA but which will impact on many medical writers. The guideline on Good Publication Practice (GPP) is being revised and updated. This initiative is being spearheaded by the International Society for Medical Publication Professionals (ISMPP; see the call for contributions to the consultation process on page 198 of this issue). As many of us are involved in writing publications for journals and making scientific presentations, it seems only natural that EMWA should in some way be involved in consulting on this update and in endorsing the outcome. I have spoken with

Chris Graf, the Co-Chair of the ISMPP Standards and Best Practices Committee, about this and they are inviting experienced EMWA members to review and comment on the first draft of the revised guideline. If you are an EMWA member, have experience in this area and would like to join in this effort as an EMWA representative, please contact Chris Graf as described on page 198, copying in Helen Baldwin and me so that we are aware of which members are participating. This is a great opportunity for EMWA to make sure the medical writer’s voice is heard on a matter that affects our working practices.

Speaking of being heard, in the past few years there have been several events (generally articles appearing about issues related to medical writing) that begged for a quick and appropriate reply from a body like EMWA to bring an authoritative statement as the voice of professional medical writers. On those occasions where EMWA was made aware of such events quickly, we have endeavoured to craft replies that reflected the view of the professional writing community. However, it has always been quite ad hoc.

With the goal of changing this and presenting a more professional face to the world, we have decided to create a Press Officer for EMWA. Until now, when EMWA learned of anything newsworthy needing a response, it generally landed on the President’s desk. With a Press Officer dedicated to responding to such things, the President will have a quick and effective means of dealing with the situation. For this reason, and to avoid expanding the EC, the function will be part of the Presidential Subcommittee. The position can be reappointed by the President every 2 years.

Many of you may be aware that Adam Jacobs has been an active voice in the public arena, responding to public statements about medical writing and defending our good name. He is a coauthor of the EMWA Ghost-writing Guidelines, which has become a recommended guideline among high calibre journals. When the EC was considering who might be an appropriate candidate for Press Officer, his name came up. Clearly, Adam would bring to the position the necessary background knowledge about what EMWA stands for. As a past President of EMWA and a long-standing member, Adam understands EMWA’s concerns and has demonstrated himself a proactive voice for the cause of promoting medical writing. I am therefore pleased to announce that Adam has accepted my proposal to serve as the EMWA Press Officer. I hope you will all welcome him to this role.

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