

A Week in the Life of ... ■



Gillian Pritchard

by Gillian Pritchard

I have been a freelance medical writer and pharmaceutical physician for three years. I work from home a few miles from Dundee on the east coast of Scotland. Like so many writers I also juggle work and family, and six months ago I added the role of EMWA Treasurer to the juggling act.

I am currently writing a clinical summary and overview with another freelance colleague, Iain Colquhoun. We had travelled to France the previous week to review the draft documents with our client. All we had to do now was finalise the summary and write the overview - oh, and this all had to be done in the next three weeks. Once I had caught up with some e-mail correspondence and administrative tasks on Monday morning I was able to review a section of the clinical summary that my colleague had been busy finalising over the weekend. Yes, we freelancers work funny hours! Iain had done a good job; there were few comments and the review didn't take very long. This was fortunate because I needed to finish work early in order to collect my son from school to take him to a hospital appointment. I usually go to an aerobics class on a Monday after work, but not this week.

Monday morning's administrative tasks included some EMWA-related work: reviewing the monthly management accounts from EMWA head office and forwarding them to the finance sub-committee for their review, and approving the previous week's payments so that they could be set up on the bank ledger. I also logged on to the EMWA bank account and authorised some payments, including the deposit for the 2010 Spring conference in Lisbon. My role as Treasurer is made so much easier by the finance team at head office who deal wonderfully with the day-to-day financial activities.

On Monday evening, once the children had gone to bed, I started work on the clinical safety section of the clinical summary. After about two hours I stopped, or rather my citation software stopped and told me that 'the server had thrown an exception and needed to close'. Well, I didn't know what this meant, the Help menu wasn't very helpful, and it was too late in the evening to start investigating, so I turned off the computer and hoped that it would recover by the morning!

Tuesday was a productive day; I had a meeting in the morning, there were very few e-mails or administrative tasks and I made good progress finalising the clinical safety summary section. The citation software was still 'throwing exceptions' though. Wednesday was another productive day; I finished the clinical safety summary section and tried to send it to Iain for review. Alas, the computer had other ideas and refused to send or receive any e-mail (perhaps this explained the low volume of e-mails during the day). Fortunately my husband soon resolved the problem and the document disappeared from the outbox. Iain is an expert with the citation software and formatted the references and bibliography for

me. I think there is a potential EMWA workshop here! As there were only a few comments to address, the section was soon ready to send to the client—two days ahead of schedule. However, because Wednesday is the end of my working week it was important to finalise the section early.

Another deadline was looming: materials for new workshops to be presented at the Spring Conference were required by the end of the week, so this was a task for Wednesday evening. The drug safety workshop had become unwieldy and so was being split into two workshops. Wendy Kingdom, who has led this popular workshop for some time, had asked me to co-present the new workshops with her. She had done a fantastic job revamping the workshop materials and so it didn't take long to review the updated slides and workshop assignments. Another deadline met.

On Thursday morning I took my daughter to her Gymtime class and in the afternoon we filled two boxes with gifts for the annual Blythswood Shoebox Appeal which our church supports. My artistic ability and patience were challenged trying to gift-wrap the shoeboxes, though! On Thursday evening I did some book-keeping and caught up with e-mails received during the day: some needs analysis questionnaires for the GCP workshop which I am leading at the Autumn Conference in Frankfurt, and proposals received from companies tendering for EMWA's website management services which are being outsourced.

After taking my son to the school bus on Friday morning, my daughter and I went for a walk to the local stables and back via the park where we collected some conkers before heading off to the pool for her weekly swimming lesson, followed by a quick visit to the bank, then to the mobile library before it left for its next destination, and finally back home just in time for the decorator who came to quote for some work. I also had to remember that school finished early on a Friday and that I must be at the bus stop half an hour earlier than usual. Non-working days can be hectic and just as busy as working ones! Whilst my daughter played, making the most of the peace and quiet before her brother came home, I took the opportunity to check my e-mails: a few from EMWA about the forthcoming Frankfurt conference and the 2010 Spring and Autumn Conferences and one from our French client with a bibliography format query which, thankfully, Iain resolved.

Friday evening was spent at an outdoor party and firework display at my son's school—a nice way to end the week ... and it didn't rain.

So that was my week; a fairly typical mixture of client and EMWA work and family life.

Gillian Pritchard
Dundee, Scotland, UK
g.pritchard@sylexis.co.uk
www.sylexis.co.uk