



The Editor's Red Pencil

by Barry Drees

Greetings fellow members,

Some of the more perceptive of you may have noticed that I attempt to present a theme in each issue (and no, the theme of the first issue was not "Copyediting is important"). This issue takes a look at the changing nature of our profession, both medical writing itself and the medical profession with which we are so closely associated, and thus I've called it the "Past, Present, and Future" issue. Of course, you can look forward to articles about change in the profession for the foreseeable future as we are privileged to be members of a profession which, while perhaps no longer in its infancy, can certainly be said to be in its adolescence in this time of mergers and restructuring.

When I first agreed to be editor and began thinking about what kinds of articles we could present, it occurred to me that one topic that would be good would be that of "alternative medicine" which seems to be quite current as well as controversial (the two things an editor loves). In fact, I was beaten to the mark by our colleagues down under who dedicated a recent issue of the [AuMWA Journal](#) to alternative medicine. I was particularly intrigued by the several stormy letters to the editor that were published in the following issue, criticising the lack of objectivity. Aah, hindsight is golden, and I hope we've avoided that problem, but please don't hesitate to write to me if you don't agree or if you have any other comments about these articles. There's nothing I'd like better than to publish a few irate (or otherwise) articles from the membership.

Medical writers don't seem to be involved in alternative medicine much, but as it gains acceptance and visibility, we may find ourselves writing about it in the future. Because alternative medicine tends to take an individual and holistic approach, it hasn't lent itself to being tested by controlled clinical trials. This could provide unique opportunities, both for practitioners to investigate its effectiveness and for medical communicators such as ourselves to describe the findings.

Finally, I just heard that one of our members is moving to Iceland where she will continue her career. Well, now we can truly say that the sun never sets on the EMWA empire (at least not in the summer). I was really excited to hear this as editor, however, since it means that we can finally round out our geographical diversity series with a "View from the North"! Stay tuned.

Barry Drees