



## **The Editor's Red Pencil**

by Barry Drees

Greetings fellow members,

As most of you should know from our diversity series of articles ("View from the . . ."), our membership truly encompasses the entire globe (Europe, North America, Singapore, South Africa, the sun never sets on EMWA members!). Nevertheless, we live in a truly global age and so I'm really excited to introduce the first simultaneous international issue with articles by the editors of *The AMWA Journal* (North America), *AMWA News* (Australia), and *The Write Stuff* appearing at about the same time in all three publications (*AMWA News*, July 1999:4-5 and *AMWA Journal* 1999; 14 (3):25-28). I don't know if I'd go so far as to use the hackneyed phrase "a landmark publishing event", but it certainly represents a first for our three associations and their journals and is a welcome first step in strengthening the links between us. My heartfelt thanks to Peter Hobbins, the editor of the Australian Medical Writers Association's newsletter, *AMWA News*, for coming up with the idea and nagging Robert Jacoby and me to do our parts. I'd also like to congratulate Daleen Krige and Jing Ping Yeo who's TWS articles were reprinted in the *AMWA News*.

Some of you may also notice that "From the Literature" has gone electronic this issue. Partly this is because our Literature columnist is in the midst of changing jobs and requested a break for one issue (no time to scan the literature, apparently) but I've wanted to start a column on interesting websites for awhile and this was the perfect opportunity. You should be seeing both of these columns in the future and of course, contributions, ideas, offers of doing a guest column, or suggestions of interesting websites or literature articles are **always** welcome.

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One of the surest signs of a journal's maturity is when the editor first has to reject an article that has been submitted. Given the history of the EMWA Journal, I wasn't sure that this would be something I would ever have to worry about. Nevertheless, it is with definitely mixed emotions that I share with you that I made the decision not to include a submitted piece because I felt that it was not appropriate. This naturally brings up the question of what my definition of appropriate is and so, I'd like to outline now the kinds of topics you'll be seeing while I remain the editor-in-chief and thus define my editorial policy. This seems particularly timely given the recent, highly-publicised sacking of George Lundberg, the editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, due to conflicts between the editor and the president of the association regarding editorial policy.

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*The Write Stuff*, as the complete title declares, is *the Journal of the European Medical Writers Association*. The word journal was purposely chosen to differentiate it from a newsletter, the idea being to deal with somewhat more basic issues and in more detail than a typical newsletter would. Hopefully, this is also reflected in the format and style, which was chosen to suggest something more serious, if not academic. I looked at quite a number of association newsletters and many had a style and format that one would probably describe as "light" (mixing lots of different fonts, for example) and while I wouldn't want TWS to be described as "heavy", I did aim for something which can represent an important professional association.

We are an association of writers, and I try to make sure that everything that gets published is at least tangentially related to the writing profession. Thus, although articles about medicine or science might be interesting, I feel that there are plenty of other places for such pieces and unless there is at least some connection to writing (however tenuous), you won't be seeing such things in TWS. As should be obvious, this gives the editor a lot of leeway in picking what to publish, which is, I believe, how it

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**"L'EMWA è una  
organizzazione in rapida  
crescita"**

**"EMWA is a rapidly growing organization."**

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should be. The editor serves at the behest of the Executive Committee, which therefore has the right to replace him or her whenever they wish.

I'm happy to announce our newest addition to the editorial board, Karen Shashok, and her regular feature, *In the*

*Bookstores*, which will feature reviews of books pertinent to the field of medical writing. A freelance translator and editorial consultant, Karen works mainly with texts in the life sciences, and handles many levels of work from author's editing to copyediting and proofreading. She has investigated authors' understanding of, and attitudes toward, peer review and is interested in all stages of the process of scientific information transfer. This feature represents another sign of TWS coming of age as we received our first offer from a publisher of a complementary copy of a book in exchange for a book review in TWS. So any of you out there who'd like to get free books related to medical writing, just let Karen or me know and we'll send along some of the next ones we get!

Finally, in keeping with our international theme this issue, I'd like to report a little publicity we're getting in a country which, despite being one of the major economic areas in Europe, has little representation in EMWA membership – Italy. As you can see from the Side box, a short article about EMWA and the Copenhagen conference, written by one of our Italian members, Jennifer Hartwig, will be coming out shortly in the newsletter of SIAR, Società Italiana di Attività Regolatorie (Italian Regulatory Affairs Association). Thanks to Jennifer and let's hope it leads to a big influx of new Italian members. Say, how about a conference in Venice, Florence or at Lake Como?

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