



The Write Stuff



Sixth annual EMWA autumn meeting, 18–20 November 2004, Munich, Germany

by Wolfgang Thielen

As a brand-new EMWA member (and one relatively green behind his medical writer's ears), I was eager to experience what had been the talk at our office for weeks. Let me say upfront that my first EMWA meeting exceeded my expectations, that it was easily the most worthwhile conference I have attended and an enjoyable initiation to EMWA at that. The meeting was held at Munich's Le Meridien hotel, close to the central railway station. Although its five-star status was not apparent from the outside, the hotel turned out to be a superb and well-equipped venue with a pleasant atmosphere for work and play (and with a confusingly varied breakfast buffet).

On Thursday evening, Susan Bhatti and Geoff Hall kicked off the meeting with their plenary lecture on the changes effected by the new European directives and the repercussions for us as medical writers. They did not fail to point out – with an unmistakably sarcastic tone at times – the difficulties of implementing these directives. The subsequent conference-warming reception was the first opportunity to mingle with the "friendly bunch" and to meet the other new members (the blue dot on the name badge proved a helpful identifier). Also, it was interesting to see that people came to medical writing from various backgrounds (some through the backdoor, like myself) and engaged in a broad range of medical writing and consulting activities apart from the canon of regulatory documentation. The first day ended (officially at least) with an informal dinner where a jolly EMWA crowd occupied an entire wing of the restaurant, as it were, and kept the waiter busy serving (some more, some less traditional) German/Bavarian specialties.

On Friday it was workshop time, and I found the first tentative steps in the professional development program very rewarding. With 9 workshops to choose from and 3 workshop sessions in total, there was a lot going on and a lot to be learnt. In addition, the workshop leaders came across not only as knowledgeable and enthusiastic, but also as very approachable inside and outside the seminar rooms. After the second round of workshops on Friday, it was time to put on hats and gloves and brave the weather on a bracing walk to the *Green Goose* where we indulged in hearty Bavarian fare (for the carnivore in each of us) and a fun social evening in the vaulted cellar of the restaurant. On Saturday morning, more meat (i.e., the last set of workshops) was served, rounding off a short 2½ days in Munich.

It was great to have the opportunity to attend and experience a friendly and encouraging welcome to EMWA. I am sure we have every reason to look forward to this year's main conference on a small Mediterranean island known as Malta – this must be the first time in the 7000 years of Maltese history that the place is teeming with medical writers. Hope to meet you there (again) – Pfuati Munich, Mer ħba Malta!

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