Kathryn White is the second in a series of articles on alternative forms of writing that medical writers get up to ‘out of hours’.

Describe the type of writing you do ‘out of hours’.
K.W.: I am a keen horse-rider and own two horses, one of whom I compete in dressage and the sport of eventing. The latter is the equivalent of a triathlon for horses. You compete in three disciplines: dressage, showjumping and crosscountry, in one day or over three days. People may be familiar with the famous eventing show, Badminton Horse Trials, which takes place in the UK and is televised worldwide. The sport of eventing is quite unique in that, despite the fact that I am a relative amateur, I’m able to compete alongside Olympians and World Champions, such as Zara Phillips! In my spare time I enjoy writing equestrian articles for publication in magazines such as Eventing and Eventing Worldwide. I also write a monthly blog for a top equestrian retailer, Equilibrium Products. The blog describes my adventures as a horse-owner and competitor. Recently, I was invited to help with the editing of a newsletter for a national equestrian organisation and I am very excited about it.

Do you have a favourite topic or a preferred style of writing?
K.W.: I particularly enjoy interviewing riders and celebrities in the sport of eventing; many of whom are my heroes. I will never forget being invited to attend an open day with top rider and Olympian, Pippa Funnell, at her yard in Surrey. I had to stop myself from being too awestruck to ask sensible questions! I have been very fortunate to have had the opportunities to report from premier events such as Badminton Horse Trials and the European Eventing Championships in Fontainebleau.

Describe a recent assignment.
K.W.: I was asked to write an event report for Eventing magazine which was my first assignment for them. I was very nervous as they had a strict remit, word count and tough deadlines! Also, it is a reputed national publication in the world of eventing, read by many of the sport’s celebrities and officials.

What was the topic?
K.W.: The report described a national event which I attended at the Warwickshire College of Agriculture. Several top riders were competing alongside amateurs and at three different levels. The event ran over 2 days.

What did the assignment involve?
K.W.: I attended one day of the event so that I could interview the organisers, report on any mishaps and provide a detailed description of how the competition went. It was great fun because I spent all day watching the action and interviewing interesting people. I have friends who are riders or officials on the eventing circuit so it was a good excuse to catch up with them. My partner is a commentator for the sport and a good source of back-room gossip! I had to keep track of who was likely to win each section of the competition and then, at each prize-giving, I needed to interview the winner and runner-up.

My remit was to interview the top two riders of each section, but only if they were amateurs i.e. riders who didn’t event professionally. In particular, the magazine wanted to know of any unusual jobs these riders had in order to support their hobby, and any interesting facts about them and their horses. I wrapped up my last interview at 7 pm on Saturday evening and had to submit the finished article first thing Monday morning, having caught up with the rest of the competition via phone and internet on Sunday. It was a long weekend and hard work but I loved every minute of it. I never get over the excitement of walking into a newsagent’s and seeing my work in print!

Describe how this type of writing helps you with your technical work?
K.W.: The magazines have word limits for their articles and they work to strict deadlines. This has helped me enormously with writing journal manuscripts and clinical summaries. In both types of writing there is a certain amount of background reading and research to be done before you begin an article. Equestrian journalism has also given me the confidence to talk to people I don’t know very well and obtain information without being phased; so talking to KOLs and journal editors is no longer a challenge! I’m hoping that working on the newsletter will give me greater experience of editing and proof-reading, which are skills I can apply in my role as a medical writer.

How do aspects of your technical work help with your writing “out of hours”?
K.W.: Working in the pharmaceutical industry, in general, has taught me the importance of planning and project managing an assignment. I have also gained organisational skills and a sense of professionalism that are paramount to getting things done efficiently and to a high standard. Some of the equestrian articles I have written have been quite technical or science-based. This is where my clinical background has been a great help.

If you have an ‘out of hours’ story to share, please contact Raquel at medical.writing@billiones.biz