

Career Guide for New Medical Writers

By EMWA

Getting into Medical Writing (GIMW) Group

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Table of contents

1. Purpose of this guide
2. What is medical writing?
3. Career prospects of medical writing
 - Which businesses hire medical writers?
 - Pharmaceutical, medical devices and biotech companies
 - Medical writing and communication agencies
 - Contract research organisations (CROs)
 - Regulatory bodies and government agencies
 - Medical Education agencies
 - Academic and research institutes
 - Publishing houses and journals
 - Other
 - Freelancing versus employment
 - Remote work opportunities
4. Qualifications and skills medical writers have
 - Preferred educational qualifications
 - Skills required
 - Transferrable skills
 - Tools and technologies
 - Soft skills for medical writers
5. What are the different types of medical writing?
 - Regulatory medical writing
 - Pharmaceutical biotech industries
 - Clinical development
 - Non-clinical development
 - Market access
 - Transparency and disclosure
 - Medical devices and diagnostics
 - Veterinary products
 - Medical communications
 - Journal articles and manuscripts for scientific and medical publications
 - Medical education for healthcare professionals
 - Congress presentations

- Advisory board meetings
 - Promotional medical content (print and digital)
 - Patient and general public language communication
 - Medical journalism and press releases
 - Transparency and disclosure
6. Fields related to medical writing
 - Medical writing in your native language and medical translation
 - Medical editing
 - Quality control specialist
 - Project management
 - Medical science liaison
 - Content lab specialist
 - Submission specialist
 - Publication planning
 7. General career progression of a medical writer
 8. Salary and remuneration of a medical writer
 9. Further information
 - What is EMWA?
 - EMWA conferences
 - Medical Writing Journal (MEW)
 - Regular sections
 - Feature articles
 - Relevant MEW issues for new medical writers
 - EMWA Special interest groups

1. Purpose of this guide

With an increasing drive to increase transparency and engagement and the public's demand for better and increased access to clinical and scientific information comes along a greater need to communicate scientific and medical information. All this information needs to be effectively communicated to different audiences, such as healthcare professionals, drug regulators, and the general public. This is where medical writing and communications come into play.

So what is medical writing and what does it look like as a prospective career? You might never have heard of medical writing in your academic career or come across these questions if you're from a science or medical background and have a flair for writing with strong communication skills. As a medical writer, you'll learn how to look at raw data, distil messages, interpret the data within a team, and then craft these messages to communicate these data in different formats and for specific audiences.

The evolution of scientific communication needs to be transparent and simple, meaning translating the complex language of science into effective communication. Any new medical writer needs to think about this career as a new research opportunity, where the outcome of the research is effective communication.

Throughout this guide, we address several queries related to medical writing and give you an idea of what it takes to become a successful medical writer.

2. What is medical writing?

Medical writing is the art of communicating complex scientific information in simplified, clear and concise words while remaining scientifically accurate. It involves creating clinical research documents, educational and promotional documents, content for healthcare websites, news articles, and manuscripts, among others.

A medical writer communicates complex scientific information in effective ways according to the target audience, the goal of the communication, the medium, the timeline, and the topic. These include doctors, patients, pharmaceutical companies, or the general public. Medical writers undertake some part of the responsibility in bringing quality and accurate information closer to society. This is particularly relevant in a time where misinformation is easily accessible and quickly spreads to large audiences, especially on the internet.

Medical writing involves clear and accurate communication of clinical and scientific data and information that deals specifically with medicine or healthcare. Medical writers can work in a variety of companies and organisations, each requiring specific qualifications and a diverse skillset. You can learn more about a career in medical writing from previously published [EMWA](#) and [AMWA](#) career guides.

3. Career prospects in medical writing

A medical writer gets to work closely with scientists, doctors, and other experienced professionals. Medical writing has carved its alcove in every domain of the healthcare industry.

Which businesses hire medical writers?

- **Pharmaceutical, medical devices and biotech companies**

Within the industry, medical writing tasks are either managed in-house or outsourced to medical writing agencies, medical communication agencies and/or CROs (further described below). As an in-house medical writer, you will join either a regulatory team and learn how to create regulatory documents or a marketing team and learn how to create medical communications deliverables. This will help you hone your expertise in developing critical regulatory, clinical and non-clinical documents within a range of therapeutic areas.

- **Contract research organisations (CROs)**

Contract research organisations traditionally are responsible for completing clinical research projects. Working at a contract research organisation (CRO) will likely include communicating with

international client organisations, managing multiple projects, and learning about various therapeutic areas. CROs provide services to pharmaceutical companies such as pre-trial regulatory consulting, conducting clinical trials and getting products registered with regulatory authorities.

CROs are also involved in post-approval activities including pharmacovigilance documentation, writing patient education materials, developing scientific content for journals and symposiums, and real-world evidence (RWE) reporting.

CROs typically have several functions/departments with capabilities to assist their clients on various aspects of a trial such as regulatory affairs, clinical operations, biometrics (eg statistics, programming, data management) as well as medical writing. Their clients may outsource all these capabilities (full service provider) or just a single capability (functional service provider). What this means for medical writers working at CROs is that depending on what is outsourced, they may have to work with both the internal and client team or just the client's team.

- **Medical writing/communication agencies**

Medical writing agencies often take on both regulatory writing and medical communications (med comms) work (see Section 5 for details), while medical communication agencies mostly work within medical communications. That being said, the type of work the two agencies take on may not be as clearly defined. For example, the bulk of the work at some medical communications agencies are medical communication deliverables but they may have a small division and some capabilities to take on medical regulatory writing work. The best thing would be to research the company of interest to see what type of work they are involved in.

Agencies may provide documentation support to biopharma, medical devices, cosmetics, and veterinary product companies, among others. They support biopharma to produce all the documentation required throughout the product life cycle. They provide medical regulatory writing support for product development from before product launch all the way through to postmarketing and life cycle management. To give you an idea, a purely medical writing company can do regulatory and med comms, while med comms agencies do mostly med comms; however, recently some med comms also take on regulatory.

Depending on the agency, some of the medical writing roles include clinical research writer, regulatory writer, scientific writer, publication writer, submission specialist, reviewer, editor, or quality control (QC) specialist. Project management is a key skill in medical writing. For those who thrive at the project management aspect, they can take on roles such as project and account manager to work with clients to understand their medical writing needs and then work with in-house or freelance medical writers to get the job done on time and within budget.

- **Regulatory bodies and government agencies**

Medical writers also work for regulatory bodies and governmental agencies such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), European Medicines Agency (EMA), UK's National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), or Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) among others. Each country has its own regulatory bodies and requirements in terms of documentation,

language, etc. and medical writers can be involved in either creating these documents or translating them into the local language.

Medical writers are also required by health technology assessment bodies like NICE (in the UK) and insurance companies to collect cost-effectiveness data and create reports to prove the value of a drug or product in terms of efficacy, safety, and cost.

- **Medical education agencies**

Medical education companies require medical writers for the promotion and continuation of medical education. These writers also get to work on the digitalisation of existing content or updating the previous content to keep the training updated and enhance the accessibility to a larger audience. These writers get an opportunity to work with/as instructional designers to communicate the creative aspects according to the content or to design and develop create e-learning modules.

- **Academic and research institutes**

Institutes hire medical writers to support researchers in publishing and presenting their results at conferences. Science professional associations, companies, medical schools, universities, and charities sometimes employ science writers to write for their newsletters and websites. Even some medical schools, universities or institutes have a small medical writing department, which deals with all the publications released by the institution as well as grant applications.

- **Publishing houses and journals**

Medical writers support publishing authors to write their research according to journal guidelines and may help with journal submissions. Medical book publishers hire medical writers, editors and translators who will help in the development of textbooks for schools, universities, and healthcare professionals.

- **Other**

Increasingly, non-profit health organisations, research institutes, and Health Economics and Outcomes Research (HEOR) agencies also employ medical writers and translators in their communications departments. A perfect example is the World Health Organization, which is constantly communicating health matters to the public.

A medical or science editor may choose to work for publishers of peer-reviewed journals. They work closely with both authors and reviewers and manage the whole process, from submission to publication.

National or local newspapers, magazines, journals, and websites may work with science writers or journalists when releasing health/medical news.

Medical writing manager

The management of medical writing activities (resourcing and line management) is usually one of the career advancements of experienced medical writers. This activity needs a genuine interest in people's care and expectations.

Freelancing versus employment

Medical writing allows you to choose your road; freelancing or employment. Career opportunities in both directions have their own pros and cons. A medical writer working as a freelancer might earn more than a full-time employee. However, as an employee, you benefit from in-house training and professional development along with the security of having health insurance, retirement savings, an annual bonus, and paid leave as part of your contract. While as a freelancer, you may not have to face office politics, restructuring and other organisational changes, you have to be flexible to manage different personality types within your client companies. A freelancer is also responsible for finding their own work and adapting to changes in the market. Freelancing can be lonely at times, but with distance relationships and co-working structures, it is possible to create supportive networks and relationships. Nowadays, companies and organisations hire both types of employees, and it's in your hands to pick between a scheduled day at a dedicated company or fitting your work around your lifestyle and juggling different clients.

Here you can read some testimonies from experienced medical writers:

[Career shift: from employment to freelancing](#)

[Never say never: returning to full-time employment after freelancing](#)

Remote work opportunities

Working from home or distance-working as a medical writer is becoming increasingly popular with companies and CROs and may be an alternative measure to finding work-life balance for those whom the 9-to-5 work-day does not fit with their chosen lifestyle. You can either work through dedicated online platforms, like UpWork or Contra, or find your own clients and individual contracts. In recent times medcomms agencies propose long-term, distance-working contracts. If you are an employee, you may be offered or request a work-from-home contract or work part of your week at your workplace (known as a hybrid).

Some of the advantages of remote working include

- Possible flexible start and finish times
- Not having to commute to work
- Saving on travel expenses or eating out for lunch
- Getting extra sleep, as you save time on commuting
- Spending more time with your loved ones at home
- Living in a location that is not dependent on where you work
- Working for foreign companies or clients

Some of the advantages of an in-person or office job might include

- Lower personal energy bills
- Social gatherings with your colleagues to get to know them better and build close relationships
- Getting out of the house more

- Higher chances of collaboration with work colleagues, and sharing tools or tips to do your work
- Having a dedicated work office space away from home

4. Qualifications and skills medical writers have

Preferred educational qualifications

Ideally, a medical writer will have a university degree in a field related to science. For example, a BSc (Bachelor of Science), MSc (Master of Science), or a PhD. It's common (but not mandatory) for medical writers to be healthcare professionals or have a medical or life sciences degree. For [useful resources for medical writers, visit this reading list created by EMWA](#).

Medical writers must have specific expertise and awareness of ethical standards, clinical data analysis, protocol development, project management and healthcare knowledge. This expertise can be gained from prior experience in clinical research or regulatory affairs. Typical pharma positions such as regulatory affairs or clinical research associates would be a good prior experience.

Skills

Transferrable skills

- Medical or scientific knowledge
- Strong research skills
- Critical thinking
- Analytical skills including basics of biostatistics
- Data interpretation and data presentation
- Drug development process
- Basics of pharmacology, engineering, epidemiology, health outcome depending on the working field
- Clinical trials knowledge
- Technical guidelines: ICH, EQUATOR, ICMJE, ABPI, etc
- Scientific writing skills
- Project planning and management
- Communication skills (including both active listening and presentation skills)
- Software knowledge

Tools and technologies

- Literature search platforms like Pubmed, Scopus, Ovid, Embase, Cochrane, etc
- Referencing tools like Endnote, Mendeley
- Plagiarism software like Ithenticate
- Proofreading and editing software like Grammarly
- Content management tools like Veeva Vault
- Publication management tools like Datavision and PubStrat
- Microsoft Office applications, such as Word, Excel, and Powerpoint
- Illustration tools like Illustrator, Canva, Biorender
- Online collaboration tools like Google Docs, Share Point, MS Teams, Acrobat
- Online communication tools like Zoom, Teams, etc.

Soft skills for medical writers

- Attention to detail
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Problem-solving
- Flexibility
- Fast learner and ability to grasp difficult concepts quickly
- Team player and ability to build rapport
- Open to criticism and continuous learning
- Time management and prioritisation
- Ability to identify what's missing, ask questions and suggest improvements
- Being responsive and easy to work with
- Patience, but also chasing for updates when necessary
- Pro-active mindset
- Project management skills

5. Different types of medical writing

Regulatory medical writing

Regulatory medical writing is the development of regulatory documents that are submitted to health authorities. The main target audiences are regulators, investigators, and ethics committees.

Each document type is specific to its purpose; therefore, adhering to regulatory guidelines for the specific product is mandatory. Sectors that employ medical regulatory writers include the pharmaceutical/biotech industries, medical devices/diagnostic industries, and veterinary medicines.

An overview of sectors and the common documents medical writers will encounter when working in each sector are presented below.

Pharmaceutical or biotech industries

Regulatory writing in pharmaceutical or biotech companies involves the development of documents that are submitted to health authorities during the development of a drug. Documents submitted to health authorities span a range of areas from pharmaceutical quality (chemistry, manufacturing, and controls [CMC]) to non-clinical and clinical development. Documents submitted to health authorities must adhere to required regulations; therefore, knowledge of regulations and guidelines are helpful.

Regulatory writing in the CMC or non-clinical space is often done by medical or scientific writers and is increasing. Regulatory medical writing often refers to all documents required by regulations and covers all phases of clinical development.

- **Non-clinical development**

When a novel drug is identified, it goes through non-clinical research, which involves in vitro and in vivo testing to determine the ideal form (or structure), manufacturing methods (including scalability),

dosage, safety and efficacy in non-humans. In vivo testing should generate data on the efficacy and safety of the drug at tentative dosage windows, which can be used to extrapolate and calculate safe first-in-human doses.

- **Clinical development**

Once the drug reaches clinical development, it will go through a series of clinical trials to determine the safety and efficacy of the drug in humans. Trials are designed with an indication in mind to target a specific disease for when the drug eventually reaches the market.

Clinical trials start at Phase I and move through to II and III. Phase I studies are usually conducted in healthy participants. Phase I studies are designed to identify the therapeutic dosage (window), the safety and tolerability of the drug, the distribution of the drug in the human body (pharmacokinetics), and the effect of the drug on the human body (pharmacodynamics).

When a new drug enters clinical development, it will go through Phase I to test its safety. Once safety is established, it will then go onto Phase II studies. Phase II studies are typically conducted in a target patient population for which the drug is being developed. These are also often dose-finding studies to determine the ideal dose to balance safety and efficacy.

Phase III is then done once Phase II is complete. Phase III studies are often the pivotal confirmatory studies in the target patient population (for specific indications, expanding indications, regulatory requests) with the standard of care as the comparator. Market approvals for new drugs are supported by all the studies performed (from Phases I through to Phase III). However, the development programme does not just end there.

Phase IV studies are post-marketing studies that are performed after the drug is approved, according to the product's IFU. Phase IV studies further examine the long-term effect of the drug in clinical practice and among the general population. Some of the documents that the regulatory medical writer authors are in Table 1.

Table 1. Some examples of document types medical writers develop in clinical development

Document type	Description
Clinical study protocol	This document describes the objectives and the rationale of a clinical study and how it will be conducted (assessments, collection schedule, statistical considerations, and strategy of disclosure of the results).
Investigator's Brochure (IB)	This document compiles all the quality, non-clinical, and clinical results of the drug. The IB contains all the updated information that helps the investigator and site staff manage a trial.
Informed consent form	This document contains information on the drug and the trial

	so that the participants can get a good understanding of the necessary information to help them decide on whether to participate in the trial or not.
Briefing document	This document is used to provide all the necessary background information, rationale, and questions when approaching health authorities for a consultation. The contents will depend on the questions and the nature of the consultation.
Clinical study report (CSR)	The CSR reports the background, methods, results and conclusions of a trial. The results from all the objectives and endpoints described in the clinical study protocol are reported in the CSR.
Risk management plans	Provide information on the safety profile of the drug and, describe further activities to characterise the safety profile and minimise risks during development and after approval (pharmacovigilance).
Periodic Benefit-Risk Evaluation Report	A safety report for the drug that is produced after market approval and contains ongoing and updated safety data that help to summarise the risks and benefits of the drug, leading to an overall evaluation.
Lay Language Summaries	A summary of clinical trial results intended to communicate trial results and improve the accessibility of findings to the general audience (eg patients, participants, general public).

Note: The documents listed in this table are not an exhaustive list of the document types developed during clinical development.

See the links below for further details:

- [A writer's role in drug development](#)
- [Regulatory Writing Basics](#)
- [Post-Approval Regulatory Writing](#)

- **Market access**

Once a drug is approved, another aspect to consider is how to bring the drug (or technology) to the market. Health economics outcomes research (HEOR) is an area of research involving humanistic, economical and clinical outcomes to evaluate the real-world effectiveness of the drug. Results from

HEOR support market access. Market access is highly dependent on payers in a local market (eg public health insurance, private health insurance, self-pay), the local healthcare system, and the country's culture. Market access will include the development of documents supporting reimbursement submissions.

See the links below for details:

- [Health Economics and Market Access](#)
- [Medical decision making and health technology assessment](#)

- **Transparency and disclosure**

Transparency and disclosure specialists are also a medical writing-related field. Clinical studies must be registered before starting enrollment and their results should be disclosed. Furthermore, the study protocol, statistical analysis, and clinical study reports of all the trials leading to the registration of a new drug in the EU are published on an ad-hoc database managed by EMA and accessible to anyone (<https://clinicaldata.ema.europa.eu/web/cdp/home>). Also, the ICMJE and GPPs request that the same documents, in addition to the patient's data, have to be submitted to the growing journals following these guidelines, together with the materials that will start the peer review process. This means that anyone can check the consistency of the data published in different ways. As the patient's privacy and companies' patents must be safeguarded, all these documents need to be revised and ensured for privacy, business and communication quality, enlarging the range of activities and the professionalism of the MWs. More details are available in [this issue of Medical Writing](#).

Medical devices and diagnostics

Medical devices, are defined [by the EU](#) as “any instrument, apparatus, appliance, material or other article, whether used alone or in combination, including the software necessary for its proper application intended by the manufacturer to be used for human beings for the purpose of

- Diagnosis, prevention, monitoring, treatment or alleviation of disease, monitoring, treatment, alleviation of or compensation for an injury or disability
- Investigation, replacement or modification of the anatomy or of a physiological process or state
- Providing information by means of in vitro examination of specimens derived from the human body including organ, blood and tissue donation

and which does not achieve its principal intended action in or on the human body by pharmacological, immunological or metabolic means, but which may be assisted in its function by such means”.

The following products are also deemed medical devices:

- Devices to control conceptions and products specifically intended for cleaning, disinfection or sterilisation of devices.

- Examples of medical devices include thermometers, needles, stents, and robotic-assisted surgical systems.

Evidently, there are many types and uses. As such, medical devices are classified according to their risk profiles (from lowest to highest) such as Class I, IIa, IIb, and III. Approval pathways associated with each type differ due to the differences in risk. One of the main types of documents written for medical device registration are Clinical Evaluation Reports (CERs), which document all clinical evidence for the device to be approved. Sources of clinical data include clinical investigations or published literature on the device concerned or its equivalent device and clinically relevant information from post-market surveillance. During the development of medical devices, many documents are also written and these are similar to the ones described in Table 1. [Here](#) is a useful resource to get an idea of the documents required by the medical device regulation.

For more details on medical devices' medical writing, contact the [MD SIG](#) and/or read [this journal issue](#).

Veterinary medical writing

Veterinary medical writing, like its larger human equivalent, covers a range of fields from regulatory writing for the veterinary pharmaceutical industry, to manuscripts for publication and communication with stakeholders. The majority of medical writers working in these areas are qualified veterinarians, but there are openings for non-veterinarians too. Indeed, the career paths in veterinary medicine taken by EMWA members are highly diverse. Anyone coming into veterinary medical writing these days must grasp the concept of *One Health*, a collaborative approach to the health of people, animals, and the environment. Under this approach, veterinary medical writing does not represent an isolated sub-specialization, but rather a key component of health-related communication for our planet. The EMWA veterinary medical special interest group (vetSIG) is open to all those with an interest in the field. Please check the [web page](#) for details on the vetSIG's quarterly meetings and other events, or contact vets@emwa.org for more information.

Medical communications

Medical communications (aka "med comms") is an area of medical writing that encompasses a range of subject areas that involve the generation of a variety of materials related specifically to medicine or healthcare.

If you're interested in MedComms, [here](#) you will find various resources that will guide you in your career search. The EMWA Medical Communications (MedCommSIG) looks forward to including all those with an interest in the field. Please check the [web page](#) for details on the SIG's monthly meetings and other events, or contact medcomsig@emwa.org for more information.

- **Journal articles and documents for medical and scientific publications and congresses**

Manuscripts and documents for scientific congresses writing involves collaborative work where the medical writer liaises with the authors to finalize the document on time, in a scientifically correct manner, and within the proposed budget. Medical writers can provide important intellectual contributions to articles and materials that will be presented in scientific/medical congresses,

including analysis and interpretation of data, or identification of which author can be responsible for each component (for more information see EMWA [Medical Writing Education | Manuscript Writing](#)).

Medical writers can be involved in the writing of primary or secondary scientific articles, namely original research, narrative reviews, systematic reviews, meta-analysis, guidelines and consensus, abstracts, posters, medical booth content, material for oral presentations such as symposia slides, and pre-and-post congress slide decks, among others. Besides interacting with the authors, the medical writer is responsible for drafting the document, editing, and improving its readability according to the intended audience.

Most medical writers who specialised in writing scientific publications have a scientific background, usually a PhD. However, this might not be the case as writing manuscripts and scientific documents involve following guidelines like those published by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) which does not require specific scientific expertise.

The role of medical writers involved in manuscript and scientific document writing should be transparent and EMWA has proposed guidelines on the role of medical writers in developing peer-reviewed publications. According to these guidelines, the medical writers should be mentioned in the Acknowledgment section of the document and the medical writer must ensure that the document is scientifically valid and in line with the generally accepted ethical standards (see [European Medical Writers Association \(EMWA\) guidelines on the role of medical writers in developing peer-reviewed publications](#) and [ISMPP Advocacy](#)). More information can be found in the EMWA [Medical Communications SIG](#).

- **Medical education for healthcare professionals**

Medical writers may prepare continuing education materials for healthcare professionals. Continuing medical education materials can be independent or sponsored by the industry. These materials aim to deliver scientifically accurate and engaging content to help health professionals keep up to date with the latest best practices, products and devices. These materials may be delivered via digital learning initiatives or traditional materials such as scientific materials, slide kits, and learning resources such as videos, and internet tutorials, among others.

- **Advisory board meetings**

Depending on the nature and objectives of the advisory board meetings, medical writers can be responsible for the preparation/conception of the meetings, through to the execution and elaboration of a meeting report.

Although capturing the meeting minutes is one of the most important duties of a medical writer attending an advisory board, there are several tasks where the medical writer can be involved. Usually, advisory board meetings involve engaging with the KOLs, preparing questionnaires, conducting online surveys to understand unmet needs, preparing a pre-meeting report to be shared with KOLs, preparing an executive summary, preparing presentations, hosting the meeting itself, capturing the minutes of the meeting, preparing the meeting report and, if applicable, elaborate a robust scientific report that can be shared with the scientific community.

These roles and responsibilities vary depending on the organisational body of each advisory board meeting. Each advisory board meeting is unique and it is important that the medical writer understands the needs and expectations assigned to each meeting. Go [here](#) for further reading.

- **Promotional medical content (print and digital)**

Promotional medical content is often a creative process using medical copywriting, where you use the context to advertise a product or service. This field of medical writing is highly specialised, and there are rules which dictate how you can promote medical content that may differ between the various countries. You can create promotional medical content digitally, for websites and social media, or in print, such as brochures, visuals, posters and banners. There is often a call to action (CTA) at the end of a piece of promotional medical content.

- **Writing for patients and plain language summaries of scientific peer-reviewed publications**

Medical writing for patients (e.g. lay language summaries of clinical trials) should be written in lay language and with an empathic tone of voice. It's important to communicate medical content in simple terms and to understand the needs of a patient audience to get your message across.

Plain language summaries, brief jargon-free summaries, primarily of peer-reviewed publications, are helping broad non-specialist readers to understand and communicate about specialized scientific publications.

- **Medical journalism and press releases**

Medical journalism and press releases involve world news around medical and scientific updates.

6. Fields related to medical writing

Medical writing in your native language and medical translation

A translator is important to engage the patients of a diverse population. Medical writers and translators will convert your data into concise and imaginable forms. The native language will attract more people to read and disseminate the information.

Medical editing

A medical editor checks work that is written by someone else. They will normally check that it is written in the correct style for the intended audience and the content is medically accurate. This is on top of checking for spelling mistakes or grammatical errors, verifying the reference list and giving feedback to the writer.

Quality control specialist

A quality control specialist ensures that every checklist is met. A QCer verifies data including graphs, tables, content style, claims, etc. Content is clear, labelling is accurate, and figures are aligned at the proper position, a QCer makes sure that nothing is out of place in your document. Before a document reaches the reviewer, a QCer ensures that the writing is solid!

Project management

Project management involves looking after more than one client or cascade of work at the same time. Project managers often work within agencies, and liaise with clients directly, while giving briefs to the in-house team of writers and designers (or freelancers) to fulfil the needs of the projects.

Publication planning

Publication planning is a concept unknown to most of us who come from academia. While in academic research we tend to try to publish our results as soon as we have the data, in the industry it doesn't work like that. The publication of the results of a clinical trial requires strategy and planning that considers not only peer-review publications but also presentations at conferences, press releases and marketing materials, among others. A medical writer can specialise in publication planning. You can find EMWA's previous [webinars](#) on publication planning to understand more about this role.

Content lab specialist

A content lab specialist works on platforms like Veeva Promomat and Zinc to maintain the repository. They also work on the referencing and annotation of the documents to make them easy to be reviewed and finally approved.

Submission specialist

A submission specialist is responsible for the timely submission and processing of a document to a journal, congress, or regulatory authority. As a submission specialist, you work closely with the authors to collect all the submission documents required by the journal, get the forms signed for authorship, conflict of interest, etc., submit the manuscript on behalf of the author and coordinate with the journal any post-submission requirements including the response to the reviewers.

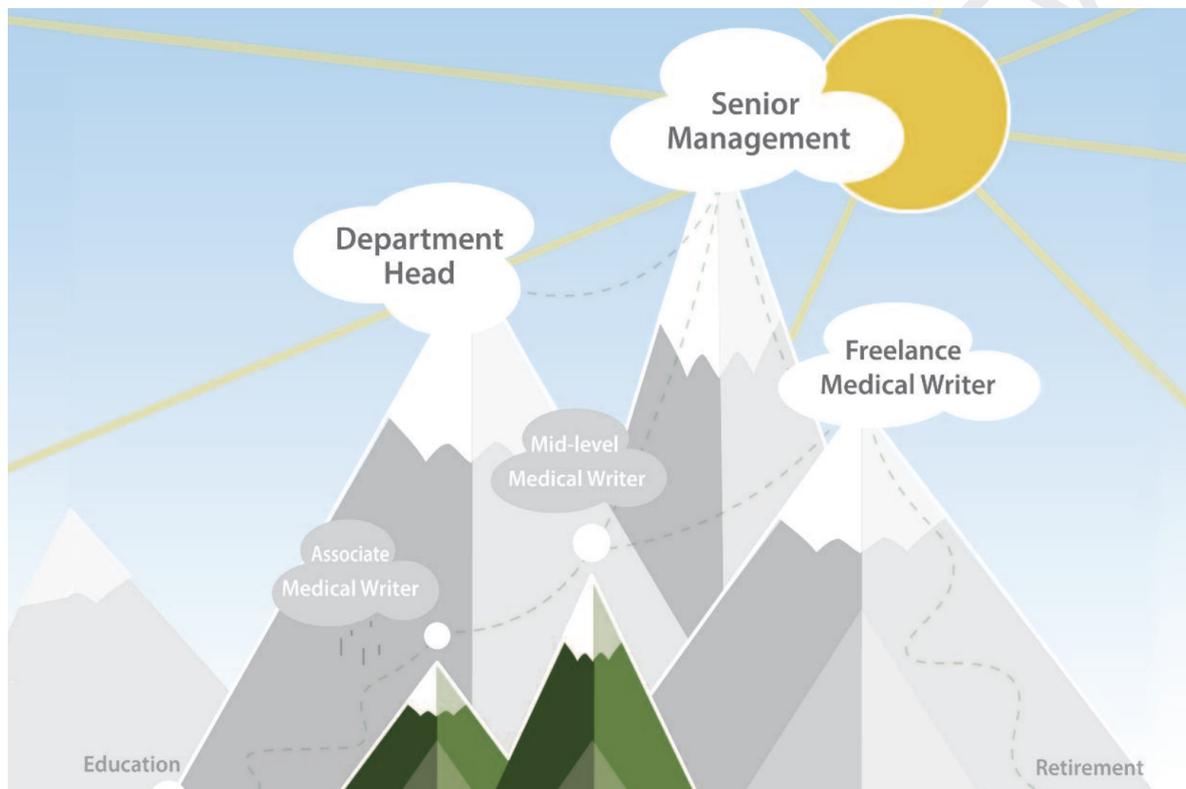
Scientific/medical illustrator

This is quite a new field in the medical writing industry that is gaining more and more interest over the course of the past years. Some professionals with either innate talents or training in illustration

can specialise in scientific or medical illustration, as well as in graphic design applied to our field. This [issue of MEW on visual communications](#) might open your eyes to new career opportunities.

General career progression of a medical writer

Your first 6 to 12 months as a medical writer will be a great opportunity to learn more about the industry, use your transferable skills and acquire new skills. A medical writer can expect to progress to a managerial or more senior role 1 to 3 years after starting. You can also switch from being a medical writer to editing, training new writers or developing your own business. There are many directions you can go in as a medical writer, and you can switch between the different types of medical writing with the right experience and training.



You can find more information about career progression in the [Mentorship issue](#) of MEW.

7. Salary and remuneration of a medical writer

The salary you start on as a medical writer will depend on the type of medical writing you are doing, and the place you choose to work at. In current times, medical writers are in high demand and you can expect a competitive salary. At the end of the day, how much you can earn as a medical writer is up to you, so keep searching for the right fit for you - whether that is finding private clients, or working at a well-known pharmaceutical company.

At EMWA we ran a survey to ask medical writers about their salary, and we will publish the results soon, so check back towards the end of 2022. In the meantime, you can check out [EMWA's 2017 salary survey](#) and [AMWA's 2015 salary survey](#).

8. Further information

What is EMWA?

EMWA is a professional organisation that aims at networking and professional development of medical writing professionals through various programmes. The various working groups (Special Interest Groups or SIGs) collaborate with each other, welcome new members and produce helpful resources for medical writers. Each year, EMWA holds two regular conferences, publishes four editions of the *Medical Writing* journal (MEW), runs regular webinars and meet & share events by the SIGs, and keeps its members up-to-date within the ever-changing landscape of medical writing through the monthly [newsblast](#), social media channels ([Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#)), and [news section](#) on the website.

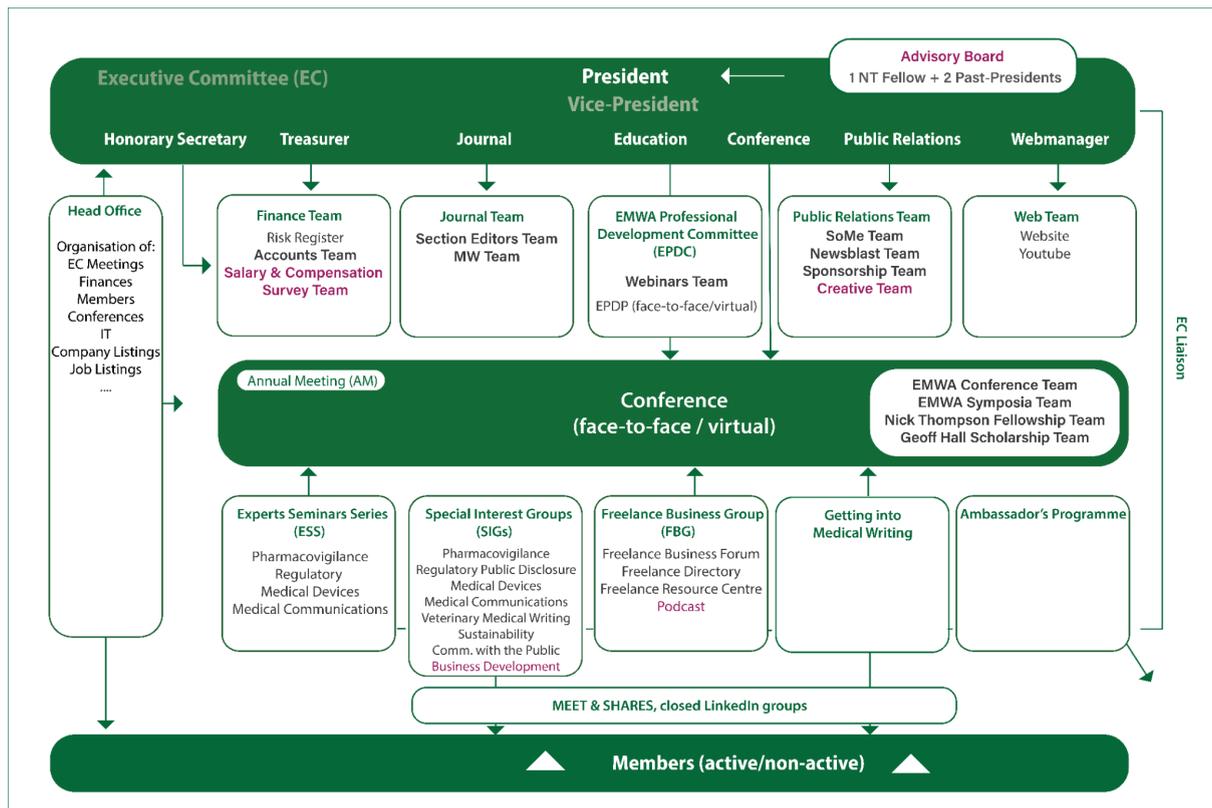
Noteworthy, EMWA is run by volunteers who are involved in many tasks from the [Executive Committee \(EC\)](#) to social media, webinars, conferences, etc. One of the many tasks undertaken by EMWA volunteers is the creation of [Joint Position Statements \(JPS\)](#) in collaboration with other relevant associations such as AMWA, ISMPP, etc., which are relevant to all members of our community. Every EMWA member can become involved in these various working groups. You can find volunteering opportunities [here](#).

EMWA offers a variety of training opportunities including

- [EPDP workshops](#) during conferences, both in-person and online
- An annual one-day symposium (see 10th symposium [here](#)) at the spring conference themed on current hot topics
- Expert Seminar Series (ESS) (see [2022 ESS](#) and [2020 virtual ESS](#) programme's) to provide further career development for experienced MWs
- Regular [webinars](#) on different interest topics, which can be joined and rewatched by all members.
- Meet & share events organised by the [SIGs](#).

There is also a dedicated space for freelancers in the organisation: the [Freelance Business Group](#) that any member can join.

EMWA is always growing and improving, reaching out to raise awareness about medical writing and the benefits of joining our organization. Here you can find an overview of how EMWA is organised:



2022/2023

Within EMWA, [The Ambassador's Programme](#) task is to reach out to universities and research institutions and introduce medical writing as a prospective career for MDs, PhDs, postdocs, etc.

EMWA conferences

EMWA runs 2 conferences per year, one in spring and one in autumn. Conferences are a great way to attend workshops, network and engage with the medical writing community. The spring EMWA conference is typically in May and runs for 5 days. The autumn EMWA conference is usually in November and runs for 3 days. During these conferences, you can network with colleagues, attend [professional development \(EPDP\) workshops](#) as well as a full-day symposium, different seminars/sessions and learn about the newest updates in our industry. You can [find out about future conferences here](#) and [past conferences here](#).

Medical Writing journal (MEW)

EMWA offers its members a quarterly publication of the *Medical Writing* journal, which adds great value to the community by updating best practices and raising awareness about relevant topics of interest to the medical writing community.

Regular sections

- News from the EMA
- Medical Devices
- Gained in Translation
- Digital Communication

- Regulatory Matters
- Medical Writing Humour
- Veterinary Medical Writing
- Medical Communications and Writing for Patients
- Gained in Translation
- Pharmacovigilance
- Good Writing Practice
- The Crofter: Sustainable Communications
- News and Notes from the World of Medical Writing
- My First Medical Writing
- Getting Your Foot in the Door
- Out on Our Own

If you're interested in contributing with an article to any of these sections, please [contact the section editor/s](#).

If you want to share your experience getting your foot in the door with new EMWA members, you can contact the section editor and publish an article in the Getting Your Foot in the Door section of the journal.

If you're an aspiring medical writer and you want a chance to get feedback on your writing and showcase your writing skills with the community, you can contact the section editor and publish your first article in the My First Medical Writing section.

Feature articles

To submit feature articles on the specific topic of each issue you should contact the guest editor/s of each issue. You can find the list of the planned issues a year ahead on the [Medical Writing journal website](#). Feature articles are always open access.

Relevant MEW issues for new medical writers

Click the links below to learn more about writing better, editing and careers in medical writing. These are must-reads.

- [Careers in medical writing](#)
- [Writing better](#)
- [Editing](#)

EMWA special interest groups (SIGs)

EMWA has created [special interest groups \(SIGs\)](#), which are working groups specialised in the different types of medical writing. Click on the links below to find out more about each one.

- [Pharmacovigilance \(PV SIG\)](#) involves the safety and regulation of medicines and the associated activities around their development.
- [Regulatory Public Disclosure \(RPD SIG\)](#) looks at how regulatory documents are produced and the variety that is available, as well as ideas for improving the process of their creation.
- [Medical Devices \(MD SIG\)](#) provides a forum for EMWA members to discuss and share information in the area of medical devices and in-vitro devices.

- [Veterinary Medical Writing](#) SIG provides a forum for EMWA members to discuss and share information in the area of veterinary medical writing.
- [Medical Communications](#) intends to support wide medical communication activities including scientific disclosure & publications, translation, real-world evidence, medical journalism etc. and acts as a source of affordable and updated information.
- [Sustainability](#) SIG helps introduce and maintain sustainability across the medical industry.
- [Communicating with the Public](#) is becoming more important globally and is a burgeoning area for medical writers, so this SIG is dedicated to raising awareness of this area and helping medical writers to gain the skills needed.
- [Business Development SIG](#) is for EMWA members who want to transition from an individual role to starting their own business and provides a platform for conversations around setting up your business to run it successfully.

We hope you found this guide useful as a starting point in your career in medical writing. Our aim, as the [Getting into Medical Writing \(GIMW\) group](#), is to provide a service to all new and aspiring medical writers, so please reach out to give us feedback about this guide or any activities run by the group. We will be happy to hear from you!