



The AMWA-GCAC Connection

April 2026



Welcome! This is our second edition of our new quarterly newsletter! And for those who missed the first edition it is available upon request. We are happy you are here and excited for all the opportunities we will have to connect and network! The AMWA-GCAC serves Chicago, Wisconsin, and the surrounding suburbs of Chicago. There are plenty of opportunities to connect and network. As we shared in our first edition, we will be bringing you information you can use in your career as a medical writer and/or editor and also aim to keep you informed and engaged in what our chapter is doing and how you can get involved. We welcome submissions from AMWA-GCAC members on relevant topics. Please reach out to Diane Brooks to submit your articles at dbrooks5316@sbcglobal.net. Do you have tips you would like to share that you wish someone had shared with you on your journey as a medical writer or editor? Please share them here with us! Also, we welcome classified ads such as job announcements. If you need assistance with a writing and/or editing project you can post it here.

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Winter Networking Event - Madison, WI



An Evening of Connection (and Pre-celebration!)

Written by Christine Weisshaar, PhD

The AMWA-GCAC Madison Networking event was held on February 3, 2026, at Bandit Tacos and Coffee in Madison, WI. Attendees enjoyed delicious tacos and enjoyed conversations about types of medical writing, their career paths into medical writing, UW-Madison sports teams, industry trends, and insights from the November AMWA conference.

One attendee even came the night before his PhD defense, giving everyone a chance to wish him well - he successfully passed the next day! This sparked a broader discussion about our academic backgrounds and how we apply our degrees in our current roles.

We also held a raffle, with one lucky winner to receive a complimentary coaching session with Laura Comilla. Laura brings extensive experience designing professional development programs and offers coaching that helps people get unstuck - whether they're launching something new or rethinking their career path.

As we departed for the evening, we left with smiles, strengthened connections, and new relationships. It is always wonderful to see both returning and new faces at each of these events. If you are worried you won't know anyone, rest assured - we are a very welcoming group!

PASSERO



Winter Networking Event - Arlington Heights, IL

Written by Leticia Torres, PhD

On February 28th, the AMWA-GCAC had the opportunity to meet at the Passero Restaurant in Arlington Heights.

At our first in-person meeting of the year in the Illinois area, nine members had the chance to catch up and, in some cases, meet for the first time. After a brief introduction or re-introduction, we chatted, shared insights, and exchanged personal and business-related updates while enjoying a great meal.

There is great value in these networking events. Not only do they offer a chance to reconnect with colleagues, meet new people, and learn more about them and their work, but they also provide a precious opportunity to build community. Especially for those who work from home, these gatherings are a valuable way to grow your network and find support.

I hope to connect with more members at future networking events.

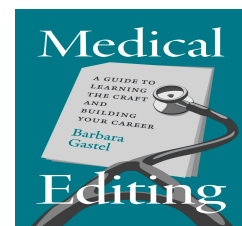
Fun fact: two attendees who had never met before discovered they were neighbors! It is a small world after all.

Virtual Book Club



Our virtual book club meetings offer a chance for engaging with other members and enjoying enlightening discussion. Members from other AMWA chapters are always welcome and you don't have to have read the book to participate!

Medical Editing by Barbara Gastel



Written by Alice Zhao, PhD

We kicked off the first book club of the year with *Medical Writing: A Guide to Learning the Craft and Building Your Career* by Barbara Gastel. The book itself contains a wealth of information for prospective and early-career medical editors and serves as a great reference for experienced professionals. Highlights from the discussion included the book's unique blend of humor, how to manage the author-editor relationship, and considerations while editing medical writing for non-native users of English. Barbara's insights on the publication process of *Medical Editing* were the stand-out for me. It was a delight to hear about her work as a medical editor and an author.



In Case You Missed It

Webinar: Insurance for Freelance Business Owners Informational Session

Insurance Essentials for Freelance Medical Writers

Written by Teresa McNally, PhD

On March 5th, AMWA-GCAC was fortunate to host a presentation by Dave Galla, the owner of RJ Galla Company Inc. (www.rjgallacompany.com/)

The presentation was organized by Sharon Rogers, PhD, our AMWA-GCAC Freelance Chair. Around 40 AMWA members registered and 24 joined the extremely informative presentation on Zoom.

Dave's company provides commercial insurance to small businesses and personal insurance to homeowners throughout the US, and is located in Grayslake, IL. Dave has over 40 years of insurance industry experience.

Dave explained the need for freelance writers and consultants who are not covered by employee policies to have liability insurance for their protection, including protection from litigation, preventing catastrophes and gaining peace of mind. The first level of insurance is setting up a Limited Liability Corporation (LLC) or an S corporation as that prevents you but not your company from being sued. He then described a number of different types of insurance that he considered essential for a freelance writer including:

1. Professional Liability Insurance (Errors and Omissions) which covers claims of negligence, inaccuracies, and copyright infringement.

2. General Liability Insurance which covers bodily injury, and property damage. While this is not essential for home-based writers it should be considered for parties who host in person meetings and use co-working spaces. It can be useful to bundle with the policy described above.

3. Cyber Liability Insurance is a new essential; this covers data breaches, ransom ware, accidental HIPPA exposure and bank fraud, many of which are becoming quite common in this age of sophisticated hacking and scamming. Dave mentioned that currently around 53% of small businesses had cyber insurance. He recommends it to all of his clients and considers that it is becoming essential.

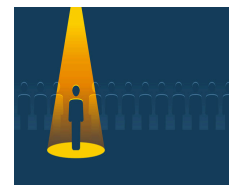
4. Health and Disability Insurance (Personal Coverage). This insurance can sometimes be obtained through the Affordable Care Act, Spousal Insurance, or some freelancer groups (who band together to support a group plan). Disability is an important safety net to protect your income in the event you are unable to work.

Dave also pointed out some insurance that may not be essential to the average freelance writer – such as Workers Compensation Insurance, Commercial Automobile Insurance, a Business Owners Policy, and Product Liability Insurance

It is possible to purchase insurance bundles from several organizations that provide generalized commercial business Insurance packages. While these may be attractive and convenient, it is not always clear exactly what is included in each package. Stories were shared of people who thought they were insured but actually were not covered fully when they read the small print. This can be catastrophic to a small business. An advantage of working with a local insurance agent is that they don't just treat you as a generic small business, but can take a closer look at the way you work, tailor to what you need, then read, understand and clarify exactly what your coverage means.

Dave did an excellent job summarizing both the need for and the nature of business insurance. We are fortunate to have had the benefit of his expertise and he

recommended that attendees contact him with individual questions about their insurance needs.



Spotlight - Someone You Should Know

Conducted & written by Diane Brooks, MMS, PA-C

I recently had the pleasure of speaking with our chapter Freelance Chair, Sharon Rogers, PhD, ELS, about her 30+ year career as a successful medical writer. Interestingly, Sharon is a former high school Biology & Chemistry teacher who later received her master's degree in Plant Physiology and her PhD in Molecular Biology. Sharon is a freelance regulatory and publication writer and scientist who has her own company, Core Content Network (www.corecontentnetwork.com).



DB: How did you get your start as a medical writer?

SR: I had extensive experience writing two theses, grants and manuscripts by the time I transitioned to medical writing in addition to lab reports and papers and so was familiar with scientific terminology. I began working at a start up company as a scientist and (by happenstance) learned about the field of medical writing. I later began working as a consultant doing regulatory writing, publications, and CVs for physicians.

DB: What do you like most about freelancing?

SR: I like the variety of projects that come across my plate. I like getting out of my comfort zone - having to figure things out.

DB: What do you find most frustrating about freelancing?

SR: Scheduling. Clients often don't let you know their needs in advance & then have a deadline. It's hard to schedule, particularly when you're working on other projects, so you're not working 12 hour days and then not at all. I have found I have to figure out what's driving the schedule to determine whether it's negotiable.

DB: What advice do you have for someone transitioning from regulatory writing to freelancing?

SR: There is a great need for regulatory writers (for hard . Start working with an agency to find work for you and branch out. I would also contact Clinical Research Organizations. Contact people you worked with. Be very active on LinkedIn.

DB: What advice do you have for someone looking to transition to the field of medical writing?

SR: Know why you want to be a medical writer. Start writing. Join AMWA & volunteer for any writing projects. Become an expert user of Microsoft Word. Keep trying.

Writer's Corner



Advancing Medical Writing: Driving Efficiency and Impact through Lean Authoring

Written by Urvashi Bhatia, PhD

Medical writers often face the demanding task of synthesizing large volumes of data while incorporating input from multiple stakeholders into a clear, cohesive document. Findings from an AMWA survey exploring perspectives from health authorities and regulatory agencies revealed that document quality is a frequent concern. Nearly 40% of respondents reported encountering issues that hinder effective review, and half indicated that poorly written documents can delay approval timelines. Common challenges include excessive length, repetition, lack of clarity, and overly verbose language. These issues highlight the critical role medical writers play in shaping documents that are both informative and accessible. By prioritizing clarity and brevity, writers can significantly improve the efficiency and impact of the document

development process. Lean authoring offers a practical framework to address these challenges.

Lean Authoring as the Solution

Lean authoring is a strategic writing approach focused on delivering clear, concise, and purposeful content. As defined by medical writer Kim Jockman, PhD, RAC, lean authoring centers on removing superfluous language so documents are focused on what matters most.

Lean Authoring Strategies

To produce documents that communicate effectively and efficiently, medical writers can apply the following lean authoring strategies:

Precision

Key messages should be accurate, clearly interpreted, and directly relevant. Understanding the audience is essential—whether regulatory reviewers, healthcare professionals, patients, or academic readers—as their needs, priorities and background knowledge will shape how information should be presented.

Conciseness and Reduction of Redundancy

To say more with less, use simple, direct language and eliminate unnecessary words or repeated ideas. Consider whether each word adds value. Cross-referencing within and across documents can reduce duplication, especially in digital formats. Furthermore, data interpretation statements can be more strongly supported by strategically selecting and mentioning only key data points.

Consistency

Maintaining a consistent structure, terminology, and tone improves readability and comprehension. Establishing conventions—such as standardized phrasing or

formatting—ensures a unified voice across documents, even when multiple authors are involved. Maintaining a consistent order such as presenting the treatment followed by placebo-enables the reader to follow the writing more easily.

Effective Presentation

Purposeful formatting enhances readability. Breaking dense text into headings, bullet points, or tables helps readers quickly identify and absorb key information, reducing cognitive overload.

Benefits of Lean Authoring

Lean authoring aims to keep readers engaged while clearly communicating essential information. By focusing on key messages, it prevents important insights from being obscured by unnecessary detail. This approach can therefore streamline review, quality control, and publication processes—an especially important advantage in regulatory contexts where timelines are often tight.

Reducing redundancy also minimizes the risk of inconsistencies, thereby improving overall document quality.

Additionally, well-structured and concise documents support more efficient collaboration, enabling subject matter experts to review content thoroughly and within required timelines.

Conclusion

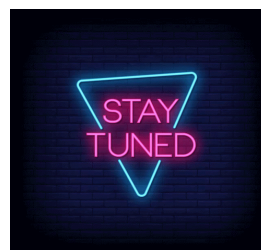
Although adoption has been gradual, lean authoring is becoming increasingly important as the demand for clear, focused, and interpretive content grows. The emergence of AI-supported writing tools further supports this shift, positioning lean authoring as more than a stylistic choice—it is becoming an operational imperative.

Medical writers are uniquely positioned to lead this transformation by accurately interpreting data, emphasizing key messages and applying strategic cross-referencing

using lean writing principles. For deeper insights and practical examples, resources such as AMWA's Regulatory Writing Core Knowledge course provides valuable guidance.

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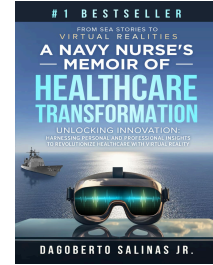


Stay Tuned...

Mentorship Program

Stay tuned for our AMWA-GCAC pilot mentorship program headed by our President-elect, Christine Weisshaar, MS. This 10-week pilot will launch this fall. It will start small with a group of 4 (2 mentors & 2 mentees). Mentors & mentees will be matched based on need & interests with pairs meeting every other week for a total of 5 meetings. Look out for an intake survey in your email inbox!

Join Us!



Our next virtual book club will be April 23rd at 12 noon. Our discussion of *A Navy Nurse's Memoir of Healthcare Transformation* will be facilitated by the author, Commander Dagoberto Salinas, a distinguished healthcare leader.

<https://gcac-amwa.org/>

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The bottom right corner of the page features a decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping geometric shapes in shades of pink and red, creating a modern, abstract design.

