

Medical Writing Agency A Way Forward to Cost-effective Outsourcing

A Medical writing agency that offers cost-effective and high-quality services is greatly preferred by pharmaceutical companies. A well-managed medical writing outsourcing initiative i.e., getting economical services with high-quality standards can bring pharmaceutical companies productivity savings.

Overall, more than 70% of medical writing is outsourced globally.¹ Demand for medical writing will continue to grow as long as there is a need to develop and market drugs for the patient's wellbeing. The pharmaceutical companies meet their medical writing requirements either by setting up in-house medical writing departments or by outsourcing. Currently, there are several medical writing business-operating models with each having its own share of pros and cons.

One of the models is where pharmaceutical companies typically have in-house writing teams integrated with medical or regulatory affairs departments. The advantage here is that the writers work very closely with the authors or scientific teams and are privy to the company's product strategy. Thus, the writers are better placed to support the stakeholders by putting the scientific messages or data into the right context. The downside is that it involves huge fixed costs and hits the bottom line. Consequently, fewer global giant pharma companies can afford and operate on this model.

Few pharma companies follow a hybrid model, i.e., insourcing medical writing services from a low-cost location to internal regulatory or medical affairs teams that are based at global locations. The advantage is that being an integral part of the company's strategy, medical writers can provide support in a cost-effective manner to internal teams. Furthermore, this model requires setting up teams at a remote location and involves a long-term investment both in terms of fixed costs and the efforts required in building teams.

A large portion of global medical writing is outsourced to medical writing agencies due to cost pressures on pharma companies. Some of the contract research organizations or medical writing agencies follow a service delivery model where they provide medical writing services to different pharma/healthcare companies and are generally not an integral part of the client organization. While some agencies work on the dedicated resourcing model where agency medical writers are year marked to the client's account. This enables a long-term, strategic partnership with contractors, thereby, providing an integrated approach that aligns with the company's data workflow and strategy. Consequently, the writers are better positioned to deliver as per the client's expectations.²

Moreover, both these outsourcing models allow pharmaceutical companies to procure need-based services avoiding the huge fixed cost and staff maintenance—making it cost-effective and easy to manage.

Outsourcing to a medical writing agency is the way forward for most pharmaceutical companies. To manage their budgets effectively, they are often on the lookout for cost-effective service providers. One such choice could be medical communications agencies operating from a low-cost location and having low operational costs. This empowers them to provide cost-effective services to their clients.



A Way Forward to Cost-effective Outsourcing

Reference

1. Stevenson C, Kuppam H. Outsourcing medical writing to India and other low cost regions? Insights and strategies for improving quality and cost benefits. 2014 [Accessed on 8 Feb 2019]. Available at: <https://www.beroeinc.com/whitepaperviewer/outsourcing-medical-writing/>.
2. Rajeev P, Makhija M. Awareness of medical writing as a profession and its career prospects. EMWA Journal 2018;27(4):46-51.

Enago Life Sciences is a leading global medical communications partner to healthcare and biopharmaceutical companies, offering a full range of services supporting brand strategies, through development phases to commercialization. Our global team of experts has extensive knowledge and unsurpassed experience in a broad range of therapeutic areas. We focus our innovation on factors critical to our clients - reducing time to market, reducing costs, and improving quality. Centralized operations from India enable us to provide cost per service that is lower than the market average. This allows the clients to maximize savings and do more with less budget. Our collaborative, knowledgeable, and competent global team ease your burden by ensuring the timely delivery of high quality, cost-effective services, and help you save time, money, and effort.

Medical Communications Agency

A World of Exciting Career Opportunities for Medical Writers

Medical Communications agency is an attractive place to work for medical writers—where every day is different and brings new experiences and opportunities to continually learn and challenge oneself. There are ample opportunities to grow into functional and/or operational roles making it a lifelong career in the medical communications field.

The key ingredients that go into the making of a good professional medical writer are flair for writing, a clear understanding of medical science, command over the language, identification of target audience, attention to detail, good analytical skills, stakeholder management, working on tight deadlines and team skills.¹ Graduates and postgraduates in Life Sciences/Medicine who have the right skills and aptitude make a good fit as professional medical writers. Those in core scientific roles benefit with a PhD, but it is not mandatory to grow in the medical writing field. Most of the professional medical writers work within the pharmaceutical industry, medical communication agencies, contract research organizations, knowledge process outsourcing companies, or independently as freelancers. There are other settings as well, where they are employed, such as media and publishing companies, medical journals, academic medical institutions, medical/scientific societies, healthcare websites, news organizations, and government organizations.²

The medical communications agency comprises a variety of roles that sets multiple growth options for medical writers to grow in functional and operational roles. In the functional role, writers are part of the core scientific team and focus on quality content development. While in the operational roles, one can choose to get into team management or client facing roles and perform client services. There are also opportunities to make a lateral move across functional and operational domains, making it a lifetime fulfilling career.¹ In a medical communications agency, the functional growth avenues span from entry level as a junior writer designated as Associate Medical Writer/Scientific Writer/Publication Writer and can grow vertically into a functional role as a Senior Writer → Expert Writer → Principal Writer level. Other opportunities in the functional domain are editorial roles such as Copy Editor, Scientific Editor, Quality Lead, and Subject Matter Expert roles such as Medical Lead/Scientific Lead/Publication Lead → Communications Strategy Director or as a Medical Director.

In a large sized medical communications agency, there are equally good opportunities in the operational domain. One can enter a people management role as a Team Lead and grow up vertically with increasing people management responsibilities as a Group Lead → Function Head → Practice Head level. If the thought of people management does not appeal, an aspect commonly associated with medical writers, there are other avenues to grow in the operational domain as an individual contributor. These are client-facing roles with different titles mostly with overlapping responsibilities:

- Project Specialist → Project Managers/Event Manager/Event Lead
- Medical Communications Lead/Publications Manager/Service Manager → Service Liaison
- Account Manager → Account Director
- Operations Manager → Operations Director

Medical writer's skills are transferable and based on one's choice and aptitude, one can grow in the functional and/or operational domain.



Exciting Career Opportunities for Medical Writers

Reference

1. Rajeev P, Makhija M. Awareness of medical writing as a profession and its career prospects. EMWA Journal 2018;27(4):46-51.
2. Sharma S. How to become a competent medical writer? Perspect Clin Res 2010;1(1):33-7.

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The Art of Manuscript Writing

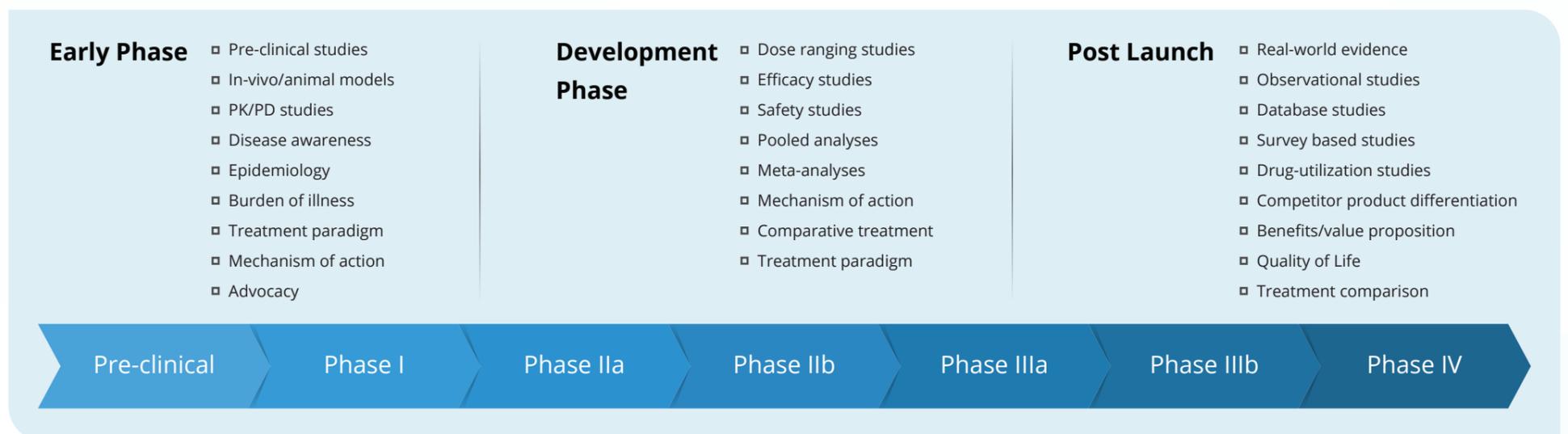
“If anyone wishes to write a clear style, let them be clear in their thoughts” Johann Wolfgang van Goethe

Manuscript writing is the art of presenting complex and huge scientific data in a simple, concise, and presentable story format. Development of a scientific manuscript requires profound knowledge across therapy areas and expertise in presenting complex data as a short, simple, and succinct story. It requires an understanding of the target journals and publication guidelines.

Scientific publications aid in disseminating clinical data to the scientific community and maintain transparency of the research outcome. Publication of manuscripts in scientific journals generates peer-reviewed, citable references. Whereas, presentation of abstracts, posters, oral presentations at scientific congresses ensures availability of data in the public domain much ahead of the peer-reviewed publication. Amongst scientific publications, the manuscript is a more descriptive way of presenting research to the external world. The key objective of communication through a manuscript is to present facts based on scientific data and research, by following the Good Publication Practice (GPP3) guidelines that ensures data integrity and publication ethics.

The publication plan for a drug is developed based on the development stage of the molecule, gaps identified in the literature, brand strategic imperatives and messaging the target audience. There are different types of scientific manuscripts developed to communicate data during the drug development phases as well as later in the life-cycle management (Figure 1). Manuscripts developed at the early phase of drug development covers preclinical, PK-PD studies, and topics related to the mechanism of action, disease awareness, advocacy etc. Through Phase I-III clinical trials, primary or secondary manuscripts focusing on dose regimen/efficacy/safety objectives of a clinical study, pooled analysis, treatment comparisons etc. are developed. In the late phase IV and product life-cycle management; manuscripts on real-world evidence, surveys, observational studies, health economics, competitor product differentiation, treatment paradigm, etc., are developed.

Figure 1. Manuscript planning through drug life-cycle



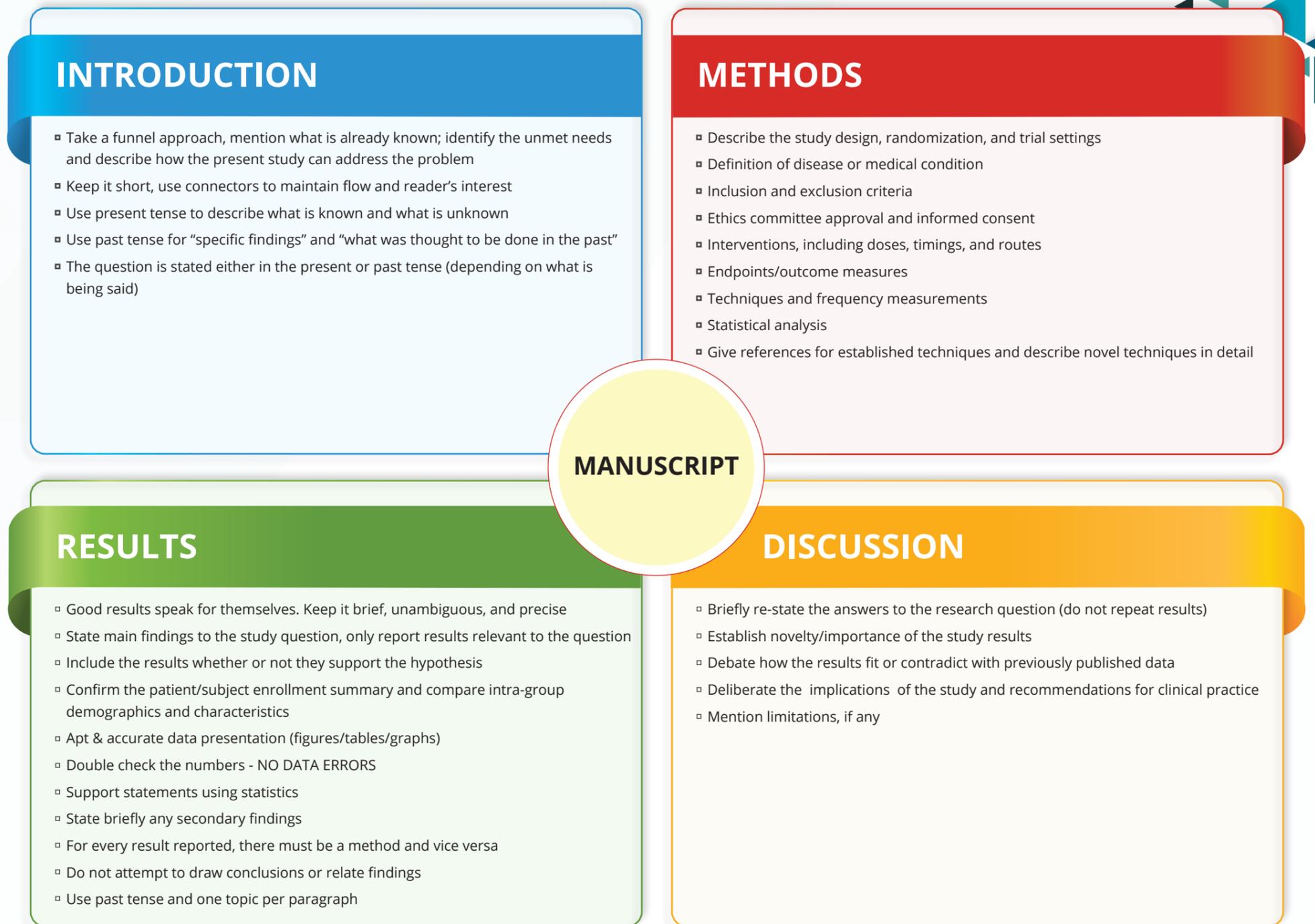
Manuscript writing is the art to present complex scientific data in a story format. To develop a good manuscript, the medical writer should have a flair for writing, therapeutic area expertise, understanding of clinical trials and drug development process, and project management skills. Here, we discuss the tips to develop a manuscript focusing on clinical research.

Tips to develop a manuscript:

- ▣ As you get started with manuscript writing, first things first get familiarized with the topic, **read, read and read...**
- ▣ If you are a medical writer writing a manuscript for authors, do some groundwork on the topic, go **well-prepared for the kick-off call** and ask relevant questions pertaining to the manuscript development. Gather all the other information related to the source material, target audience, probable key messages, journals, timelines, authorship, affiliations, disclosures, conflict of interest, acknowledgments, review, and signoff process etc.
- ▣ Familiarize yourself with the data and identify gaps, if any. Perform extensive **literature search** and extract relevant information to supplement the data.
- ▣ As you assimilate information to develop a story **outline/skeleton** around objectives and key messages, follow a logical structure.
- ▣ **Full manuscript** should have a story with a clear message based on a logical sequence of thoughts supported by text, tables, figures, and references.
- ▣ Manuscript writing broadly follows the **IMRAD** (Introduction, Methods, Results, And Discussion) structure (Figure 2). The story must be woven in the context of established literature (**Introduction**), unmet needs and the research question (**Objectives**), procedures performed (**Methods**), the research outcome, (**Results**) and the research outcome implications (**Discussion**). Ensure uniform flow of objectives and associated parameters throughout different sections methods, results, and discussion. A small paragraph concluding the research outcome can also be added towards the end.

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Figure 2: Tips to develop IMRAD structure



Follow the 3 C's of writing

1. Content:

- Convey the research in a story format
- Write in a direct, simple, and clear style
- Follow the editing style guide for consistent formatting. Use consistent **language US/UK** based on the target journal/audience
- Ensure consistent use of scientific terminologies/ definition/messaging. Follow the **scientific/brand lexicon**, if any

2. Clarity:

- Correct usage of words, grammar, and punctuation
- Concise, accurate, and precise sentences
- Coherent - organization of ideas in a proper flow

3. Compliance:

- Acknowledgment - the role of author vs. writer
- Disclosures
- Conflict of interest

- Figures and Tables** (max 6–8) should be self-explanatory as a standalone image/table and follow the same sequence as mentioned in the text. Use brief, informative legends, titles, and footnotes. Ensure consistent abbreviations, variables, units, symbols, and colors as per journal specifications.
- References** should be styled consistently as per journal guidelines, use latest references wherever possible.
- Perform **plagiarism and copyright check**.
- Follow **journal guidelines** - instructions to the authors, and format the manuscript as per journal specifications.
- Follow standard reporting guidelines for the study type e.g., **CONSORT checklist** for randomized trials. Refer the [EQUATOR](#) network to access the relevant checklists.
- Review** your work thoroughly, once done revisit it with a fresh mind the next day, it will definitely help you improve your manuscript. Get it reviewed by a peer or a friend, who can spot gaps and make it better.
- Perform a mock journal submission and prepare your **checklist** for the journal submission package.

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Scientific Posters: An Effective Way of Presenting Research

Medical communications services encompass publications development, medical education/medico-marketing material, and event content development/management for a healthcare product or research. Scientific publications (manuscripts, abstracts, posters, and oral presentations) aid in disseminating clinical therapeutic area data to the scientific world and maintain transparency of the research outcome and interest in a medical brand. Publication of manuscript in the scientific journal generates peer-reviewed citable references. Whereas, presentation of the abstract, poster and oral presentation at scientific conferences (also known as congress) ensures research data are available in the public domain much ahead of the peer-reviewed publication.

Medical communications services usually include standalone or end-to-end conference support; starting from an abstract, poster/oral presentation, medical booth content, symposia slides, pre-and post-congress slide decks. Of these, posters services are a unique form of scientific communication; it is a combination of information and graphics. Generally, a poster service (print/electronic) includes content development, layout design, QR code, printing, and shipping to the designated venue (optional). Encore posters requiring only layout creation are also supported as a service.

Scientific Posters

The scientific poster presentation is a popular method of presenting research findings succinctly at meetings and conferences. Posters are a hybrid form of an oral presentation and a manuscript; it is more detailed and interactive than an oral presentation but less than a manuscript. Poster development includes two major elements, content and layout development. Content development requires expertise in presenting complex data into a succinct and simple form. The content is developed by experienced professional medical writers with profound scientific knowledge on the topic and writing skills. Poster layout is developed by graphic designers; they work closely with medical writers and ensure the scientific story is presented in a visual format as per the conference guidelines.

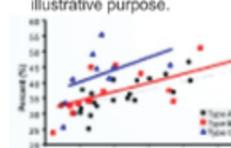
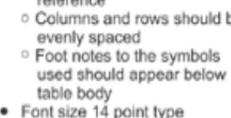
A good poster conveys the research as a simple, clear story in the form of bulleted text and images/ diagrams. The "W's" (who, what, when, where, why) are an effective way to organize the elements of a poster.¹ The content of the poster should interest the audience and provide them with a clear take-home message that they can grasp in the few minutes they spend near the poster. Create the title, charts, and the text to emphasize the key message. The poster starts with a title, aim, background, methods, results, and concludes with the summary of findings and their implications for research. The best poster is a perfect mix of content, color, figures, font, and layout (Figure). In our next article, "Most Effective Tips When Presenting Your Scientific Poster", we will share the prerequisites and tips on how to develop a good presentable poster.

Poster illustration: An effective poster with relevant and focused content under various headings

Scientific Poster Template

Title (40 point type): informative, short, mention of the study design and findings

Add author names and information; the list and sequence of authors remains unchanged from the abstract to poster
Include university or department names if needed (24 point type); the superscript number denotes each author's affiliation

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Reference

1. Jane E Miller. Preparing and Presenting Effective Research Posters. Health Serv Res. 2007 Feb; 42(1 Pt 1): 311–328.

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Most Effective Tips When Presenting Your Scientific Poster

In our previous article, we discussed the salient features of a good poster. This article focuses on the prerequisites and tips on developing a poster/e-poster.

A poster is a combination of information and graphics. Medical communications services have evolved along with technology to provide options such as the QR (Quick Response) code, interactive electronic posters (e-posters) and handouts, which aid in increasing the dissemination of research to a larger audience with speed and ease of use. The e-posters are similar to traditional paper posters, but displayed on-site on a large LCD television screen and are available for electronic viewing at all times for participants. A mobile device with a camera and QR code reader App can easily scan QR codes and directs to a website where a copy of the poster can be downloaded. Poster A3 handouts are sometimes prepared as a take-home message for the delegates. Sometimes conferences ask the presenter to give a mini-slideshow (2-3 slides) on the poster, check for the requirement, and plan accordingly.

Tips for poster content and sequence

In general, the poster content is arranged under the following headings

- **Title:** Informative, short, and has a mention of the study design and findings
- **Background:** A short paragraph on the importance of the topic and any previous studies done on similar lines
- **Objectives:** Bulleted list of two to three research questions
- **Data and Methods:** Data source, study design, duration of the study sample size, patient population, methodology, statistical analysis-primary and secondary variables
- **Results:** Findings presented in the form of table/figures, highlights of key findings, bulleted text relating findings to initial aim and hypotheses, study strengths and limitations
- **Conclusion:** Summary of findings, implications for research and directions for future research

Table: Tips for preparing and presenting an effective research poster

General prerequisites	Content tips	Layout tips
<p>First thing first - check for following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poster timelines, poster mounting/upload schedule, and logistics— build timeliness accordingly • Poster type and conference guidelines - Print or e-poster • Poster and board size and orientation of the poster (portrait/landscape) • Source material • Order of authors and affiliations (same as abstract) • Conflict of interest disclosures and funding/sponsorship information • Acknowledgments • QR code requirements • NCT number, if applicable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapt content as per the target audience - follow the language consistently (US or UK) • Abstract at the top right-hand corner (optional) and if specified by conference • Informative title at the top • Simple, bulleted points that develop the interest of the viewers • Maintain a good balance of text and tables/images. Content depends on the poster size: Ideally content <800 words with figures and tables (max 4-6). • Replace large tables with charts • Conclusion: Key message - focus on two or three key points. Mention limitation of the study, if any • References abbreviated— Max 2 or 3 (follow consistent style) • No use of brand names 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the guidelines and check the poster size specifications • Font size and style which is easy to read and understand from a distance • Orientation either landscape or portrait as per the conference specification • Divide the material into vertical sections on the poster • Tables and figures should ideally cover approximately 50% of the poster area • Avoid cluttered text and white spaces • Avoid vibrant, pale, and multiple colors. Check for brand/company color or template, if applicable • Check the specifications of e-poster; if required by the congress • Sponsorship and meeting details as a footnote. Poster number on the top right corner
<p>Once the poster is final, proofread it thoroughly from consistency point (font, spacing, abbreviations, etc.) If there are multiple posters for a brand, check for message alignment and consistency across posters.</p>		
<p>e-Posters – points to remember</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the content based on conference guidelines • Follow the specifications for the file type (slide deck, PDF or JPG) and size • E-posters to be uploaded one week before the conference • Colors in the e-poster should match the color of the final paper poster 		

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Project managers in Medical writing: the silent heroes

"Operations keep the lights on, strategy provides the light at the end of the tunnel, but project management is the train engine that moves the organization forward" - Joy Gumz.

A typical medical writing agency consists of scientific and client servicing teams. The scientific team comprises medical writers, subject matter experts, quality assurance, editorial, and creative designing staff who primarily focus on content development. Whereas, the client servicing team includes project managers/account managers who liaise with clients and scientific teams.

Medical Writing Services and Project Management

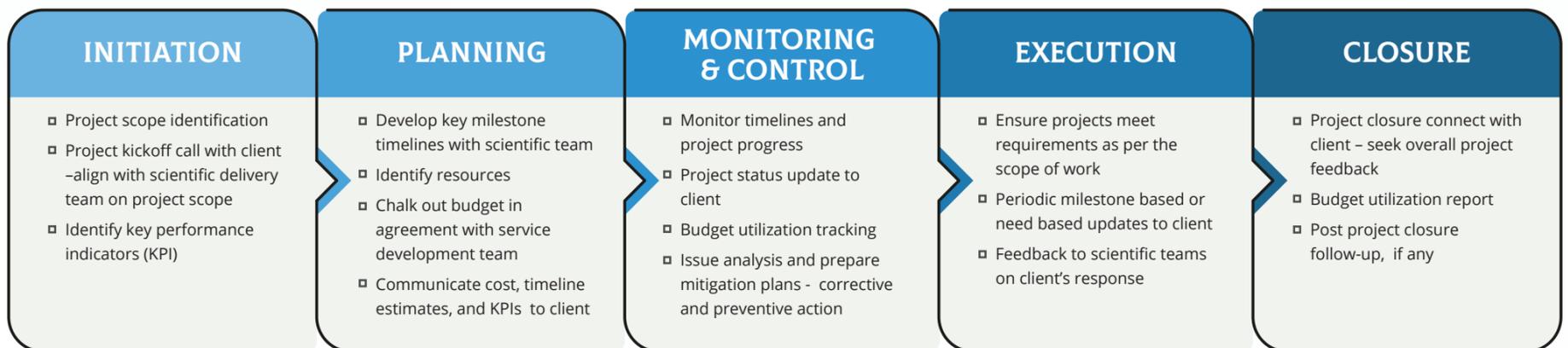
Medical writing services are strictly timeline bound and include both short and long turn-around projects. Medical writing services like abstract submission (late breakers) to a congress; daily congress newsletters; or a publication alert are to be turned around quickly in timelines ranging from a day to a week. Whereas, medical writing services like, content development for a manuscript; submitting a clinical study report to regulators; or organizing an ad-board/symposia, run over months to a year. Project management is crucial to the success of timely submissions of regulatory documents, publications, or event management. Each project involving all such internal and external stakeholders is an orchestra of activities that need to be well planned, executed, tracked, and coordinated by a project manager.

The Role of Project Managers

Medical writers play an important role in scientific content development. They multitask and work closely with multiple stakeholders (scientists, medical teams, authors etc.) to communicate the research outcomes and healthcare product information to the target audience. They are often overwhelmed with these activities and do not have the bandwidth for project management activities which are critical to delivery. That is where the project managers come in to the picture and play a key role in supporting medical writers from conception to completion. They ease out the medical writers' burden, so that writers can focus on value added content, creative thinking, and developing quality documents. The project managers act as an interface between the clients and the core scientific writing team, hence are an integral part of the service team. They are also responsible for leading and managing designated accounts, tracking multiple projects - big and small. Project management involves developing a strong client relationship while delivering high-quality projects and also ensuring overall client satisfaction. Those involved in events management coordinate production of material to promote events, sourcing venues, program development, and vendor management. ¹

A Typical Project Management Workflow

For successful service delivery, a project manager implements the five step process as defined by the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK). The workflow is representative of, but not limited to the project manager's activities.



Project Manager - Skills and Career Growth

The project manager plays a crucial role in effectively and efficiently managing project execution by liaising between teams. Successful project management is a combination of majorly soft skills which are complemented by the technical know-how to a certain extent:

- Soft skills:**
- Communications - excellent oral and writing skills
 - Collaboration
 - Managing multiple stakeholders - working in a matrix environment
 - Interpersonal relationship - negotiation and influencing abilities
 - Analytical and decision making
 - Time management
 - Conflict management

- Technical know-how:**
- Medical writing domain awareness including services/products knowledge, standard operating procedures; process maps; publications/organization's internal tools; and high-level business operations.
 - Hands on experience in Excel, PowerPoint, and project management tools

The starting career point into project management could be a junior role as a Project Specialist. They can eventually grow in different directions depending on their skillset and interest.

- Those interested in core project management can grow as a Project Manager/Event Manager/Event Lead
- Those inclined towards science, the growth path could be, Medical Communications Lead / Publications Manager / Service Manager → Service Liaison
- Those interested in accounts can progress as Account Manager → Account Director
- Those interested in business operations can choose to become an Operations Manager → Operations Director.

Reference: 1. Moon A. From academic to medical writer. 2016. Available at <http://medcommsnetworking.com/careersguide.pdf>. Accessed on Feb 1, 2019.

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Medical Communications Agency Your Knowledge Partner

Medical communication agencies are integral to pharmaceutical companies and play an important role in driving communications plan. They support all aspects of multi-channel communications from strategic support to meeting management, and publication planning. As knowledge partners, they provide scientific, strategic, and tactical expertise across the product life-cycle and help pharmaceutical companies raise awareness of a drug or a disease area in different forms of communications.

Pharmaceutical or healthcare companies meet their medical writing requirements by setting up in-house medical writing departments or by outsourcing the work to a medical communications agency. The primary function of a medical communications agency is to develop scientific, regulatory, and educational/training material to raise awareness and educate healthcare professionals about new research and innovations in medicine. A typical medical communications agency works together with pharmaceutical clients to achieve their communication goals. In recent times, there has been an increase in demand for medical writing. To fit the needs of pharmaceutical companies, medical communications agencies have evolved from being a service provider to consultancy services and business-partnering model.

There are different types of medical communications agencies, some concentrate on publications and medical education often called MedComms. Some agencies offer a full range of consultancies such as medical education, public relations, market research, and advertising, while others focus on niche areas.¹ Medical communications agencies play an important role in communicating drug-related information throughout the drug development and life-cycle management phases. They provide medical writing support, managing queries around the drug product; internal communications to client's brand/medical teams, publication management, event management, and brand messaging through integrated solutions. Medical communications agencies not only develop the required deliverables but are also involved in providing strategic inputs, guidance, proper planning, and execution of projects.

Key attributes that make a medical communications agency a preferred choice for pharma/healthcare companies are:

- Understanding client needs and adapting to the client's style of work
- Driving projects with efficient planning and execution
- Ensuring quality and compliance standards
- Responsiveness and leaving an overall positive and memorable impression

To meet the global pharmaceutical client's expectations, a medical communications agency should maintain a highly qualified staff with an ability to work across therapeutic areas and those who are well trained on relevant industry regulations, guidelines, and compliance requirements. Most

importantly, agencies must keep a customer-centric approach ensuring customer engagement by collaborating with them. Experience to work in a global setting is an advantage. A typical medical communications agencies core team consists of scientific and client service teams. The scientific team comprises medical writers, subject matter experts, quality assurance, editorial, and creative designing staff who primarily focus on content development. Whereas, the client service team includes project managers/account managers who liaise with clients and scientific teams ensuring timely delivery as per the client's budgets.

Reference

1. Moon A. From academic to medical writer. 2016. Available at <http://medcommsnetworking.com/careersguide.pdf>. Accessed on Feb 1, 2019.



Enago Life Sciences is a leading global medical communications partner to healthcare and biopharmaceutical companies, offering a full range of services supporting brand strategies through development phases to commercialization. Whether it is an early development product with a potential market launch or a mature brand relaunch demanding a robust publication plan; peer-reviewed publications; medical educational material, or digital graphic design, we have the expertise to meet all your needs. Our global team of experts has extensive knowledge and unsurpassed experience in a broad range of therapeutic areas. We focus our innovation on factors critical to our clients – reducing time to market, reducing costs, and improving quality.