

Title: Stronger Together: Medical Affairs and Publications in Strategic Collaboration to Achieve Patient-Centricity Goals

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Patient-Centric Communications Are More Important Than Ever Before

In today's evolving healthcare landscape, patient centricity is a foundational imperative. As patients increasingly become active participants in their own care, the way that scientific evidence is communicated must evolve to meet the needs of this critical stakeholder group. Traditional methods for dissemination of clinical data and real-world evidence, while rigorous and comprehensive, often fall short in accessibility, health literacy, and engagement. Dense language, medical jargon, complex graphs, and academic formats can create barriers that exclude the very individuals the data are ultimately meant to benefit. To close this gap, communications leaders across pharma and biotech must reimagine communication strategies that are not only scientifically robust, but also inclusive, understandable, and aligned with what matters most to patients.

Medical Affairs Professionals Are Poised to Lead on Patient Centricity Goals

Medical Affairs professionals are uniquely qualified to champion patient centricity in their organizations. Positioned at the intersection of clinical expertise, strategic insight, and stakeholder engagement, they play a central role in shaping how evidence is communicated across audiences, from internal teams to external experts and, increasingly, to patients themselves. As trusted advisors, they bring scientific fluency, a deep understanding of unmet needs, and the ability to translate complex data into meaningful insights. Their cross-functional vantage point spanning publications, medical information, field teams, and patient advocacy equips them to embed the patient perspective early and effectively into their strategic plans. Additionally, the inclusion of Patient Centricity as one of the Focus Area Working Groups underscores its importance to the Medical Affairs Professional Society (MAPS). This combination of expertise and influence makes Medical Affairs a natural leader in advancing communication strategies that are not only scientifically sound, but also accessible and relevant to all.

Publications Leaders Are Key Partners in the Advancement of Patient Centricity

To realize the full potential of patient-centric scientific communications, Medical Affairs must work hand-in-hand with cross-functional partners. Specifically, Publications/Scientific Communications teams are empowered to broaden the reach and relevance of clinical evidence by integrating into their publication plans tools designed specifically for patient engagement. These include plain language summaries (PLS), which are defined as concise, accessible synopses of peer-reviewed scientific/medical research

presented in a way that is understandable and meaningful to broad audiences, including nonspecialist healthcare professionals, patients, and other lay readers. The goal of PLSs is to improve understanding of the implications of research results and new data, and they are often presented as text-based summaries, visual infographics, videos, or podcasts. Emerging publications formats, such as podcast manuscripts, offer new ways to bring science and patient journeys to life for nonexpert audiences in credible yet inclusive ways.

A critical element of impactful patient centricity is the collaborative development of a patient lexicon. For this, Medical Affairs and Publications teams collaborate with patients to co-create a shared language that is clear, understandable, scientifically accurate, and reflective of the patient experience. This partnership ensures terminology and explanations resonate authentically, improving comprehension, engagement, and trust.

Effective patient centricity also requires thoughtful execution and careful consideration of nuanced aspects of the publications process to be successful. For example, the selection of journals that ensure open access to peer-reviewed manuscripts (and their derivative PLSs) helps remove financial and technical barriers for patient audiences to access relevant content. Similarly, purposeful posting of plain-language content in ways that are openly available in patient education sections of corporate platforms—without requiring log-ins or user role validation—significantly improves the accessibility of the content for patients and their caregivers. Leveraging digital platforms and AI-driven personalization can also help tailor plain-language content to individual patient literacy levels, language preferences, and areas of interest. This approach not only

expands the reach of scientific communications, but also enables scalable engagement across patient communities, fostering feedback and dynamic content improvement.

Partnering with Publications teams to optimize the patient voice

Early collaboration between Medical Affairs and Publications teams is key to aligning on patient-centric objectives **(Figure)**, from shaping study narratives to prioritizing outcomes that matter most to patients. With respect to real-world evidence, which often resonates more directly with patient needs, engaging patients in the study design phase as well as in publications workflows can enhance relevance and trust by ensuring patient-relevant outcomes are measured. The strategic use of storytelling—both narrative and visual—is another powerful tool to ensure content is not only informative but also engaging and emotionally resonant. By using techniques such as narrative storytelling, data visualization, and patient-centered metaphors, Medical Affairs and Publications teams can create materials that speak with the right “voice” and emotional tone, making scientific content more relatable and memorable for patients. Publications teams are increasingly involving patients as coauthors, steering committee members, and advisors to enhance the authenticity of patient-focused content and ensure that scientific narratives reflect lived experience. Meaningful participation of patient contributors requires support and mentoring to help them navigate the complexities of the publications process. Ensuring patient representation at scientific congresses, including addressing access, cost, and logistical challenges, further embeds the patient voice across the entire evidence-dissemination pathway. Dissemination efforts are also strengthened through partnerships with patient advocacy groups, which offer trusted, targeted pathways to reach engaged

communities with patient-centric versions of scientific content. Ultimately, measuring the impact of patient-centric communication strategies—whether through reach, engagement, or comprehension—is most effective when Medical Affairs and Publications teams collaborate closely from the outset.

Call to Action: Leading the Drive Toward Patient-Centric Scientific Communications

Medical Affairs professionals have both the opportunity and the responsibility to lead transformation in how scientific evidence is communicated with patients, not just about them. By proactively partnering with Publications teams, they can embed patient perspectives from the earliest stages of planning through to dissemination. This includes advocating for the inclusion of meaningful endpoints, employing narrative and visual storytelling to humanize scientific content, ensuring accessibility through plain language and open-access formats, and enabling direct patient involvement as content cocreators. By collaborating from the outset, Medical Affairs and Publications teams can harness digital analytics and feedback to generate metrics that go beyond traditional publication impact. These patient-centered insights allow for iterative refinement, ensuring communications are not only widely disseminated but also genuinely understood and valued by their intended audiences, leading to measurable improvements in engagement, comprehension, and patient empowerment data. This transformative approach directly contributes to improved health literacy across the population, fostering better treatment adherence, informed decision-making, and ultimately, enhanced patient outcomes.

Medical Affairs is uniquely equipped to drive this shift, leveraging its strategic position, scientific fluency, and cross-functional influence. Now is the time to champion a more inclusive, impactful approach to evidence communication—one that aligns with the real needs and experiences of patients, and in doing so, elevates the value and relevance of Medical Affairs itself.

Figure Legend

Figure. Early collaboration between Medical Affairs and publications teams is key to aligning on patient-centric objectives.

