

SALES TRAINING AND BEYOND: DEVELOPING EDUCATIONAL CONTENT ACROSS THE PHARMA/ BIOTECH LANDSCAPE

Speakers

Gail V. Flores, PhD, *Medical Writer, Encore Biomedical Communications LLC, Encinitas, CA*

Lauren Mays Weddle, PhD, *Learning Strategist and Senior Medical Director, Curtis Learning LLC, Philadelphia, PA*

Julie Munden, BA, *Director of Editorial Services, Curtis Learning LLC, Philadelphia, PA*

By Kavita Garg, MPharm

Gail V. Flores, Lauren Mays Weddle, and Julie Munden, speakers at the 2021 American Medical Writers Association (AMWA) Medical Writing & Communication Conference, discussed the elements (*who, what, and how*) of sales training materials, debunked some misconceptions about them, and revealed insights into what it's like to work in this field. Their goal was to bring awareness to an unmet need in the AMWA community by providing medical communicators with the skills required to work in sales training for the biotech and pharma industries.

Busting Common Myths

Dr Flores described the field of sales training as being a black box that remains unopened. She addressed some misconceptions about what developing sales training materials entails.

Who (Key Stakeholders, Their Roles, and Processes Involved)




Dr Mays Weddle introduced the key players for the sales education and training materials that medical writers

(MWs) create (from both the client and agency sides).

The procedures involved in developing collaborative concepts for a variety of target audiences with different learning needs are discussed below. The key role players are project leads, writers, and editors.

Key Stakeholders

Audience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical affairs, sales, clinical nurse educators, patient services, patients, health care providers
<i>Training for commercial sales representatives</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult learners • Educational background varies • Years of commercial sales experience varies
Client Team
<i>Main point of contact</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial training manager or director • Lead initiatives <i>Team involved in reviewing materials</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing • Medical • Legal • Regulatory
Sales Training Team (Curtis Learning LLC)
<i>Main point of contact</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Strategist • Medical Director • Project Manager <i>Content development team</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical writer • Medical editor • Content manager • Medical illustrator • Graphic designer • Fact-checkers • Technical team

Developing Sales Training Materials Is NOT	What Medical Communicators DO
Writing materials that teach selling skills	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus primarily on science and clinical education
Writing marketing or promotional materials	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write educational materials <p><i>A disclaimer is included in the footer of every page or slide of every deliverable, stating that these materials are not to be used for promotional purposes.</i></p>
Writing materials with “spin”	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow the same ethical standards as all other medical communicators, and they can only develop documents that are accurate and completely referenced to high-quality resources

Curriculum Design and Development

Bringing therapy to market is a multi-year process around United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval, so the training materials in the curriculum supporting the product (client's drug) launch typically cover a range of topics.

1. Prelaunch
 - a. Foundational training
 - b. Disease state, treatment landscape, and product knowledge
2. Launch
 - a. Launch training/workshops
 - b. Certification
3. Postlaunch
 - a. Ongoing support for existing indication
 - b. New foundational and launch curriculum for additional indications

What (Types of Deliverables For Sales Training)

Dr Flores also highlighted becoming familiar with a variety of print and digital deliverables that includes medical illustrations for their sales-trained clientele.

1. Prelaunch (print or digital modules, assessments, patient cases, quick reference cards, interactive deep dives, subject matter expert-facilitated sessions)
2. Launch
 - a. Launch training/workshops
 - b. Annotated package inserts
 - c. Certification
3. Postlaunch
 - a. Update of previous materials
 - b. Resources to address knowledge or skill gaps

Dr Flores contrasted and explained how sales training in medical writing differs from other types of medical writing.

Similarities: Deliverables most commonly include an outline and 3 drafts, working templates, medical editing, and graphic design, elements of storytelling, and adherence to strict citation guidelines, and referencing of every statement to the publication page. Although not ideal, many projects also have some out-of-scope work due to late reviews and changing therapeutic landscapes.

Differences: For sales training materials, the MW decides how to present content (bulleted lists, tables,

medical illustrations, graphics, or infographics), collaborates with medical illustrators and artists, writes customized glossary definitions for terms the learner may not be familiar with, and writes for real-world application.

How (Key Steps in Deliverable Development)

Munden summarized the key steps in the deliverable development process. It's important to understand them to grasp their significance and what happens when these deliverables are used in the field.

1. Content outline (MW, client)
2. Draft 1 (MW)
3. Draft 2 (MW, review, edited, and fact-checked by medical editor; uploaded into client's content management system by a content manager)
4. Medical/Legal/Regulatory (MLR) reviews all deliverables for approvals and resolves comments
5. Additional drafts—resolve MLR comments, layout finalization, re-upload by content manager
6. Document approval—incorporate any changes in the layout, comments resolution, deliverables ready for use

All documents—outline and all drafts—are fully annotated and internally edited and reviewed before submitting to the client.

Key Takeaways

Knowing the essential people and processes involved in sales training content development, as well as how to collaborate effectively throughout content development, is necessary when writing for sales training audiences. Medical writing for sales training focuses on scientific and clinical education. From early conception through final approval and dissemination, generating sales training materials requires various key steps.

Kavita Garg is Director-Medical Writing at Saliegral Global Pvt Ltd. and is based in Singapore.

Author declaration and disclosures: *The author notes no commercial associations that may pose a conflict of interest concerning this article.*

Author contact: kavita.garg@saliegral.com
