

FROM THE PRESIDENT / INAUGURAL ADDRESS

The Evolving Face of Medical Communication



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When I was first approached by Kathy Spiegel to serve on the American Medical Writers Association (AMWA) Board of Directors (BOD) and chair the inaugural Chapter Advisory Council, I had no idea that my path would one day lead me to serving as AMWA President. I am deeply humbled to accept the gavel that once graced the hands of such an esteemed succession of AMWA leaders.

Through the years, I've had an opportunity to witness my predecessors successfully lead AMWA through bylaws and governance changes; timely joint statements and responses to critical issues; legislation impacting medical communicators; organizational priorities; social justice awareness; and of course—a pandemic that changed the way we live, work, learn, and connect.

One thing I know for sure is that AMWA leaders are open-minded, resilient, and constantly evolving. It is with this knowledge that I confidently step into this role. With that said, I know that I am not alone. I have the support of the Executive Committee, BOD, committee chairs, work groups, councils, a plethora of volunteers, and an amazing and dedicated AMWA staff focused on AMWA priorities.

As I look back on where it started, I realize I've had to keep evolving to appreciate where it's going. The “it” is my career in medical communication that started at Texas A&M University many years ago. It was in College Station, Texas, where I realized my passion for writing was just as deep as my interest in medicine, science, and health. It came as no surprise to those who knew me when I switched my major from Pre-Medicine to Journalism.

Fast forward 14 years later, and I strategically aligned my career to have the best of both worlds. Once I settled on what I loved to do most—sharing impactful patient stories, writing about research, clinical trials, and patient support programs—I knew I needed to enhance my skill set. I searched online for the top medical communication organization to heighten my medical writing and editing skills. Lucky for me, I found AMWA! The AMWA Southwest Chapter welcomed me with open arms and wasted no time putting me to work. I've heard from other leaders that serving at the chapter level enhanced their experience

with AMWA. I, like many others, credit AMWA for helping me evolve as a medical communicator and for providing me with the necessary tools and resources.

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines “evolve” as “changing or developing slowly often into a better, more complex, or more advanced state.” What does that have to do with medical communication? Let me explain. History has shown us that everything changes; and I believe how we've evolved as a society through science, technology, and research has also had an impact on how we've evolved as medical communicators. Today, medical communicators are needed more than ever to communicate the science: clinical trial results, drug discoveries, and medical anomalies that can help everyone have a better quality of life.

The Upward Path of AMWA

Over the past couple of years, we've had an opportunity to experience AMWA's revamping of its educational content, development of new targeted resources and tools, and the launch of a variety of online learning programs. As we move into the new year, there is still more to come. The Education Committee and AMWA staff are working hard to enhance and grow the AMWA Certificate program, deliver relevant online programming, and develop education activities to support AMWA members.

When we think about the relevance of our role in the medical communication space, we must also keep the value of what we do top of mind as we educate others. That's why I am so proud of the work that is being done by AMWA's Value of Medical Writing Working Group. Established out of the important and ongoing work of AMWA's Medical Writing Executives Advisory Council, this work group is working toward defining and quantifying the value of medical writing. I am looking forward to seeing this group bear fruit for the organization. As we buckle up for where we are going, we must also appreciate where we've been and celebrate the many successes that have led us here. One of the many benefits I've enjoyed as a member is the *AMWA Journal*. It's an excellent peer-reviewed publication that we've seen transform over the years. In January

2021, we welcomed our new Editor-in-Chief, Michael G. Baker, who has been working diligently with the AMWA staff and the *AMWA Journal* Editorial Board to transition the *Journal* to a digital publishing platform. With this new technology, we will have the capability to manage the *Journal*'s editorial workflow and deliver content online. I'm excited to see two new sections added to the *Journal*, one of which is entitled "Technology Talk." I also look forward to the implementation of a strategy to put forth themed *Journal* issues that resonate with our members. "Digital Revolution" is the first of 4 themed *Journal* issues scheduled to publish on our new digital platform in Spring 2022.

As we evolve and transition to new platforms that will give us a better reach, we must also be inclusive. An organization is strengthened by its diversity, and we must bring to the table different perspectives, ideas, and values to build upon our organizational growth. As you know, medical communicators come from a variety of different backgrounds, work settings, and specialties within the medical field. For example, I am a medical communicator in the public relations field focused on pediatric oncology. No matter what our differences are, as medical communicators we have one common goal—to

communicate the science to all. That means being inclusive and seizing on opportunities to diversify our skills, audience, content, and membership. With that in mind, I am pleased to share that a new task force—the AMWA Diversity & Inclusion Assessment Task Force—was formed to identify how AMWA can foster a more diverse and inclusive environment within the association. The search for task force members, and more information on how you can support this initiative, is underway.

As we continue on this incredible journey as medical communicators, I will continue to keep our priorities at the forefront of everything we do. AMWA's most important asset is our members. We value our members, and the priorities we set are established to ensure continued growth and to give our members the best experience. As we embrace technology, inclusivity, and expand upon new ways to grow the organization, I hope you will engage, connect, volunteer, share, mentor, educate, and invite others to experience and evolve with AMWA!

Reference

1. Evolve. Merriam-Webster. Updated 2021. Accessed December 10, 2021. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/evolve>



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