



CAROLINA CONNECTIONS

Carolinas Chapter—American Medical Writers Association

December 2006

President’s Message

It’s that time of year again. Everyone is running around frantically trying to balance family, work, and holiday season expectations. For medical writers, this can be an exceptionally stressful time of year, as deadline pressure and workloads increase dramatically for many of us. Trying to meet deadlines when half of the people you work with are on vacation, mentally elsewhere because of their own holiday pressures, or hungover from that slightly over-the-top office party, can be a challenge.

Personally, this holiday season I am wrestling with creating the perfect Christmas for my 1-year-old in addition trying to keep all of my clients happy while still remembering to feed the cats. So far, I have managed to meet all my deadlines but have gotten only lights but no ornaments on the tree and the stocking holders but not the stockings (which I can’t find) are hung by the chimney with care. And the cats are still alive. Still there are times I want to stick my head in a bucket of eggnog and let the season pass by. Fortunately, my son is still a little too young to realize his mommy is a bit of humbug; but next year I’ll need to have my act together.

This is the time of year when we all feel stressed, but it is also a time to step back and appreciate all we do, both personally and professionally. In that spirit, I would like to acknowledge all of the very busy people who volunteer their time to make this chapter a success. A lot goes into the usual chapter activities, including this newsletter and our Web site, the chapter conference, and meetings.

In addition, in the last year, volunteers have taken on new activities to further enhance the chapter. We began hosting bimonthly topic dinners, which have been very well received; numerous speakers have given their time to educate their fellow medical writers on topics ranging from using PubMed to enhancing author relations. And, we have a wonderful slate of dinner topics scheduled for 2007 (see page 2). In addition, the chapter recently started a chapter book group (see page 4). AMWA members seem to love the idea of discussing “fun” reading, and the group has been very successful. Last year, we also organized a field trip to the State Medical Examiner’s office and an excursion to a Bulls game.

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We hope to continue this level of activity. So thanks to all of you who give your precious time year round to make this chapter what it is—I'm not naming names for fear of leaving someone out, but you know who you are.

We hope to make next year's activities even more successful. To this end, you'll be receiving a Member Survey via email/mail shortly. When it arrives, please complete it and send it back as soon as possible, so that we can continue to develop programs that are informative, valuable, and fun for our members!

—Tara Hun-Dorris, MMC, ELS

Upcoming Events

AMWA Carolinas has many important, informative, and fun events coming up soon. We hope to see you at one or more of these! Please see our [Website](#) for more details as more events are added.

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| January 4 | Bimonthly networking lunch, Johnny Carino's, Durham. Noon. |
| January 18 | OTC Reader's Group , California Pizza Kitchen, Streets at Southpoint, Durham. 6:30 pm. |
| February 1 | Bimonthly networking dinner, NeoChina, Cary. 6:30 pm. <u>Theme</u> : Effective Manuscript Writing. Guest speaker: Jyoti Nandi, MD, Schwarz Bioscience. |
| February 22 | Freelance panel discussion, Duke Clinical Research Institute, Durham. Time: 6:30 pm for networking/snacks, 7 pm for the program (see page 3 for more info). |
| March 1 | Bimonthly networking lunch, Johnny Carino's, Durham. Noon. |
| April 5 | Bimonthly networking dinner, NeoChina, Cary. 6:30 pm. <u>Theme</u> : Ethics of Authorship. Guest speaker: Cindy Hamilton , Pharm D, ELS. |
| May 3-4 | AMWA Carolinas Annual Spring Conference, UNC Friday Center, Chapel Hill (see page 3 for more info). |

AMWA Carolinas to Sponsor Panel Discussion on Freelancing

By Pat French

AMWA Carolinas will be sponsoring a panel discussion on various aspects of freelance scientific editing and writing on February 22, 2007 at the [Duke Clinical Research Institute \(DCRI\)](#), North Pavilion building, in Durham. This is an opportunity to ask questions of experienced freelancers and people who hire them, exchange success and horror stories about clients, and see whether freelancing might be right for you. The panel will include the following people:

- Tara Hun-Dorris, MMC, ELS; AMWA Carolinas President and principal, THD Editorial, Inc. (moderator)
- Jennifer King, PhD, ELS; principal, August Editorial, Inc.
- Terry Paul, PhD; principal, Paul Medical Writing, Inc.
- Terri O'Quin; principal, Terri O'Quin Medical and Scientific Editorial Services
- Jean Noblin; hiring manager, Trio Clinical Research
- Susan Sisk, PhD, RAC; principal, SFP Consulting

For directions to the DCRI's North Pavilion, located at 2400 Pratt St. in Durham, please visit http://dcri.org/who_we_are/map.jsp. Parking is available in the adjacent parking garage. You must take a ticket to lift the entry gate, but no attendant will be on duty, and the gate will be up when you exit. The meeting will be in the Lower Level Lecture Hall. As you enter the building, security is on your right. Turn left to take the elevator to the lower level or walk down the flight of stairs directly in front of you. From the elevator, the Lecture Hall is on your left; from the foot of the stairs, it is located on your right.

We hope you can join us for this informative event!

Annual Spring Conference Dates, Courses Announced

By Pat French

The annual Spring Conference will be held on Friday, May 4, 2007, at the [Friday Center](#) in Chapel Hill, NC. Like last year, 4 courses will be offered (see below for details). For the first time, this year we will also be offering open, noncredit sessions, the details of which are still being decided. There will be an informal, optional dinner the night before the conference.

- Writing the Final Report of a Clinical Trial (PH): Howard Smith, MD
- Statistics for Medical Writers and Editors (C): Bart Harvey, MD, MEd, PhD
- Understanding Sample Size and Study Power (ADV): Bart Harvey, MD, MEd, PhD
- Basics of Human Anatomy and Physiology (EW): Mary Ann Foote, PhD

The registration form will be available on our [Website](#) soon, which will also include information about local accommodations, etc. Hope to see you there!

Taken As Directed, No Adverse Effects! The AMWA Carolinas OTC Book Group

By Ernie Hood

It began on a lazy afternoon in August 2006, when AMWA Carolinas members Jenny Walker and Tracey Fine met for brunch and then browsed in a nearby bookstore. “There was an entire wall of books that were recommended for book clubs,” says Fine. “We were going through that wall, and wishing we had a book club, and it just sort of naturally came up, ‘why don’t we just start one?’”

That’s exactly what they did, and today, thanks to their founding efforts, the OTC Readers Group is up and running, and shows every sign of becoming an institution. The group, which meets bimonthly, has held two meetings so far, with attendance at the second meeting nearly double that of the first.

The OTC-ers discussed their first book, *Basket Case* by Carl Hiassen, at the group’s inaugural meeting in September. It was a light, summery novel that all present enjoyed, so there wasn’t a great deal of discussion. That left time for participants to establish some of the group’s ground rules, such as meeting bimonthly, with an attendee picking the next restaurant meeting site and the next tome to be consumed and digested.

The second OTC session was an entirely different affair. With 13 readers of Jodi Picoult’s *My Sister’s Keeper* in attendance, the pizza dinner needed no added spice as a lively and occasionally heated discussion ensued. The book’s ending (read it for yourself and see what you think) was particularly controversial. Next up on the OTC formulary? *Middlesex*, the Pulitzer Prize-winning, gender-bending novel by Jeffrey Eugenides. As one ecstatic reviewer put it, “To call *Middlesex* a coming-of-age novel about a hermaphrodite would be like calling *The Odyssey* a story about some guy on a boat. *Middlesex* is nothing short of epic...”

Why “OTC?” The idea is for the reading to be “nonprescribed and nonprofessional,” according to Walker, who came up with the name. The books selected for the group are to be recreational. “As medical writers, all day long we read all this material that we have to read for our jobs, but outside of work, we all like to read novels,” says Fine. “Also, we thought it might be a way to get other people in the chapter to participate in something they would think is fun.”

Another key to the group’s success has been its open-door policy—all are welcome to attend, whether chapter members or not, whether medical writers or not. The group’s credo says it all: *Nonprescribed reading for the professional medical writer—and friends.*

When I get a little money, I buy books; and if any is left, I buy food and clothes.

—Desiderius Erasmus (1465-1536)