

Viewpoint

The development and uptake of the Joint Position Statement on the role of professional medical writers

On behalf of the American Medical Writers Association, the European Medical Writers Association and the International Society for Medical Publication Professionals:

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Members of the European Association of Science Editors (EASE) and professional medical writers share a common goal – to publish research that readers trust and value. Medical writers can help EASE members as they strive to follow the EASE Golden Rules for Scholarly Journal Editors.¹ Various guidelines are available regarding the role of professional medical writers,² and adherence to these guidelines is best accomplished if the fundamental points are presented concisely and widely endorsed. This has been achieved with the release of the Joint Position Statement (JPS) on the Role of Professional Medical Writers,³ which has been endorsed by leading medical writing associations from around the world and other key stakeholders. The purpose of this article is to highlight to editors the development and uptake of the JPS, and how this guideline aligns with and supports the EASE Golden Rules.

The JPS

To develop a unified core of concise, practical, evidence-based guidelines for responsible and ethical medical and scientific writing, a Writing Committee was established that consisted of four members from three leading professional organizations – the American Medical Writers Association (AMWA), the European Medical Writers Association (EMWA) and the International Society for Medical Publication Professionals (ISMPP) – representing more than 6500 medical communications professionals around the world. The JPS was reviewed by organisational representatives located in Europe, North America and Asia Pacific. A broader Joint Outreach Committee developed a multichannel communications strategy.

The JPS draws on existing guidelines and evidence to outline the responsibilities of professional medical writers and the responsibilities of the authors who choose to collaborate with them. By following the JPS, medical writers can support ethical, accurate and timely medical and scientific reporting, which also supports the EASE Golden Rules (Table). The JPS was launched at the European Meeting of ISMPP on 17 January 2017. It was presented at the EMWA conference in May 2017, as well as the AMWA

conference in November 2017, and has been published in a peer-reviewed journal with an associated commentary.⁴

Table 1. Alignment of the EASE Golden Rules and the JPS

Principles of good scholarly medical and science communication	EASE Golden Rules ¹	The JPS ³
Ensure manuscript content is appropriate for the target audience	✓	✓
Follow ethical principles and guidelines for scientific reporting	✓	✓
Ensure that publications are complete, clear and concise	✓	✓
Ensure that manuscripts contain appropriate acknowledgements, references and disclosure information	✓	✓
Publish research in a timely manner	✓	✓

The developers and endorsers of the JPS are keen to work with EASE and other influential stakeholders around the world to help raise awareness of the JPS and how medical writers can enhance ethical, accurate and timely reporting of research (Figure 1).

Endorsement and uptake

We are delighted that EASE is endorsing the JPS. Since it was launched, the JPS has secured additional endorsement from the Association of Regulatory and Clinical Scientists Australia. The Council of Science Editors and Board of Editors in the Life Sciences have shared the JPS with their members in one of the top five most popular articles on The Publication Plan website for 2017. The JPS has also been included in the Enhancing the QUALity and Transparency Of health Research (EQUATOR) Network list of reporting guidelines, and has been shared with a range of journal editors, academics and industry critics by email and face-to-face. In the first month after its launch, the JPS attracted over 10000 unique page views. A series of social media posts have resulted in substantial



Figure 1. The authors' views on the global impact of the JPS

online engagement via platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.^{5,6} The continuing mission has been to increase the global reach and impact of this collaborative document. To date, the JPS has been made available in Chinese, English, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Romanian, Spanish and Ukrainian. In addition, Brazilian, Portuguese and Russian translations are in progress. Strong efforts have been made by medical writing associations to raise awareness of the JPS among their members. The next important and more challenging step is to raise awareness of the JPS beyond the professional medical writing community.⁷

Conclusion

The development of a unified core of concise, practical, evidence-based guidelines for responsible and ethical medical and scientific writing has received widespread endorsement, communication and uptake. By working together, medical writers and editors can improve the quality of research reporting, which can ultimately lead to improvements in patient care.

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Disclosures

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