February 10: Sunday Brunch Meeting in Waltham, Mass.
Roundtable Discussions for Professional Development

The New England Chapter’s traditional midwinter brunch will be held on Sunday, February 10, at the Hilton Garden Inn in Waltham, Mass. Come join us for a stimulating meeting featuring roundtable discussions with knowledgeable AMWA professionals who will share their insights, offer valuable advice, and answer your questions—while we all enjoy a hearty breakfast.

There are 10 topics. Choose the one that interests you most, give second and third choices if you have them, and mark your choices on the registration form. Don’t delay, because seating at each table is limited and will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis upon receipt of payment. Your table assignment will be confirmed by e-mail about a week before the meeting.

#1 Moving into Medical Writing
Table Leader: Jill Shuman
Are you interested in transitioning into the field of medical writing? Whether you’re fresh out of school, working in bench science, or already writing for another industry, learn what you need to know in order to evaluate your skills, overcome knowledge gaps, and prepare for a successful career in biomedical or healthcare communications.

#2 Are You Cut Out for Freelancing?
Table Leader: Lonnie Christiansen
Freelance writing can be a rewarding way to practice your craft without being tied to a single company and a daily commute. But the freelance life is not for everyone. Get the inside scoop on what it takes to be successful working solo. This session will include an informal questionnaire to help you assess whether your personality, resources, and work style make you a candidate for a freelance career.

#3 Satisfied Customers Keep Coming Back for More
Table Leader: Kevin Flynn
Keeping clients happy is a genuine art, whether you’re managing a communications agency, working for one boss at your company, or in your own freelance practice. Hear an experienced manager from a medical communications company that has enjoyed steady growth and an influx of new clients by exceeding the expectations of numerous pharmaceutical companies.

#4 How to Edit Your Own Work
Table Leader: Constance Putnam
Your ideas are flowing, your content is accurate, and your first draft is finally on paper. Now comes the tough part: polishing it up to send to your client, manager, or in-house editor. Many writers fall short when it comes to editing their own material, particularly when subject matter is complex and/or they have spent much time on it. Knowing how to self-edit can increase your value in the marketplace. Get some simple tips to help you through this critical process.

#5 Substantive Editing
Table Leader: Mary Zoll
Learn what substantive editing really is, as well as the common misperceptions clients have about the role of editors. See how to assess the quality of a document quickly and how to work effectively with content-matter experts. A veteran editor shares tips and techniques for working more efficiently and meeting the expectations of both managers and clients.

ROUNDTABLES

DATE: Sunday, February 10
TIME: Social Hour (Coffee/Tea) starts at 11:00 a.m.
       Brunch & Discussions from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m.
PLACE: Hilton Garden Inn, 420 Totten Pond Road, Waltham, Massachusetts. DIRECTIONS ON PAGE 5.
BUFFET MENU: Scrambled Eggs with Bacon, Sausage, and Potatoes • Sliced Melon with Fresh Fruit and Berries • Assorted Juices • Vanilla and Low-Fat Fruit Yogurts with Granola • Assorted Bagels with Flavored and Low-Fat Cream Cheese • Muffins, Danish Pastries, Croissants • Sweet Cream Butter, Honey, Preserves • Coffee, Decaf, Herbal Teas
REGISTRATION: The registration fee is $25 for members, $28 for guests and prospective members. To register, print the form on page 6, fill it out, and mail it with payment to the address on the form.
DEADLINE: To guarantee brunch reservations, we must receive your payment by mail (checks only, no credit cards) no later than Tuesday, February 5. (Sorry, no refunds for cancellation after 2:00 p.m. that day.)
Chapter Calendar

The New England Chapter holds six regular meetings a year, from September through June. Four meetings are in the Greater Boston area, and two are in Connecticut. Every meeting begins with a social hour, followed by dinner (except for a Sunday brunch in midwinter), then a program with a speaker, a panel presentation, or roundtable discussions. A writing competition, culminating in the Will Solimene Awards Banquet, is held every other year, alternating with the New England Conference, an all-day program of workshops on a Saturday. Occasionally informal networking meetings or tours are scheduled.

February 1: Deadline for Submissions to 2008 Writing Competition

The chapter’s biennial writing awards recognize outstanding work in medical, biomedical, and health communication by New England AMWA members. If you are a New England Chapter member (or wish to join AMWA at this time), you are invited to enter books, articles, brochures, or other materials you published in 2006 or 2007.

Submission guidelines and an entry form are available in PDF format on the chapter Web site. Go to www.amwa-ne.org and click in the Save-the-Date box in the upper right corner of the home page.

Entries must be postmarked by February 1.

Authors of winning entries will be notified on or about May 1 and will receive the Will Solimene Award of Excellence in Medical Communication at the chapter’s awards banquet in June.

Other chapter meetings being planned

In mid-spring, there will be a dinner meeting in the Greater Boston area and a dinner meeting in Connecticut.

June 12: Awards Banquet in Waltham, Mass.

The chapter’s 13th Awards Banquet will take place at the Westin Hotel, Waltham, Mass., on Thursday, June 12. This celebratory event will be the last meeting of the 2007-08 chapter year.

2009 New England Conference

The 8th New England Conference will be held Saturday, March 28, 2009, at the Sturbridge Host Hotel & Conference Center in Sturbridge, Mass.

ROUNDTABLES, from page 1

#6 Feature Writing in Medical Communications
Table Leader: Nancy Knoblock Hunton
Describing complex medical subjects in clear, readable copy that lay audiences will find interesting and exciting is a genuine skill. Learn how to translate medical information into human-interest stories. Explore the process of developing and writing feature articles for hospitals, pharmaceutical companies, and other healthcare-related organizations.

#7 Money Matters in the Freelance World
Table Leader: Francesca Coltrera
Even the best writers in the world won’t have financial success unless they know how to get what they’re worth. Whether you are currently freelancing or just considering it, here’s a primer of essentials you need to know about setting and raising rates, assessing the benefits of hourly rates vs. project rates, collecting your due, and negotiating contracts. Share your experiences and tap into those of your colleagues.

#8 Basic Science Writing Formats: CME Materials, Journal Articles, Posters, Abstracts
Table Leader: Andrea Gwosdow
Learn what’s involved with each type of scientific writing, from reading basic study data to producing technically accurate pieces for physicians. Review the requisite skills, what clients need and expect, and what opportunities are available in industry, agencies, and academia.

#9 Regulatory Writing
Table Leader: Linda Wood
Find out all about one of the hottest fields in medical writing: helping pharmaceutical firms prepare new drug applications and other regulatory documents for the FDA. Good regulatory writers are always in demand, particularly in the Boston area. Explore opportunities as a freelancer or staff regulatory writer.

#10 Social Networking Table
Table Leaders: Julie Martin, Debbie von Rechenberg
Are you fairly content with your career right now but seek more contact with your fellow AMWA members? Join some like-minded colleagues for a morning of shop talk and chat while eating a delightful brunch and recharging your professional batteries.

As at all New England Chapter meetings, guests and prospective members are welcome.

—Chris McMorrow
President-Elect/Program Director
October Meeting Report
The State of Health Literacy in Connecticut

Did you know that 14% of adults have “below basic” health literacy? ...that only 12% of adults have “proficient” health literacy? ...that most adults read at an 8th grade reading level? ...and that most health care literature is written at a 10th grade level or higher?

Low health literacy is a major problem for both health care consumers and health care professionals with potentially serious consequences for individual patient outcomes and for the health care system as a whole. At the chapter’s Connecticut fall dinner meeting in New Haven, Annamarie Beaulieu and Christine Woolley described their work on the UConn Graduate Public Health Program’s 2006 Practicum Project, “Improving Health Literacy in Connecticut: A Prescription for Healthy Lives and Communities.” Annamarie also discussed her work with Connecticut state legislators on a bill for a Health Literacy Task Force.

The Public Health Program’s Practicum Project is a service-learning experience that integrates curriculum with hands-on experience in a public health setting. A different public health topic is selected each year, and all second-year students in the Public Health graduate program are expected to participate.

The 2006 health literacy practicum examined five types of literature that patients might encounter in a health setting:

- Prevention literature: printed literature on a variety of health care topics relating to disease prevention and maintaining health.
- Clinical health literature: literature distributed in a health setting, such as patient forms.
- Navigational health literature: information describing how to access health services, such as covered benefits, eligibility for public assistance, and health insurance plans.
- Professional health literature: information used by health care professionals to communicate to patients during clinical encounters. (The students found that many patients were embarrassed to admit that they didn’t understand the doctor’s instructions.)
- Public health literature: information communicated to the public in the event of a disease outbreak or similar situation, as well as routine health information distributed to the general public.

Ms. Beaulieu and Ms. Woolley suggested that medical writers can help further the cause of health literacy in each of these areas. For example, health insurance companies and local public health departments need the services of professional communicators to rewrite existing materials at a lower reading level and to improve the focus of health publications so that they convey health information at a level that patients can readily comprehend.

A growing number of companies are beginning to recognize how important health literacy is to their businesses. Pfizer has an exceptionally strong health literacy effort through its “Clear Health Communication Initiative.” (For information go to www.pfizerhealthliteracy.com).

—Lisa Catanese

November Meeting Report
Massachusetts Health Insurance Reform

Health insurance reform in Massachusetts was the timely topic at the New England Chapter’s November meeting at Vinny T’s in Lexington, Mass. Melissa Boudreault of the Commonwealth Health Insurance Connector Authority and Maria Schiff from Network Health, an insurance provider, gave us information about groundbreaking legislation and a detailed overview of healthcare choices.

In 2006, according to a Commonwealth survey, 372,000 Massachusetts residents were without health insurance. In response to that serious finding, Health Care Reform was enacted on April 12 of that year.

So how does it work? In brief, Massachusetts residents over the age of 18 must have health insurance that meets certain minimum standards. Commonwealth Care is designed for uninsured people whose incomes fall within certain guidelines and who meet other qualifications. If you are a single person, for example, and your family’s income was less than $30,636 before taxes, you may qualify—if you are uninsured, a United States citizen, and aged 19 or over.

Commonwealth Choice offers new health insurance options to individuals and small employers who do not qualify for Commonwealth Care. For sole proprietors, Commonwealth Choice offers options with providers such as Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Fallon Community Health Plan, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, Health New England, Neighborhood Health Plan, and Tufts Health Plan. Among these providers, the so-called bronze, silver, and gold options exist—based on cost and benefits.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts also mandates that employers with 11 full-time equivalent employees must adopt section 125, allowing employees to pay for health insurance on a pre-tax basis, which translates into real savings.

Although this summary is cursory at best, I hope it provides you with some basic information, as well as the incentive to check out your options as we move into the new year. For more information, call 877-623-6765, or log onto www.MAhealthconnector.org.

Happy New Year and Good Health to Everyone!

—Adriane Bishko
Secretary
New Members

The New England Chapter cordially welcomes those from our six-state region who have recently joined AMWA, reestablished their affiliation with the association, or moved here from another chapter area:

Barbara J. Burroughs, DVM
Shelburne, Vermont

Jeffrey A. Coderre, PhD
Newton, Massachusetts

Carol A. Comerci
Franklin, Massachusetts
Coley Pharmaceutical Group Inc.

Robert T. Creutz
Weymouth, Massachusetts

Kate Meyers Gilbert, BA
Brighton, Massachusetts

Elizabeth B. Goodwin, PhD
Sepracor Inc.
Marlborough, Massachusetts

Caryl A. Haddock
Fat Fish Communications
Malden, Massachusetts

Judith Healy, PhD
Archemix Corporation
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Lisa A. Herman, PharmD, MS
Wellesley, Massachusetts
Genzyme Corporation

Mary Kantz, RN, MS
Corrigan Kantz Consulting
Brookline, Massachusetts

Barry Kottler, MD
Bolton, Massachusetts

Ira Mills, PhD
Branford, Connecticut
Advogent

Pamela Obuchowski
Mexico, Maine

Anthony A. Perez, BA
Worcester, Massachusetts

Joan Piteo, BSN, MSN
Wolcott, Connecticut

Deborah A. Potter, PhD
Arlington, Massachusetts

Karina Rinsky, MA
Somerville, Massachusetts

Eric C. Roux, MS
Framingham, Massachusetts
Genzyme Corporation

Jeanette M. Sayers, MA
Brookline, Massachusetts
Ophthalmic Research Associates

Stacy L. Springs, PhD
Watertown, Massachusetts
Custom Learning Designs

Patricia H. Wakefield
East Greenwich, Rhode Island

Jane C. Wandel, RN, MS
Reading, Massachusetts
Corrigan Kantz Consulting

Marybeth Willard, BS, MBA
MC Communications Inc.
Williston, Vermont
[from Empire State-Metro NY Chapter]

Judy Wittenberg, MS
Beverly, Massachusetts
North Shore Medical Center

Abigail Zsenai, BS
Quechee, Vermont
[from Empire State-Metro NY Chapter]

CORRECTION: In the last newsletter, I inadvertently omitted new member Michiko Kobayashi’s PhD degree. I apologize for the error. —JL, Editor

Personal Notes

Ellen R. Lewis, PhD, has joined Vion Pharmaceuticals, New Haven, Conn., as a senior medical writer. She was previously a senior medical writer at Envision Pharma.

Hot Flashes, Hormones, and Your Health by JoAnn E. Manson, MD, and Shari S. Bassuk, ScD (McGraw-Hill, 2006) won honorable mention in the 2007 AMWA Medical Book Awards Competition trade category. Shari is a medical editor at Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Boston.

Barbara M. Thomson, MS, MPH, has joined Infinity Pharmaceuticals Inc., Cambridge, Mass. She was formerly a clinical research scientist at Serono Inc.

Tapani Ronni, PhD, has established his own business, Polar Bear Communications in Arlington, Mass., offering translation services (English into Finnish) in medicine, chemistry, pharmaceuticals, biotech, and patents, among other areas. He received his doctorate in genetics from the University of Helsinki, Finland.

Peter D. Spain, principal of Peter D. Spain LLC in Fairfield, Conn., has been certified as an editor in the life sciences.

Tom O’Connell’s latest book is Bugging Out: An Army Memoir (1954), available online at www.sanctuary777.com or from other booksellers. Tom is a writer and lecturer based on Cape Cod.

Justine E. Cohen, MS, is now a medical writer at Perceptive Informatics Inc., Waltham, Mass.

Karen Oberheim is now editorial manager at Custom Learning Designs Inc., Belmont, Mass. She was previously senior director, editorial services, at Fusion Medical Education LLC.

Marjorie Layman has joined Vertex Pharmaceuticals, Cambridge, Mass., as a principal medical writer. She was formerly a senior medical writer at PAREXEL International.

Marianthi Markopoulos, PhD, has joined Millennium Pharmaceuticals Inc., Cambridge, Mass.

Cherie Dewar, a 2007 recipient of the chapter’s Membership Award, has started her own freelance business, Hummingbird Medical Communications in Quincy, Mass. Recently, she has been writing articles for Scanner, the newsmagazine of the American Society of Radiologic Technologists.

Patrick J. Skerrett is a coauthor with Jorge E. Chavarra, MD, ScD, and Walter Willett, MD, DrPH, of The Fertility Diet, published by McGraw-Hill in the fall. The book, offering recommendations based on findings from the Nurses’ Health Study, was the cover story of the December 10, 2007, issue of Newsweek. Pat is editor of the Harvard Heart Letter.

CHAPTER CHANGE: Cara L. Coffey has transferred to Envision Pharma’s Philadelphia office and is now a member of the Delaware Valley Chapter.
Directions to February 10 Meeting

Hilton Garden Inn
420 Totten Pond Road
Waltham, Massachusetts
781-890-0100 x1006

The hotel is a short distance from Route 128/I-95, via Exit 27A. There is ample free parking.

Coming from points north:
Take Route 128/I-95 south to Exit 27A (Totten Pond Road). At the end of the exit ramp bear right onto Totten Pond Road and cross over Route 128/I-95. Proceed one-quarter mile and turn right into the second office park. Bear left into the hotel entrance.

Coming from points south:
Take Route 128/I-95 north to exit 27A (Totten Pond Road). At the end of the exit ramp turn right at the traffic light onto Totten Pond Road. Proceed one-quarter mile and turn right into the second office park. Bear left into the hotel entrance.

Need a ride to the meeting?
If you don’t have a car, contact Judy Linn (508-358-7071 or judyhlinn@aol.com) to find out if anyone from your area is driving to the meeting.

Winter Weather Alert!
Should severe winter weather require postponement of the meeting, we will notify everyone by e-mail.
If the weather looks really bad and you are unable to access your e-mail on the weekend, call Judy Linn at 508-358-7071 before you go—just to be sure.

Upcoming Events in New England
The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) will hold its annual meeting in Boston, February 14-18. For information: www.aaas.org.

The Health & Science Communications Association (HeSCA) will hold its annual conference in New Haven, Conn., June 19-21. For information: www.hesca.org.

Chapter Membership Awards
Applications invited
The New England Chapter’s Judy Linn Membership Awards provide professional development and networking support to medical and health communicators who are fairly new to the field. The chapter will accept applications from candidates who live and work in New England. There is no application fee.
To download an application form, go to amwa-ne.org, click on Awards, and scroll down to the last paragraph.
If you have questions, contact David Olle, Membership Awards Director (dolle@eastshire.net or 802-254-3899).

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL 2007-08
OFFICERS

- PRESIDENT: Julie J. Martin
- IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT: Lonnie K. Christiansen
- PRESIDENT-ELECT: Christine McMorrow
- VICE PRESIDENT/CONNECTICUT: Susan F. Gonsalves
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- E-NEWS: Julie J. Martin
- NEWSLETTER: Judy Linn
- NOMINATING COMMITTEE: Christine McMorrow
- WRITING AWARDS: Jill M. Shuman
- HONORS AWARD: Michael J. Lasalandra
- WEB SITE: Lonnie K. Christiansen

MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

- Francesca Coltrera, Aaron Federman, Andrea Gwosdow, Laurie LaRusso, Joann H. Merriman, Debbie von Rechenberg

DELEGATES TO AMWA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Julie J. Martin, Christine McMorrow
- ALTERNATES: Lonnie K. Christiansen, Susan F. Gonsalves
EVENT: Roundtable Discussions for Professional Development
DATE: Sunday, February 10, 2008
TIME: 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
PLACE: Hilton Garden Inn, Waltham, Massachusetts
REGISTRATION FEE: Member: $25.00    Guest or Prospective Member: $28.00
DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF PAYMENT: Tuesday, February 5
MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO: New England Chapter AMWA
MAIL PAYMENT WITH THIS FORM TO: AMWA
37 Forty Acres Drive
Wayland, MA 01778

TOTAL PAYMENT ENCLOSED: $_________

Your table assignment will be confirmed by e-mail.

Please use a separate copy of this form for each registrant.

Name ______________________________________________________________
Company ___________________________________________________________
Address ____________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
Address is: (  ) Business     (  ) Home

E-mail (required) ______________________________________________________
May we include this in the meeting registration list? (  ) Yes     (  ) No

Phone (required) ______________________________________________________
May we include this in the meeting registration list? (  ) Yes     (  ) No

Please indicate your choice of tables:    First choice #___    Second choice #___    Third choice #___

Have you attended a New England Chapter meeting before?    (  ) Yes     (  ) No