February 8: 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 8, at the Hilton Garden Inn, Waltham, Mass. Join us for lively roundtable discussions led by knowledgeable colleagues who will share their insights, offer valuable advice, and answer your questions—while we all partake of a hearty breakfast.

There are 10 roundtable topics. Choose the one that interests you most, give second and third choices if you have them, and note 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 Substantive Editing (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.

#2 Regulatory Writing (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. Learn about opportunities as a freelance or staff regulatory writer.

#3 Build Your Reference Library for Less Than $200 a Year (Jill Shuman)
From style guides to medical dictionaries, medical writers today have a vast number of print and electronic reference materials from which to choose. This roundtable will collaboratively assemble a list of indispensable references available for purchase or free on the Web, with a goal of spending less than $200 a year.

#4 Secrets to Writing a Business Plan and Meeting Your Goals (Helen Osborne)
Yes, you really do need a business plan. This is the single best way to stay “on track,” not just making decisions based on your latest query. There’s no rule that writing business plans must be tedious or boring. Learn the secrets for doing it in ways that are helpful, effective, and even fun.

#5 On the Record: Interviewing Scientists, Clinicians, and Patients (Lonnie Christiansen)
You don’t need an MD to interview a clinician, or a PhD to question a molecular biologist. Interviewing is more of an art than a science. We will discuss how to prepare for an interview, establish rapport, focus the conversation to get the information you need, and use technology to save time. Through personal anecdotes, we’ll also explore issues such as phone vs. in-person interviews, getting the science right, and ducking political crossfire.

INDEX
2 Calendar  3 October Meeting Report  5 New Members  6 Weather Alert
2 Online Registration  4 November Meeting Report  5 Obituary  6 Chapter E-news
3 Roundtables, cont.  4 Personal Notes  6 Directions to Meeting  6 Membership Awards

BUFFET MENU
Scrambled Eggs • Bacon, Sausages, and Potatoes • Sliced Melon, Fresh Fruit, Berries • Fruit Juices • Vanilla and Low-Fat Fruit Yogurts with Granola • Assorted Bagels with Flavored and Low-Fat Cream Cheese • Muffins, Danish Pastries, Croissants with Sweet Cream Butter, Honey, Preserves • Coffee, Decaf, Herbal Teas

DEADLINE: To guarantee brunch reservations, we must receive your payment by mail (check) or via PayPal (credit card) no later than Tuesday, February 3. (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. The New England Conference, an all-day program of workshops on a Saturday, is held every other year, alternating with a writing competition, culminating in the Will Solimene Awards Banquet. Occasionally, informal networking meetings or tours are scheduled.


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

The program will offer four 3-hour workshops for credit toward an AMWA certificate and two 3-hour workshops designed for this conference. The conference luncheon will include several tables devoted to career-development topics as well as open tables for those who would prefer to network, socialize, or just relax between classes.

The conference brochure and the registration form will be posted on the chapter Web site before the end of this month. As soon as these are available, chapter members will be notified by e-mail. No one may reserve space now.

The scheduled workshops are:
Morning
• Writing Abstracts
• Tables and Graphs [editorial approach]
• Health Literacy: The Writer’s Role
Afternoon
• Organizing the Biomedical Paper
• Statistics for Medical Writers and Editors
• Freelance Forum

Connecticut Spring Meeting
TBD

In April or May, the chapter will hold a dinner meeting in Connecticut. Do you have a suggestion for a program topic, a particular speaker, or a meeting location? If so, please share it with Susan Gonsalves (sgonsas@aol.com).

NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER NEWS, published 4 to 5 times a year for the New England members of the American Medical Writers Association (AMWA), is posted as a PDF on the New England Chapter’s Web site.

The newsletter welcomes reports about members’ professional activities and special achievements; notices of local meetings, conferences, and courses; and other items of potential interest to medical, biomedical, and health communicators in New England.

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June Meeting
TBD

The last meeting of the 2008-09 year will be held in mid-June.

Other Events

January 22: HCEA Meeting in Boston

The Healthcare Convention & Exhibitors Association will hold this year’s Healthcare Convention Marketing Summit in Boston. For information: www.hcea.org/meeting_summit.asp.

June 24-27: NIH Course in Bethesda, Md.

The National Institutes of Health offers journalists and editors a free 3-day course on “Medicine in the Media: The Challenge of Reporting on Medical Research”—meals and lodging included. For information: http://medmediacourse.nih.gov.

October 22-24: 69th AMWA Annual Conference in Dallas, Tex.

Starting planning now to attend AMWA’s 2009 annual meeting. It’s always a spectacular event with an unparalleled program of educational and networking opportunities for medical communicators.

Instructions for Online Registration

In September, the New England Chapter introduced online registration for chapter events. This enables you to submit your registration through the chapter’s Web site and pay for an event either by credit card (via PayPal) or by mailing a check.

To register for the February 8 meeting:
Go to the chapter Web site at www.amwa-ne.org. On the Home page, click on the link inside the Save-the-Date box. This link will display instructions for registration and payment.

If you use the PayPal option:
Just enter your credit card—or e-check—information. (You don’t need a PayPal account, and you don’t have to enter a password.)

If you opt to send a check by mail:
Your registration will be considered tentative until we actually receive your check. We cannot give you a table assignment without payment in hand.
ROUNDTABLES continued from page 1

#6 Technical Writing Opportunities in the Medical Device Industry (Aaron Federman)
Medical device companies provide unique opportunities for technical writers to produce a wide variety of product documentation. Learn how technical writers work closely with engineering, regulatory, and marketing throughout the R&D process to produce the documentation for using, testing, and servicing medical products.

#7 Writing for Consumers and Patients (Nancy Knoblock Hunton)
Discuss how to communicate effectively about medical topics. Get tips on readability, style, and graphics. Learn about writing for the Web and print publications.

#8 Advanced Freelance (Andrea Gwosdow)
Are you an experienced freelance? Do you have business questions you would like to discuss regarding clients, marketing, building your business, contracts, etc? Bring your questions and join a discussion to learn new strategies for dealing with these issues. You're sure to glean some valuable business tips from your colleagues.

#9 Improving Your Networking Quotient (Laurie LaRusso)
Now more than ever, networking is essential to professional success. Hear networking strategies from a busy freelance, including use of increasingly popular networking sites such as LinkedIn, and share your own strategies for sharpening this critical, but often overlooked, skill.

#10 Social Table (Chris McMorrow)
If you’re at a point in your career where you are not looking for change but would just like to get together with fellow medical writers, this table is for you. Enjoy a leisurely brunch while you catch up with old friends and make new acquaintances.

As always, the New England Chapter welcomes guests and prospective members.

—Debbie von Rechenberg
President-Elect/Program Director

Enhance Your Professional Credibility
AMWA’s Professional Development Certificate (PDC) is a way of demonstrating your continued commitment to professional development beyond the scope of your regular job. You can earn 5 points toward a PDC by attending this meeting. For information, go to: http://www.amwa.org/default.asp?id=252.

October Meeting Report
Former Researcher Helps Pfizer Make Its Case

How would you like to have the task of achieving consensus from physicians, clinical researchers, administrators, and marketers on an issue that may change even before you can draft your final statement?

This is one of the challenges faced by the staff in the Department of Science Policy and Public Affairs at Pfizer. Former clinical researcher Lydia Pan, PhD, now a director in the department, gave a behind-the-scenes account of her work at the October chapter meeting in New Haven.

It seems size does matter. One consequence of Pfizer’s dominance in the pharmaceutical industry, according to Dr. Pan, is that it is often the de facto spokesperson for the industry. This means that, like it or not, the company must develop policies that put forth its position on specific issues and that its key staff can stand behind.

One of the goals of policy formation is to “lay out the facts and hope people will come to agree with you when they have all the information,” says Dr. Pan. Increasing transparency in the industry has both increased the need for public policies and the level of information available to support (or challenge) those policies.

Ongoing criticism in the press about perceived conflicts of interest and incomplete or biased disclosure of information about drugs are among the factors that have led to the increased transparency, even in the historically closely guarded research arena. Web sites, maintained by government and industry, provide access to registered clinical trials, clinical developments, trial results from all phases, and post-marketing safety data. Even the U.S. patent system provides a window into early drug development to the diligent researcher through publication of patent applications regardless of whether they ever issue.

Drug regulation, the ethics and laws governing clinical trials, stem cell research, animals in research, and philanthropic drug research and development are among the standing arenas that repeatedly call for policies to be developed. Other issues are dealt with on an ad hoc basis. For example, European governments have been debating the issue of drug residue in the environment for several years, but this issue only recently came to public attention in the U.S. following reports of the detection of pharmaceuticals in drinking water supplies in March 2008. The global nature of Pfizer’s business calls for it to develop a coherent policy that applies not only for the U.S., but for its operations throughout the world.

—J. Lynne Dodson
Member, Connecticut Planning Committee
November Meeting Report

How a ‘Dull’ Doctor Learned to Write Thrillers

Michael Palmer, MD, entertained us at the November chapter meeting in Lexington, Mass., telling us how a “country doc” (actually, board certified in internal and emergency medicine) became an author of best-selling medical thrillers. He said he never wanted to be a writer, but when Robin Cook’s _Coma_ came out—Cook had been two years ahead of him at Wesleyan University—Dr. Palmer asked his sister, “Why can’t I write a book?” Her answer: “Because you’re dull.”

Dr. Palmer went on to describe an interesting encounter with a dying patient that became the subject of his first attempt at a novel. He bought an Olivetti typewriter for $78, and wrote one page a night. He enjoyed writing, saying, “I was in charge of my world, and I could make anything happen that I wanted to” in fiction. He titled his first manuscript _The Corey Prescription_.

Luckily, he found a reviewer who told him it was terrible, but felt he had some potential and referred him to an editor. The agent said that everyone hated the book, but they liked his instincts.

He learned how to write better, with points of view and sentence structure. He didn’t know what good fiction was, but he “felt it.” He learned that “the essence of fiction is all about conflict and resolution: conflict between two characters, conflict within a character, or conflict between the character and the plot. In between, the character has to change, and that’s catharsis.” His first book was _The Sisterhood_, about a secret society of nurses dedicated to mercy killings. It was published in 1982 and is in its 36th printing now.

Dr. Palmer said the hardest thing for him is to figure out what to write. He will sit for two or three hours at a time, just thinking about his “Horrible Question: What am I going to write about?” When it comes to the business of writing, he is very disciplined, he said—and “I’m good at sitting.” He now teaches a course for doctors who want to write, and each year he gives them two signs: “This Is Hard” and “Be Fearless.” He said he doesn’t like writing books, but he likes having written them. One day of writing out of eight is “transcendent,” and the rest is “just work.” He averages one page an hour, and writes five pages a day.

His latest book, _The First Patient_, about the president’s physician, was published by St. Martin’s press in 2008.

In addition to his writing, Dr. Palmer works part time as an associate director of the Massachusetts Medical Society’s Physician Health Program.

—Jerome Lang
Secretary

Personal Notes

Kevin P. Flynn, MA, has joined Analgesic Research in Needham, Mass., as director of scientific communications. He was previously managing director at ApotheCom Associates LLC. Kevin is a past president of the New England Chapter and an AMWA fellow.

Ava L. Taylor, MS, is now a medical writer at Synta Pharmaceuticals, Inc., Lexington, Mass. She was previously a medical writer at Ophthalmic Research Associates Inc.


Kafi N. Meadows, PhD, is now a medical writer at Custom Learning Designs Inc., Belmont, Mass. She was previously a research fellow at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center.

Stacey M. Ellender, PhD, is now a senior research associate at Boston Medical Center.

Rosanne T. Guerriero, MPH, is now a project manager at Lahey Clinic, Burlington, Mass. She was formerly a managing editor at Boston Medical Center.

Linda Fossati Wood, RN, MPH, and California AMWA member MaryAnn Foote, PhD, are editors of _Targeted Regulatory Writing Techniques: Clinical Documents for Drugs and Biologics_, the first comprehensive book on regulatory writing for the biopharmaceutical industry, recently published by Birkhäuser. Linda is president of MedWrite Inc. in Westford, Mass., which offers consulting services for pharmaceutical, biotechnology, and medical device companies. She is a past president of the New England Chapter.

Larry J. Rosenberg, PhD, is now a senior medical writer at Envision Pharma Inc., Southport, Conn.

Ellen E. Millman, MS, is now a research associate at The Institute for Bioanalytics, Branford, Conn.

Eric D. Rabinovsky, PhD, is now medical director at MedKnowledge Communications LLC, Rocky Hill, Conn.

Watch the _AMWA Journal_ for an entertaining (and inspiring!) report on Julie Martin’s coffee and dessert klatch, “Gutsy Travelers: Going Solo Around the World,” at the AMWA conference in Louisville last fall. Julie, the immediate past president of the New England Chapter, is a communications manager at Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston.

CHAPTER CHANGES: Martin E. Gordon, MD, has moved to St. Louis, Mo., and is now a member of the Mid-America Chapter. Pamela Obuchowski has moved to Dunwoody, Ga., and is now a member of the Southeast Chapter.
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:

Julie Bellet, MD
Sudbury, Massachusetts
[from Mid-Atlantic Chapter]

Milena Braga-Basaria
Boston, Massachusetts

Philip Caffery, PhD
Brown University
Providence, Rhode Island

Marsha R. Charron, BA
Waterford, Connecticut
Kendle International Inc.

Charles Daniel, MPH
Newtonville, Massachusetts

Ellen C. DeNigris, MD
Norwich, Connecticut

Geoffrey Denton
Serono Inc.
Rockland, Massachusetts

Derek Dore, PharmD
Amesbury, Massachusetts

Gerald F. Eisen, BS
Eisen Medical Writing & Clinical Consulting
Henniker, New Hampshire

Tim Fitzpatrick, BS
Andover, Massachusetts

Julia Jenkins
Newton, Massachusetts

Deanna Kinney, BS
Brighton, Massachusetts

Jack Korpi
Woburn, Massachusetts

Elizabeth J. Lathers, PhD
Wareham, Massachusetts
EMD Serono Inc.

Robin D. LeWinter, PhD
Brookline, Massachusetts
[from Northern California Chapter]

Peter B. Lindgren, PhD
Hampton, New Hampshire
[from Carolinas Chapter]

Ruth Lloyd, MS, PhD
Boston, Massachusetts

Joanne B. Murray, PhD
Mystic, Connecticut
Pfizer Inc.

Ruth A. O’Halloran, PhD
Quanticate
Cambridge, Massachusetts
[from England]

Katherine M. Parisky, PhD
South Boston, Massachusetts
Brandeis University

Leslie A. Pray, PhD
Holyoke, Massachusetts

Marcie A. Roche, PhD
South Londonderry, Vermont

Claire Standen, PhD
Worcester, Massachusetts

Barbara S. Sternberg, PhD
Yarmouth Port, Massachusetts

Danielle L. Thaler, BA
McInnis Contracting Services
Milford, Connecticut

Bethany Thivierge, MPH, ELS
Technicality Resources
Rockland, Maine

Emily Van Ness
Storrs, Connecticut

Regina Windsor, BA, MPH
Woburn, Massachusetts

Obituary

Sally Ann Edwards, who brought the innovative concept of professional roundtables to AMWA, died on November 13 of complications from recurrent brain tumors. She was 65.

Sally was a medical editor for some 35 years, spending most of her career at Harvard hospitals until 1999, when she joined the Health Effects Institute as director of publications. Before that, she was managing editor of the Radiology Publications Group at Brigham and Women’s Hospital. As a freelance during the years she was raising her two sons, she counted among her clients Brigham and Women’s, Deaconess Hospital, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School, and the Educational Development Center.

She held a BA in English, history, and secondary education from the University of Maine. She was named an AMWA fellow in 1985, and she was a certified Editor in the Life Sciences.

Sally joined AMWA in 1977. In 1979-80 she served as New England Chapter secretary and the following year as president-elect and delegate to the AMWA Board of Directors. That year she came up with the idea of having a chapter meeting at which experienced members would share their particular expertise in an informal but focused small-group format. The chapter’s first roundtable discussions, at a dinner meeting in May 1981, were a sell-out success, and AMWA borrowed the concept for a luncheon at the 1982 Annual Conference. Roundtables have continued to be a highlight of AMWA conferences and a popular meeting format for the chapter.


In 2001, on the occasion of the New England Chapter’s 25th anniversary, Sally was among the distinguished panelists discussing the past, present, and future of medical communication. Asked to describe her responsibilities over her then 30-year career, she said that she had been “called upon to do writing, editing, rewriting, typing, layout, design, graphics, photography, budgeting, people management, project management, Web presentations, tutoring, and more.” And she did all of this with uncommon professionalism, proficiency, enthusiasm, and intelligence.

Sally, my friend, was a bright light in this AMWA chapter, as she was in every aspect of her life.

—Judy Linn
Directions to February 8 Meeting

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

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. Continue straight through the traffic lights. The hotel is one-quarter mile ahead on the right.

**Coming from points south:**
Take Route 128/I-95 north to exit 27A (Totten Pond Road). At the end of the exit ramp follow the sign directing you through the traffic lights to Totten Pond Road. The hotel is one-quarter mile ahead on the right.

**Need a ride to the meeting?**
If you don't have a car, contact Judy Linn (508-358-7071 or judylinn@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.

New England E-news
A Chapter Membership Benefit

A few times a month, Chris McMorrow, chapter president, sends an e-mail to remind you of an upcoming chapter meeting or to let you know about a job opening, freelance opportunity, local event, or anything else that might be of interest to you or other New England AMWA members. The brief messages give only as much information as is necessary for you to follow up if you want to.

If there is something you would like to mention in the New England E-news, please send it to Chris for consideration (christine_mcmorrow@yahoo.com). In the case of a job notice, be sure to abide by the submission guidelines available at www.amwa-ne.org/content/pdfs/Submission%20Guidelines.pdf.

Note that anyone may submit an item, but the E-news is sent only to chapter members.

Chapter Membership Awards

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 second paragraph under New England Awards.

If you have questions, contact David Olle, membership awards director (dolle@ eastshirecommunications.com or 802-254-3899).

**BELS Exam in Boston?**
Are you interested in certification by the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS)? Jeanette Sayers is coordinating an effort to have BELS administer an exam in the Boston area. Contact her (jsayers@oraclinical.com) if you would like to take the exam.

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