December 3: Dinner Meeting in Newton, Mass.
Self-publishing Your Book:
From Preparation to Distribution

Join your colleagues at the New England Chapter’s next dinner meeting – on Tuesday, December 3 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Newton, Mass – for a practical program on self-publishing. David Pallai, founder and president of Mercury Learning and Information and a former publisher at Jones and Bartlett Learning, will take the mystery out of becoming a self-published author, helping you to transform your manuscript into a published product.

Mr. Pallai, who holds master’s degrees from both Boston College and Yale University, has taught the business of publishing, including the fundamentals of self-publishing, for 15 years, first at Emerson College and currently at Boston University. Many of his students have gone on to publish their own books.

Mr. Pallai will explain the key steps authors must take to self-publish their work, including acquiring the necessary ISBN/ISSN permissions and developing production, marketing, and distribution strategies. You will take away the basic tools you need to self-publish your work, whether in print or online. You’ll also learn how e-publishing has changed the delivery of self-published books.

During the social hour and dinner, you can catch up with your AMWA New England friends and make some new professional contacts as well.

At the same time, you might also want to chat informally with Mr. Pallai about writing for his publishing company. While Mr. Pallai is more than willing to share his extensive knowledge of self-publishing, he is also actively looking for professional writers for MyModernHealth FAQs, a Mercury Learning and Information book series on health topics for consumers. To check out the books published to date, you can visit the company’s website at http://www.merclearning.com/.

If you sign up early, you’ll not only be assured of a seat at the dinner table, you’ll see a substantial savings on the registration fee, too!

As always, guests and prospective members are welcome.

—Theresa Singleton
President-Elect/Program Director

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Chapter Calendar

The New England Chapter’s year begins in mid-June, when the new slate of officers takes over. The officers and other members of the chapter’s Executive Council meet during the summer, but there are no general activities during July and August.

Regular Meetings: The chapter holds six regular meetings from September through June. Four of these meetings are in the Greater Boston area, and two are in Connecticut. Typically, these meetings start 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.

Special Events: In addition to the regular meetings, the chapter holds one special event each year. A writing competition, culminating in presentation of the Will Solimene Awards for Excellence in Medical Communication, is held every other year. In the alternate years, the chapter holds the New England Conference, a full day of workshops on a Saturday in the spring.

Occasional Extras: Once in a while, the chapter schedules an informal event, such as a networking lunch.

Writing Competition

2014 Will Solimene Awards for Excellence in Medical Communication

The New England Chapter’s competition for the Solimene medical writing awards is held only once every two years, so the 2014 awards will recognize outstanding work published by New England medical writers—in print, online, or in audiovisual media—during 2012 and 2013. For over two decades, these awards have been prized as a mark of recognition by one’s professional peers.

Now is the time to think about seeking peer recognition for your work, whether you write for professional audiences, patients, or the general public. Is there a recent writing project that you’re especially proud of? Sometime next month you will have the opportunity to enter it in the 2014 competition. As soon as the competition opens, we’ll let you know via the AMWA New England E-News.

Plans for the Rest of the Chapter Year

January: Next month the chapter will hold an informal after-work meetup, hosted by Kristin Stephan, in either Cambridge or Boston. Watch the E-News for details.

February: Our midwinter Sunday brunch meeting in the Greater Boston area will feature roundtable discussions on career-related topics. Please contact Theresa Singleton if you have any suggestions (theresasingleton@hotmail.com).

March: The chapter will hold an informal networking lunch, hosted by Francesca Coltrera and Andrea Gwosdow, on Tuesday, March 11, at Chang Sho in Cambridge, Mass.

April: There will be a dinner meeting in the Greater Boston area in April.

May: The Connecticut Program Committee, headed by Jill Max, vice president/Connecticut, has already begun making plans for the spring dinner meeting there. You don’t have to live in Connecticut to attend. Everyone is welcome!

June: This year’s special event will be a dinner program in June featuring the 2014 Honors Speaker and presentation of the 2014 Will Solimene Awards for Excellence in Medical Communication.

Journalism Fellowship Opportunity

2014 Health Coverage Fellowship

The annual Health Coverage Fellowship for freelance and staff journalists, sponsored by the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of Massachusetts and other philanthropies, will offer nine days of training, from April 25 to May 3, 2014, on the Babson College campus, Wellesley, Mass., with follow-up for a year. Application deadline is December 2. For information, go to: http://bluecrossmafoundation.org/programs/health-coverage-fellowship.
September Meeting Report

Credentials to Help You Reach Your Career Goals

At the chapter’s dinner meeting in September, Jill Shuman, AMWA fellow and former New England Chapter president, encouraged attendees to “bridge the gap that exists between where you are now in your career and the goal you intend to reach.” To this end, she provided an overview of various programs that offer professional certifications, certificates, university degrees, and online learning of interest to medical communicators.

Jill began by noting that a certification is a credential granted to an individual who has met established criteria for competency, whereas a certificate is a document attesting to one’s participation in an educational program designed to help fulfill specific learning objectives. She reminded us that, although AMWA currently only offers certificates, the association will soon also offer a certification: Certified Medical Writer (CMW). The CMW will require applicants to submit a portfolio of work and pass an exam. The first exam will be offered in 2015.

Among Jill’s own credentials are an MS degree in communication, certification as an Editor in the Life Sciences (ELS), certification as a CME Professional (CCMEP), and certification as a grant professional (GPC). Attaining the ELS, she said, has been particularly helpful in advancing her career, and she highly recommends it. She also mentioned that earning a GPC is a good way to expand the work you do. Nonprofit and corporate grant work pays well, and because it usually supports a good cause, such as literacy or women’s health, it gives the writer a true sense of fulfillment.

For online learning, she suggested the Poynter Institute, a nonprofit journalism training center that offers courses in which seasoned writers and editors can hone their skills. You can learn, for example, how to craft “short narrative bursts” and make the most of social media outlets such as Twitter and Tumblr.

Regardless of the path you choose, it is always good to be learning something new and different, she said, even if you are not using it right now. You never know what will come out of learning a new software program, learning a new language, or writing a grant for a community project. And, as the Nobel laureate Dr. Rosalyn S. Yalow observed, “The excitement of learning separates youth from old age. As long as you’re learning, you’re not old.”

If you were unable to attend the meeting, you can learn more about certifications, certificates, university programs, and online training by viewing Jill’s presentation slides, which she has generously allowed us to post on the New England Chapter website (www.amwa-ne.org).

— Marisa Greenfield, Secretary

October Meeting Report

Ergonomics for Desk-Bound Medical Writers

The chapter’s fall dinner meeting in Connecticut—held at the Stone Hearth restaurant in New Haven, a new venue for us—featured a presentation by Nicholas Warren, MS, MAT, ScD, an associate professor of medicine at the University of Connecticut Health Center and ergonomics coordinator at the Ergonomic Technology Center of Connecticut, located at UCHC. He spoke about the musculoskeletal risk factors of office work and how to reduce them.

Dr. Warren began by pointing out that the design features of modern work are incompatible with how humans are designed. For most of our evolutionary history we have been hunter-gatherers, interspersing intense bursts of exertion with long periods of rest. Not surprisingly, maintaining a stationary position at a desk can lead to trouble. Musculoskeletal disorders brought about by our work habits can include not just aches and pains, but also numbness, swelling, inflammation, and tingling.

Dr. Warren asked the group where we were experiencing the most discomfort, and the consensus was that the neck, shoulders, lower back, wrists, and elbows are the most problematic areas. Using an office chair, he demonstrated the correct ergonomic posture to minimize those discomforts when sitting at a desk and working on a computer: Your back should be against the chair back, your elbows should be supported by the arm rests, the seat should support as much of your thighs as possible, the keyboard should be close to your abdomen, and the top of the monitor screen should be at eye level.

Although it makes sense to invest in a chair that is adjustable, there are also inexpensive modifications you can make, such as placing books under the monitor to raise it, bringing the monitor closer, using copy holders, buying a gel pad to support your wrists, using a headset for phone calls, and installing a keyboard tray to bring the keyboard lower and closer to your body.

Dr. Warren also suggested getting up and moving around for a few minutes every hour, as well as taking periodic microbreaks that could be as short as a minute.

If you would like to learn more about Dr. Warren’s work, go to: http://www.oehc.uche.edu/facstaff_warren.asp.

— Jill Max
Vice President/Connecticut
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:

Yael Abadi
New Haven, Connecticut

Susan Armknecht
Groton, Connecticut

Maureen Alexandra Armonies, BA
South Kingston, Rhode Island

Neil Andrews, MS
Brookline, Massachusetts

IBMS BoneKey

Yvonne Bokhour, MA
Sweet Water Health Advocates LLC
Westport, Connecticut

Shelby E. Briggs
EMD Serono Inc.
Rockland, Massachusetts

Melinda Burke
Brattleboro, Vermont

Brittany Loren Cain
University of New England
School of Pharmacy
Portland, Maine

Nolan Campbell, PhD
Biogen Idec
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Andrea Chisholm, MD
Salem, Massachusetts

Kara Crowley, MS
New Fairfield, Connecticut

Pfizer New Haven Clinical Research Unit

Sarah LaVaughn Dobney, MPH
PAREXEL
Billerica, Massachusetts

Maria Ekstrom, BSc, MPH
Ekstrea Media
Newton, Massachusetts

Richard Charles Fuller
Allston, Massachusetts

Donnasue Graesser, PhD
North Windham, Connecticut
University of Connecticut

Tatum S. Johnson, MD
Etna, New Hampshire

Natalie Kane, MS
West Hartford, Connecticut

Jason Paul Keller
Boston University
Boston, Massachusetts

Tanya Larsen-Bollenbach, MSc
Veristat
Holliston, Massachusetts

Diane J. Lewis-D’Agostino, MPH, RN
Boehringer-Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals
Ridgefield, Connecticut
[from Empire State-Metro NY Chapter]

Marva M. Loback, MS, MBA
Belmont, Massachusetts
Novartis Vaccines and Diagnostics

Patricia McTiernan, MS
Arlington, Massachusetts

Carolyn Mitchell
Pownal, Vermont

Maria Naylor, PhD
Brookline, Massachusetts

Biogen Idec

Barbara J. O’Neill, BA, BSN, RN-OCN
New London, Connecticut

Marion Anne Price, BS, MFA
Wakefield, Rhode Island

Eric Reavis
Norwich, Vermont
Dartmouth College

Gabrielle Ruggiero
Storrs, Connecticut

Gregg Squeglia, BS, PT
Mashpee, Massachusetts

Nancy A. Stokes
Hull, Massachusetts
Clarity Technical Communications

Audrey Jean Thibodeau, BA
Hebron, New Hampshire

Mark B. Thomas, PhD
Westborough, Massachusetts

Sofia Luz Vidal-Cardenas, PhD
Wakefield, Massachusetts
ARIAD Pharmaceuticals

Jennifer Wardell, PhD
Brown University
Providence, Rhode Island

Susan C. Wu, PhD
Somerville, Massachusetts
Vertex Pharmaceuticals

AMWA New England E-News
E-mail from President Keeps You Informed

Keep an eye out for an occasional e-mail from chapter president Shanna McClennen with “AMWA New England E-News” in the subject line. The brief messages let you know about local job openings, freelance opportunities, upcoming chapter meetings, and other events of possible interest to members of the New England Chapter.

Personal Notes

Debra L. Stamper, PhD, is now a principle medical writer at Sanofi, Cambridge, Mass. She was previously manager, medical writing at Veristat Inc.

Justin Allen, PhD, has joined Foundation Medicine Inc., Cambridge, Mass., as a scientist, biomedical informatics. He was previously a postdoctoral research fellow at Children’s Hospital Boston.
How to Register for December 3 Meeting

You can register for this event either online or by mail, depending on how you wish to pay. Either way, if you sign up before 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 28, you can take advantage of the lower fee for early registration.

To pay by credit card or e-check, use the electronic registration form on the chapter website (www.amwa-ne.org). Fill it out and continue to the PayPal form, where you can enter your credit card information. (You don’t need a PayPal account, and you will not be charged a fee for the transaction.)

To pay by check, download the printable registration form from the chapter website (www.amwa-ne.org), print a copy, fill it out, and mail it with your check to the address on the form. Please note that if you want to pay by check, you must make sure that we receive your registration by Thursday, November 28. After that, we can only accept payment via the electronic registration form.

Directions to December 3 Meeting

Crowne Plaza Hotel
320 Washington Street
Newton, Massachusetts
617-969-3010

The Crowne Plaza is located in the Newton Corner area, over the Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90) at exit 17. There is complimentary parking after 5:00 p.m. in the Gateway Garage, adjacent to the hotel.

You can get detailed driving directions or information about public transportation at: http://www.cpboston-newton.com/directions.html.

Need a ride to the meeting?
If you don’t have a car and can’t get there easily by public transportation, ask Judy Linn (judyhlinn@aol.com) whether there is someone from your area who might be able to give you a lift.

New Online University Program
Digital Health Communication Certificate

Tufts University School of Medicine is now offering online courses leading to a certificate in digital health communication for health professionals who need to understand digital communication channels and how to incorporate them as part of an organization’s strategic health communication and outreach efforts. For information, go to: http://publichealth.tufts.edu/Academics/HCOM-Program/Certificate.

2014 AMWA Annual Conference

As you start filling in your 2014 calendar, mark Oct. 8-11: “AMWA, Memphis, Tenn.” Planning has already begun for AMWA’s 74th Annual Conference. As always, it’s sure to be an unparalleled experience, with hundreds of medical communicators convening from around the country and beyond for 3½ days of workshops, lectures, roundtables, poster presentations, exhibits, networking sessions, and more. Watch the AMWA website (www.amwa.org) for updates as the program develops.

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MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

Francesca Coltrera, Andrea Gwosdow, Laurie LaRusso, Joann Merriman, Olivier Morteau, Nicola Parry, Kristin Stephan, Debbie von Rechenberg

DELEGATES TO AMWA
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Shanna McClennen, Theresa Singleton
ALTERNATES: Derek Dore, Jill Max