September 26: Dinner Meeting in Lexington, Mass.

**DIY Graphics for Medical Writers**

Don’t fear the figures! Don’t panic about poster design! Stop stressing over slides! Join your colleagues on Monday, September 26, at Yangtze River Restaurant in Lexington, Mass., to learn the essentials of creating graphics for medical publications and presentations.

The ability to create clean, crisp graphics that effectively highlight key data and convey key messages is in high demand, because graphs, charts, and diagrams spotlight important trends and messages in ways that text cannot.

You can easily learn to do it yourself, without having to rely on graphic design services or invest in expensive illustration software. Using Microsoft PowerPoint with its embedded Excel features, you can produce the visual elements of presentations and publications, including slide sets, posters, and manuscript figures. Kelly Dobben-Annis, a professional graphic designer, and our AMWA colleague Laurie LaRusso, a medical writer who is also a self-taught graphics whiz, will show how it’s done.

Ms. Dobben-Annis holds an associate’s degree in commercial design and illustration and has nearly 25 years of experience as a graphics designer in both print and digital marketing. She currently works as a designer at Cell Signaling Technology, a life sciences and research company based in Danvers, Mass. During her 16-year tenure there, she has held several positions and is currently the senior designer/creative project manager. She has won numerous design awards and has earned multiple certifications in design.

Ms. LaRusso has been writing about health and medicine for a variety of audiences and in a variety of formats for more than 15 years. Her publications and presentations run the gamut from clinical research and continuing medical education to consumer health and patient education. She spends much of her time writing and developing graphics for peer-reviewed journal articles, slide decks, and posters for scientific conferences, and has become a go-to graphics person for several of her clients. She has a master’s degree in health communication from Tufts University and is certified as an editor, life sciences (ELS). She does not have a degree or certification in graphic design!

You won’t want to miss this first meeting of the chapter’s 2016-17 year on September 26. Come early to network with friendly fellow medical writers. Then enjoy the plentiful Chinese buffet, followed by a presentation that will give you valuable tips on how to create high-quality graphics for your writing projects.

As always, guests and prospective members are welcome.

**DIY GRAPHICS**

**DATE:** Monday, September 26  
**TIME:** Social Hour (cash bar)—6:00 to 7:00 p.m.  
Dinner—7:00 to 8:00 p.m.  Program—8:00 to 9:00 p.m.  
**PLACE:** Yangtze River Restaurant, 25 Depot Square, Lexington, Massachusetts. (DIRECTIONS on page 6)  
**BUFFET MENU:** Ravioli  • Beef Teriyaki  • Crab Rangoon  • Chicken Wings  • Egg Rolls  • West Lake Beef Soup  • Loquat-Flavored Crispy Duck  • Shanghai Crispy Beef  • Crispy Shrimp Roll with Tofu Skin  • Mandarin Pork Chops in Tomato Sauce  • Stuffed Eggplant with Minced Shrimp  • Shanghai Bok Choy with Garlic  • General Gao’s Chicken  • Steamed Rice (NOTE: Vegetarian and gluten-free options will be available on request.)

**REGISTRATION:** The registration fee is $25.00 for members, $30.00 for guests and prospective members. You can pay online with a credit card or by mail with a check. (See HOW TO REGISTER on page 6.)

**DEADLINE:** To guarantee reservations, we must receive your payment no later than 5:00 p.m., Thursday, September 22. There will be no refunds for cancellation after that, but late registrations (online only) will be accepted on a space-available basis.
CHAPTER CALENDAR

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

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.

In addition to the regular meetings, the chapter occasionally schedules other events, ranging from informal networking lunches or evening meetups to workshop programs.

Every fall, at AMWA’s national meeting, attendees from New England get together for an informal dinner at a restaurant near the conference site.

October 7
Chapter Dinner
AMWA Conference
Denver, Colo.

If you’re going to Denver for the 2016 AMWA Medical Writing & Communication Conference, plan to join your New England colleagues for dinner on Friday, October 7, at The Cheesecake Factory, about a mile from the hotel. (To see their menu, go to http://locations.thecheesecakefactory.com/co/denver-19.html.)

We’ll all meet in the Sheraton Denver Downtown Hotel lobby at 6:30 p.m. and walk to the restaurant.

You don’t have to pay in advance, but you must make a reservation to be sure of a seat. Please RSVP to Debbie Ferguson (deborah.ferguson@yahoo.com) no later than Monday, October 3.

October 13
Networking Lunch
Cambridge, Mass.

Everyone is invited to lunch at 12:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 13, at Changsho, 1712 Mass. Ave., Cambridge, Mass. (between Harvard Square and Porter Square). Meet colleagues, raise work-related questions, and share tips on medical writing. Take the Red Line to Harvard Square and walk to the restaurant, or park across the street in the Changsho lot. Cost is the price of buffet lunch, plus your drink and tip. Please RSVP by Wednesday, October 12, to Francesca Coltrera at coltrera@comcast.net or 781-641-9872.

TBD
Dinner Meeting
New Haven, Conn.

Watch the AMWA New England E-News for information about the chapter’s Connecticut fall meeting—a dinner program in New Haven in early November.

TBD
Dinner Meeting
Greater Boston Area

The chapter will hold a dinner program in Massachusetts in early December.

Other Upcoming Events in New England

If you are involved with or know about a forthcoming professional meeting, educational program, or other activity that might be of interest to New England AMWA members, please send the information to Judy Linn at judylinn@aol.com. We are happy to publicize such events in the chapter newsletter and/or via the AMWA New England E-News.

September 25-October 1
HUBweek 2016
Boston, Mass.

Billed as “a festival for the future,” HUBweek’s programs at various sites around the city will cover a wide range of topics, including biotech, medicine, and health. Events of possible interest to AMWA members range from a workshop on “Designing Your Website on the Cheap” to a panel presentation on “FDA and the Drug Approval Process: Is It Really Broken?” Most sessions are free, but advance registration is required. For information, go to https://hubweek.org/.

March 30 - April 1, 2017
Writing, Publishing, and Social Media Course
Boston, Mass.

The Harvard Medical School’s annual 3-day CME course for “healthcare professionals who want to advance their communication skills or get published” will be held at the Fairmont Copley Plaza Hotel, Boston. For information, go to http://wps.hmscme.com/.
April Meeting Report
How 3 Medical Communicators Landed the Jobs They Wanted

At the New England Chapter’s dinner meeting in April at Yangtze River Restaurant in Lexington, Mass., three of our colleagues shared stories of navigating recent job challenges. Shawn Watson had completed doctoral studies in pharmacy and in clinical pharmaceutical sciences—he holds both a PharmD degree and a PhD—but still wasn’t considered qualified for a regulatory writing job. Aaron Federman was unexpectedly let go from a technical writing job he loved and had held for over 17 years. Jill Shuman had found her dream job a few years back, but then the company abruptly folded, forcing her to look for work at the age of 60. Although they were at very different stages of their careers, they all used positive, organized approaches, worked hard, and made the happy ending happen.

There were common threads running through all three stories. They all emphasized networking—Jill quipped that the difference between networking and not working is just one letter! And they took advantage of available resources. For Jill and Aaron, who were laid off, these included career counseling services and support groups offered through the Massachusetts state employment office. For all of them, professional organizations, courses, online forums, and colleagues proved invaluable.

After networking with regulatory writers to identify a path to a regulatory writing position, Shawn began his journey by taking a job with a contract research organization, where he learned the best practices of client pharmaceutical companies. He then moved on to a company dedicated to medical writing for client companies. And finally, with some higher-level experience under his belt, he applied to a pharmaceutical company and got the job he really wanted.

Aaron’s lay-off was due to a business decision and came without warning. (He said he felt like “a cowboy being thrown out of a saloon.”) But he soon found a job lead, and in filling out the extensive online assessment, he identified the things he enjoyed about his last job. This gave him a focus that served him well not just for the interview, but in clarifying why he loved his work. He believed he fit the job description, and the interview with the hiring manager went well. But in the next round of interviews, the technical writers quizzed him on his knowledge of a tool he was unfamiliar with. It looked like the company was going to take a pass on him. So he spoke with people in his network and put together a plan to fill the gap in skills on his own. He made his case to the hiring manager that the skills he would bring to the role outweighed his lack of familiarity with the tool. By persisting and presenting the hiring manager with a solid strategy, he was able to land the job.

Jill’s systematic approach to her job search began with going to the beach for two weeks. (She joked that we should try to be laid off in the summer.) She took the time to just relax. Then she dug in, treating her job search as a full-time job. She began by making a matrix of all she had done, all that she wanted to continue doing (or not), and what she needed in a new job. This allowed her to focus her search and rationally evaluate all her opportunities. Her cheeky presentation titled “Death by PowerPoint” sealed the deal with a pharmaceutical company seeking a knowledge management director. They appreciated her style and said she was just the sort of team leader they needed. Knowing what she was good at and what she wanted helped her leverage her skills to get a position in a field she had not previously had a leadership role in.

Besides having engaging and encouraging stories, the presenters offered some practical tips:

- Put your resume in plain text (for filling out online applications).
- Don’t overshare on resumes—the last 10 to 15 years are sufficient.
- Update your LinkedIn profile.
- Reflect on past accomplishments as a way of clarifying future goals.
- Use a spreadsheet to track your job searches.
- Research corporate culture (e.g., at www.themuse.com and www.glassdoor.com).

The presenters gave us so much to think about that everyone who attended this program should be ready for a job change, planned or unplanned—starting with that beach trip!

—Debbie von Reichenberg
2015-16 Secretary

June Meeting Report
Football and Chronic Brain Damage

New England Chapter members and guests met in June at the Capitol Theatre in Arlington, Mass., for a private screening of *Concussion*, a true story of a young physician who discovered the link between repeated concussions and long-term brain damage in NFL football players. As a mother of two boys who are involved in team sports—and also love the Patriots—I was looking forward to learning more about this provocative subject.

The movie opened with Dr. Bennet Omalu, an accomplished Nigerian-born pathologist, testifying in court about forensic evidence in a murder trial. His passionate testimony clearly demonstrated his commitment to his patients and to fully understanding the true cause of their death.

In 2002, while working in the Allegheny County Coroner’s Office in Pittsburgh, Dr. Omalu was assigned the...
autopsy of Mike Webster, a former Pittsburgh Steelers player and a member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame. He determined that the cause of death was a heart attack, which was unusual given that Webster was only 50 years old. Dr. Omalu consulted with Dr. Julian Bailes, Webster’s former physician and neurological consultant to the NFL, who revealed that Webster had been living with depression and dementia for several years. Suspecting that there was more to the story, Dr. Omalu requested that Webster’s brain be sent for histopathological analysis.

Using his personal microscope at home, Dr. Omalu studied the brain tissue sections. To his surprise, he observed significant amounts of neurofibrillary tangles, which are typically present in advanced brain disease. Footage from professional football games helped Dr. Omalu form the hypothesis that the repeated concussions sustained by football players might cause long-term brain damage. In 2005, he named the condition chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) and published his observations in the journal *Neurosurgery*.

Dr. Omalu’s findings were initially dismissed by the NFL as “completely wrong.” The Mild Traumatic Brain Injury Committee, commissioned by the NFL, went so far as to request that the article be retracted. Undeterred, Dr. Omalu continued his research and found evidence of CTE in two other former NFL players who had committed suicide, Terry Long and Andre Waters. Still, the NFL denied any connection between concussions and long-term brain damage.

The ongoing tension between the NFL and Dr. Omalu took its toll. The FBI conducted a suspicious raid in the office of Cyril Wecht, Dr. Omalu’s boss and mentor, and Dr. Omalu himself was threatened with deportation. In 2007, unable to continue to live and work in Pittsburgh, the Omalus left their home and moved to California.

In late 2009, the NFL acknowledged that there was evidence to support a link between concussions and CTE. A class action lawsuit was filed by former professional football players against the NFL for failing to properly inform them of the risks of permanent brain damage. Dr. Omalu was offered the Chief Medical Examiner position in the District of Columbia; however, he declined the offer and continues to work as a forensic pathologist in California.

After the movie, we discussed our impressions of the film as we indulged in ice cream sundaes. Many were familiar with CTE due to the ongoing news coverage of the NFL trial, but were not aware of the extent of Dr. Omalu’s contributions. Personally, I found the story to be both inspiring and sobering—I will definitely be paying closer attention to the risks associated with concussions.

—**Debbie Ferguson, Secretary**

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**MOVIE NIGHT from previous page**

**Personal Note**

In June, **Laurie MacDougall** (below, left), became a three-time *Jeopardy!* winner, going home with $78,000. Thanks to this impressive performance, she’s on the list of candidates for the 2016 Tournament of Champions, a 2-week competition featuring some of the year’s best players.

In real life, Laurie is a cancer registrar at St. Elizabeth’s Medical Center in Boston and a freelance medical editor. She holds master’s degrees in both epidemiology and gerontology and is a certified tumor registrar. She is a past president of the New England Chapter.

**Connecticut Programs: Committee Seeking Volunteers**

Would you be interested in serving on the New England Chapter’s Connecticut Programs Committee? If you’d like to help select program topics and meeting locations, please contact the new Vice President for Connecticut, Margaret Burke, for more information (mburkepharmd@cox.net).

Margaret would also be pleased to hear from anyone who would like to give a presentation at a Connecticut meeting. Send her an email with a brief description of what you would talk about and why you think it would be of interest to your fellow medical communicators. The Program Committee will give careful consideration to any proposal.

**Are you eligible for free AMWA membership?**

If you are just starting your career, with no more than three years of full-time experience as a medical writer or editor, and you live and work in New England, you may be eligible for the New England Chapter’s Linn Membership Award. This award covers the cost of AMWA dues for one year, with full membership benefits, and also allows the recipient to register for the chapter’s regular meetings at no charge.

There is no application fee, and an application may be submitted at any time. For more information, please go to www.amwa-ne.org/awards.
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. We are also happy to welcome AMWA members from outside of New England who are planning to move here in the near future or have personal or professional ties here.

Dana Berberio, MS
Sherborn, Massachusetts

Julie Bellet, MD
Ipswich, Massachusetts

Becki Cameron
Concord, New Hampshire

Susan C. Carr, BA
Concord, Massachusetts

Agnes Costello, PharmD, MS
Lexington, Massachusetts

Kenneth Dangman, PhD, MD, MPH
Avon, Connecticut

Pranali Prabhakar Deshpande, MS
Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts

Karen S. Duncan
Westbrook, Maine

Lindsay Guth
New England Journal of Medicine
Boston, Massachusetts

Matthew Hanley
Farmington, Connecticut

Aditi Jhavari, MS
Boston, Massachusetts

Daniel Kelley
DK Translations LLC
Lebanon, New Hampshire

Ellie W. Lin, MS
Worcester, Massachusetts

Karen Macheledt, MD, MS
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Meghan Malone-Moses, MPH
EBSCO
Ipswich, Massachusetts

Isabelle Markey, RN, MSN
Waterville, Maine

Colleen C. Mazin, MS, MPH
Sudbury, Massachusetts

Kelly Nulick, MAT
Hope Valley, Rhode Island
Pfizer

Helen Margaret O’Rourke, MS
Stonington, Connecticut

Ann Pike-Paris, MS, RN
East Orleans, Massachusetts
Hayes Inc.

Claudia Prahst, PhD
Cambridge, Massachusetts
Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center

Sunita Rangaraju, PhD
Scripps Research Institute
San Diego, California

Tithi Dutta Roy, PhD
Medtronic
Mansfield, Massachusetts
[from Florida Chapter]

Ashvin Shah, PhD
Salem, Massachusetts

Carolyn Skowronsksi, PharmD
Milton, Massachusetts

Donald S. Smith, BA, ELS
New England Journal of Medicine
Boston, Massachusetts

Sacha Uljon, MD, PhD
Brookline, Massachusetts

Elizabeth Witte, MFA
Harvard Medical School
Boston, Massachusetts

Connect on LinkedIn with Fellow New Englanders
Have you signed up for the AMWA New England subgroup on LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com)? This open forum for questions and comments about local matters provides an easy way for you to connect with other medical writers and editors here in our region. Everyone—including prospective members—is welcome to participate.

To discuss—or just keep abreast of—professional issues of general interest, you can also sign up for AMWA Engage, the national online forum for AMWA members (http://engage.amwa.org/home).

Keep Up to Date with ‘AMWA New England E-News’
Watch for the occasional email from “President@amwa-ne.org” with “AMWA New England E-News” in the subject line. A few times a month, chapter president Olivier Morteau sends an email to New England Chapter members to announce a job opening, an upcoming chapter meeting, or some other local event. Be sure to take a quick glance at these brief messages so you don’t miss something of possible interest to you.
How to Register for September 26 Meeting

You can register for this event either online or by mail, depending on how you wish to pay.

- **To pay by credit card**, 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.

New England Chapter Membership Survey

Sometime this fall, president Olivier Morteau will be asking all chapter members to complete a survey to help chapter leaders plan events for the 2016-17 year and beyond. The survey will not be overly long, so please take a few minutes to share your thoughts and let your chapter leaders know what interests you and what doesn’t.

In the meantime, remember that your suggestions, critiques, and questions are always welcome. You can send an email to Olivier at olivier.morteau@gmail.com.

Directions to September 26 Meeting

Yangtze River Restaurant
21 Depot Square (off Mass. Ave.)
Lexington, Massachusetts
781-861-6030

Depot Square is a three-sided block directly off Mass. Ave., which is the main street in Lexington Center. The Depot Square roadway begins and ends on Mass. Ave.

There is some on-street parking as well as parking in municipal lots in back of Depot Square.

To get there:

- **From Route 128/I-95**: Take Exit 31A East to Routes 4/225, which is Bedford Street. Follow the signs into Lexington Center past the Minute Man statue, where Bedford Street joins Mass. Ave. Go straight ahead and take the third left into Depot Square.
- **From Route 2**: Take Exit 54 to Waltham St/Waltham. Follow the signs for Lexington Center to the traffic lights at the end of Waltham Street. Turn left onto Mass. Ave. and stay in the right lane. Depot Square is on the right, about 100 yards beyond the traffic lights.
- **From Cambridge/Arlington**: Follow Mass. Ave. north to Lexington Center. Depot Square is on the right, about 100 yards beyond the traffic lights.

For detailed driving directions from your location, go to:

Need a ride to the meeting?

If you don’t have a car, ask Judy Linn (judyhlinn@aol.com) whether there is someone from your area who might be able to give you a lift. You can also use the chapter’s LinkedIn page to ask for a ride (or offer one).