March 31: Sunday Brunch Meeting in Burlington, Mass.

**Roundtable Discussions for Professional Development**

The New England Chapter will hold its annual Sunday brunch on March 31 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Burlington, Mass. This always popular event will feature lively roundtable discussions led by knowledgeable AMWA members—colleagues who will share their insights, offer valuable advice, and answer questions while we all enjoy a leisurely late breakfast.

There will be 8 roundtables in all—7 on career-related topics, plus an informal “book club” table. Choose the table 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 will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis upon receipt of payment.

As always, guests and prospective members are welcome.

**ROUNDTABLES**

**Table #1**

**BREAKING INTO MEDICAL WRITING**

*Leader: Sue Chow*

This roundtable will help scientists and clinicians figure out how to use their skills in a career as a medical writer. Join colleagues to discuss how to make the transition. Explore the nuts and bolts of applying your skills to this new arena, including how to develop contacts and resources, how to get clips, and tips for finding a job.

**Table #2**

**REGULATORY WRITING IN THE DRUG INDUSTRY**

*Leader: Debbie von Rechenberg*

One of the hottest fields in medical writing is helping pharmaceutical and biotechnology firms prepare documents for regulatory authorities such as the FDA. We’ll discuss the ABCs of clinical research, the regulations companies must follow, and documents that support it. We’ll also discuss how the work is done and what a day looks like. Finally, we’ll delve into the mysteries of the “alphabet soup” of the industry: GCP, CTD, CSR, RMP, etc. This discussion will help you decide if you would like this type of work and might even help you land an interview!

**Table #3**

**NONREGULATORY WRITING IN THE DRUG INDUSTRY**

*Leader: Olivier Morteau*

Not all medical writers in pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies work on regulatory documentation. Join this discussion to learn about nonregulatory writing jobs in the pharma/biotech industry—in medical education, medical information, scientific publications, sales training, consumer information, corporate communications, and other areas.

**DATE:** Sunday, March 31

**TIME:** Social Hour (Juice, Coffee, Tea) starts at 11:00 a.m. Brunch & Discussions are from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m.

**PLACE:** Hilton Garden Inn, 5 Wheeler Road, Burlington, Massachusetts (DIRECTIONS on page 7)

**BUFFET MENU:** Scrambled Eggs ● Bacon ● Breakfast Potatoes ● Fruit Juices ● Sliced Seasonal Fruit ● Vanilla & Low-Fat Fruit-Flavored Yogurts with Granola ● Assorted Bagels with Cream Cheese ● Muffins, Danish Pastries & Croissants with Butter, Honey & Preserves ● Coffee, Decaf, Herbal & Breakfast Teas

**REGISTRATION:** The registration fee is $33 for members, $40 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 7.)

**DEADLINE:** To guarantee brunch reservations, we must receive your payment by Tuesday, March 26. There will be no refunds for cancellation after that, but late registrations (online only) will be accepted on a space-available basis.
CHAPTER CALENDAR

TBA
Networking Lunch
Cambridge, Mass.
The chapter is planning to hold an informal networking lunch at Changsho, 1712 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, Mass. (between Harvard Square and Porter Square). You’ll have an opportunity to meet colleagues, raise work-related questions, and share tips on medical writing. There is metered on-street parking, or you can take the T. Cost will be the price of buffet lunch, plus your drink and tip. Watch the AMWA New England E-News for details.

April 24
Dinner Meeting
Wallingford, Conn.
The New England Chapter will hold the Connecticut spring meeting on Wednesday, April 24, at Ola Restaurant in Wallingford. Agnella Izzo Matic, PhD, CMPP, of AIM Biomedical, will lead a case-based discussion on how medical writers can make small changes and educate colleagues to make an impact on gender bias in science, technology, engineering, and medicine (STEM) fields.

Other Events in New England
March 28-29
Tufts University School of Medicine
Plain Language Workshop
Boston, Mass.
“Plain Language for Health,” a two-day health literacy and plain language writing and design workshop, will be held at Tufts University School of Medicine, Boston. For information: https://publichealth.tufts.edu/graduate-programs/professional-development/hcom-professional-development/plain-language-health.

NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER NEWS, published 4 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 website.

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.

Judy Linn, Newsletter Editor
Phone: 508-358-7071
Email: judyhlinn@aol.com
www.amwa-ne.org

ROUNDTABLES continued from page 1

Table #4
HEALTH ECONOMICS AND OUTCOMES RESEARCH
Leader: Ana Bozas
This table is for writers interested in the growing field of health economics and outcomes research (HEOR). We will discuss the basics of HEOR and offer advice on breaking into this field.

Table #5
CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION
Leader: Jill Shuman
Writing continuing medical education (CME) materials requires a combination of scientific, business, and consumer writing skills. Learn about the different roles for a CME writer and how to find work in this tightly regulated area.

Table #6
JAM SESSION FOR EARLY CAREER FREELANCES
Leader: Theresa Singleton
The early years of freelancing are the most challenging, with business decisions ranging from setting up a business structure to finding and keeping clients, negotiating contracts, and estimating projects accurately, to name a few. We’ll discuss these and any other topics that arise. Come share your successes and toughest problems, and make new connections to continue the conversations once you’re back home.

Table #7
DIY GRAPHICS
Leader: Laurie LaRusso
Don’t fear the figures. Don’t panic about poster design. Stop stressing over slides. Medical writers can easily create high-quality graphic elements without enlisting the help of a graphic designer or incurring the expense of high-end graphics software. Learn tips and tricks on how to create high-quality graphics for your writing projects.

Table #8
BOOK CLUB
Leader: Debbie Ferguson
Looking for a table where you can chat informally with colleagues? We will be discussing the recent bestseller Bad Blood: Secrets and Lies in a Silicon Valley Startup by John Carreyrou. Please plan to read the book by the event date so we can have an engaging exchange!

Choose a table and join the conversation!
Validity and Privacy Issues in Ancestry DNA Testing

At the New England Chapter’s dinner meeting in Waltham, Mass., in September, Sheldon Krimsky, PhD, professor of urban and environmental policy and planning at Tufts University and an authority on social and ethical aspects of science and technology, spoke about “Ancestry DNA Testing and Privacy.” Dr. Krimsky noted that ancestry DNA testing has become very popular, but many consumers are not aware of how it works or of the privacy issues associated with it.

Among humans, 99.5% of the genome is identical. The remaining 0.5% consists of small variations in single nucleotides (called single nucleotide polymorphisms, or SNPs). Some of these SNPs, known as ancestry-informative markers (AIMs), are found at varying frequencies among different geographic populations. Genetic testing companies have exploited these AIMs to estimate a person’s ancestry by comparing his or her genetic sample to those in their reference databases. The quality and size of a reference database, Dr. Krimsky noted, can significantly influence the results of ancestry DNA testing. An ideal reference database would include thousands of DNA samples from people who lived in different regions of the world hundreds or thousands of years ago. But since it is not possible to collect and sequence these samples today, genetic testing companies obtain reference samples from existing populations believed to have lived in a given region for several generations. Little is known about how this information is validated.

Another concern is that most of the samples included in the reference databases may have been collected as a part of another study and therefore may not be a truly random sampling of the population. In addition, many geographic regions and populations—including African and Native American tribes—are underrepresented in the current databases.

Ancestry predictions require complex algorithms and statistical analyses. The types of analyses performed by a given genetic testing company are proprietary information and may change over time. This could result in different ancestry predictions by different companies or even by the same company over time.

A common misconception among consumers is that ancestry information from genetic testing can be informative about one’s race. Dr. Krimsky explained that individuals self-identify their race based in part on physical features such as skin color, eye color, and body form. He emphasized that DNA testing cannot determine which race or social groups a predicted ancestor may have identified with, or how consumers should identify themselves today.

Because ancestry DNA tests do not make health-related claims, they are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration. However, many studies have linked SNPs with medical information such as disease susceptibility, illness severity, and response to medication. Therefore, many ancestry DNA testing companies sell their data to pharmaceutical companies for research and product development purposes. According to Dr. Krimsky, current laws are not broad enough to protect consumers’ privacy. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act does not apply when DNA samples are sent to private companies by consumers. The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act makes it illegal to use genetic information to discriminate against employees or applicants for health care insurance, but not life insurance or long-term care insurance.

Although most ancestry DNA testing companies anonymize their databases, don’t allow third-party sharing without permission, and allow consumers to opt out of data sharing and research. Dr. Krimsky pointed out that anonymizing individual genetic data is challenging and could potentially be de-anonymized by a skilled researcher. Moreover, it could be difficult to ensure that all shared data are destroyed if consumers choose to opt out long after their data had been sold to third parties. Finally, even though companies may take precautions to protect consumers’ data, the risk of hacking and database breaches always exists.

Consumers may also use ancestry DNA testing to search for relatives. An online, open-source amateur genealogy database called GEDmatch allows users to compare their DNA sequences and family trees with other users’ data on the site. Only a few companies warn their customers that this could reveal cases of infidelity as well as unknown or unwanted children, which may result in long-lasting family conflicts.

DNA sequencing data collected for ancestry analysis may also be requested by law enforcement agencies. Several of the leading ancestry DNA testing companies (e.g., 23andMe) explicitly state that they resist law enforcement requests for individual personal information as much as possible. But law enforcement officials do not need a court order to access the publicly available GEDMatch database. Dr. Krimsky cited the Golden State Killer case as an example. Unable to solve the case, detectives submitted DNA evidence from crime scenes to GEDMatch and narrowed down the list of possible suspects to a single family. The officers collected a piece of abandoned trash from one of the family members for DNA analysis, and a match with the killer’s DNA finally unlocked the identity of the elusive and unlikely suspect—a retired law enforcement officer.

Given the current popularity of ancestry DNA tests as holiday gifts, it appears that many consider these tests to be a fun and harmless activity. However, as Dr. Krimsky explained, the genetic information obtained from these tests is associated with serious medical and ethical issues that consumers may not be aware of. Better communication about the scientific accuracy and privacy implications of ancestry DNA testing is clearly needed.

—Haifa Kassis & Deborah Ferguson, President

[Note: A longer version of this article will be published in the next issue of the AMWA Journal in the new Members Matters section.]
November Meeting Reports

Chapter Dinner at National Conference
Every fall New England attendees at the AMWA annual conference get together for an informal private dinner. At the 2018 AMWA Medical Writing & Communication Conference in Washington, D.C., in November, more than 30 chapter members met for an Italian dinner at Alba Osteria. Thanks to our colleague Haifa Kassis, MD, for organizing this event. And thanks to Theresa Singleton for these photos:

Acting Against Health Disparities
The New England Chapter’s fall dinner meeting in Connecticut, at Ola Restaurant in Wallingford in November, featured a presentation by New York AMWA member Bob Kirsch, MA, on “FDA and CDC Acting Against Health Disparities: Will Your Work Be Affected?” Bob defined the terms “health disparity” and “social determinants of health,” giving several examples, and explained how current knowledge about health disparities is influencing healthcare priorities and policies. Then we all discussed how these changing priorities present opportunities for medical writers and how writers can incorporate the issue of healthy disparities and social determinants of health into their writing.

For an in-depth look at this topic, see Bob’s 3-part series, coauthored with Dr. Tamara Bell, in the AMWA Journal: “People Who Cannot Afford Boots Cannot Pull Themselves Up by the Bootstraps” [2018;33(2,3,4)].

—Margaret Burke, Vice President for Connecticut

Personal Notes

Kristen Hawley, MS, senior scientific editor at Takeda Pharmaceuticals in Cambridge, Mass., attained certification as an editor in the life sciences (ELS).

Theresa Singleton, PhD, is serving a second term on AMWA’s Board of Directors as an at-large director. Theresa is owner and principal scientific writer at Singleton Science LLC in Beverly, Mass. She is also a member-at-large of the New England Chapter's Board of Directors and a past president of the chapter.

Andrea Gwosdow, PhD, president of Gwosdow Associates Science Consultants in Arlington, Mass., is author of The Complete Guide to Scientific Manuscript Writing (Aviva Publishing, 2018), available on Amazon. Andrea is president of Gwosdow Associates Science Consultants LLC in Arlington, Mass. She is a past president of the New England Chapter, a long-time member of the chapter’s Board of Directors, and a frequent presenter at national and chapter meetings. At AMWA’s 2018 annual conference, she was named an AMWA Fellow.

At the 2018 annual conference, Theresa Singleton (right), chair of the AMWA Member Recognition Committee, gave a fellowship pin to Andrea.
**Linn Awards**  
*Free AMWA Membership for Beginners*

Are you just starting out as a medical writer or editor? If you live and work in New England, you may qualify for a Judy Linn Membership Award. The award covers national AMWA dues for one year for professional membership with full benefits, and during that time the recipient may register for the New England Chapter’s regular dinner and brunch programs at no cost.

If you’re at an early stage of your medical communication career, with no more than three years of full-time experience in this field, please go to www.amwanne.org/awards.html for more information and an application form. There is no application fee, and an application may be submitted at any time.

**LinkedIn**  
*AMWA New England Subgroup*

Do you know that our chapter has its own LinkedIn subgroup? It’s an easy way to connect with other members here in our six-state region. Everyone—including prospective members—is welcome to participate in this local forum. All you have to do is go to www.linkedin.com, sign up for the main AMWA group, and then sign up for the New England Chapter subgroup.

**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.

Christina Ahmad  
Arlington, Massachusetts

Neil Andrews, MS  
Brookline, Massachusetts  
*Harvard Medical School*

Karen Ashe  
Grafton, Massachusetts

Justin Aubin, BS  
Voyager Therapeutics  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Alicia Blaker-Lee, PhD  
Takeda Pharmaceuticals International  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Carolyn Barron  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Ada Ao-Baslock  
Sarah Cannon Development Innovations  
Nashville, Tennessee

Anna Beaurivage, MPH  
Boston Scientific  
Bedford, Massachusetts

Katharin Blackerby-Burke, BS  
Tesaro  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Andrea Blotta, PhD  
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts  
*Harvard University*

David Bochniak, MS  
Southbury, Connecticut

Sherri Boldt, MA  
Pfizer  
Groton, Connecticut

Colleen Bornstein, BS  
Takeda Pharmaceuticals International  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Maida Broudo, MA  
Prides Crossing, Massachusetts

Jeanna Canapari, BA  
Guilford, Connecticut

Federico Cismondi, PhD  
doDOC  
Boston, Massachusetts

Allison Clark, PhD  
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute  
Boston, Massachusetts

Sharon Coleman, MSPT, MPH  
Newburyport, Massachusetts  
*Boston University*

Isabelle Darnis-Wilhelm, MD  
Wenham, Massachusetts  
[from Delaware Valley Chapter]

Alison Davis, DVM, MPVM  
Orleans, MA

Gloria DeWalt, PhD  
Boston, Massachusetts

**New Members** continued on page 6.
New Members continued from page 5.

Elisabeth Donohoe  
Woburn, Massachusetts

Emily Elliot, VMD  
Animals In Balance  
Lakeville, Connecticut

Samuel Falsetti, PhD  
Windham, New Hampshire  
ApotheCom Associates

Bridget Fitzpatrick, DVM  
Fitzpatrick Medical Writing  
Leominster, Massachusetts

Diana Glubiak  
Celgene Corporation  
Summit, New Jersey

Diana Golden, PhD  
UConn Health  
Farmington, Connecticut

Lore Gruenbaum, PhD  
Applied Biomath  
Concord, Massachusetts

Rosanne Guerriero  
Reading, Massachusetts

Elisabeth Haeger, MD  
Randolph, Vermont

Stephanie Haynes, BS PT, DPT  
Chelmsford, Massachusetts

Ann Hill, BA  
Alphie Training  
Auburndale, Massachusetts

Anna Hoang  
Boston, Massachusetts

Taryn Hojlo  
Boston, Massachusetts

Megan Johnson, PharmD  
HealthAlliance Hospital  
Leominster, Massachusetts

Heather Kang, PhD  
Brigham and Women's Hospital  
Harvard Medical School  
Boston, Massachusetts

Patrick Kelley, MS  
Ceres Health Research Consulting  
Littleton, Massachusetts

Kitsa Catherine Kondylis, MD  
Concord, Massachusetts

Michael Lee, AS, BS  
Salisbury, Massachusetts

Katelynn Mannix, MA  
Yale University School of Medicine  
New Haven, Connecticut

Alice McCormick, VMD  
Jeffersonville, VT

Denise McGinnis, ScD  
Boston Children's Hospital  
Boston, Massachusetts

Binyamin Mittelman, MSc  
Cambridge, Massachusetts  
Laminate Medical Technologies

Heather Morgan, MD, MSPH  
Freeport, Maine

Jean Mukherjee, DVM, PhD, DACVIM  
Worcester, Massachusetts

Michael Murray, MD  
Falmouth, Massachusetts

Kelsey Nation, PhD  
Tuscon, Arizona

Paul Pikutis, BA  
Shire Pharmaceuticals  
Lexington, Massachusetts

Erin Robertson, MD  
Cumberland Center, Maine

Samantha Santangelo, PhD  
Santangelo Consulting  
Newton, Massachusetts

Frances Slater, PhD  
Guilford, Connecticut  
QIAGEN

Elizabeth Spitz, CPhT  
South Grafton, Massachusetts

Emily Stackpole, PhD  
UMass Medical School  
Worcester, Massachusetts

Peter Stein, DC, PhD  
Roslindale, Massachusetts  
Boston University

Victoria Theroux, MS, PA-C  
Greenland, New Hampshire

Fangyun Tian, PhD  
Harvard Medical School  
Boston, Massachusetts

Melanie Trombly, PhD  
UMass Medical School  
Worcester, Massachusetts

Catherine Tyrrell, BSc  
Seqirus  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Jennifer Wu, VMD  
Stow, Massachusetts

Karen Wylie, BSc, BA, MSc  
Westbrook, Connecticut

Awais Zia  
Waltham, Massachusetts
How to Register for March 31 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.

Directions to March 31 Meeting

Hilton Garden Inn
5 Wheeler Road
Burlington, Massachusetts
781-272-8800

The hotel is just off the Middlesex Turnpike, near Route 128/I-95.

From 128/I-95, heading north or south, take Exit 32B (Middlesex Turnpike). At the end of the ramp, at the traffic lights, turn left onto the Middlesex Turnpike. Then take the first left onto Wheeler Road. The hotel is less than a third of a mile ahead on the left.

There is ample free parking.

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). If you haven’t already signed up for the New England Chapter LinkedIn subgroup, you can do so at www.linkedin.com.

Nominating Committee Seeking Possible Candidates

In accordance with the New England Chapter’s Bylaws, the Nominating Committee, chaired by President-Elect Brian Head, invites members to suggest possible candidates for the offices of President-Elect, Secretary, and Treasurer for the 2019-20 chapter year, which begins July 1, 2019. Please contact Brian at bhead.amwa@yahoo.com by April 14.

The Nominating Committee will announce the slate in the June newsletter.

Board of Directors Welcomes Member Feedback

Chapter officers and committee chairs are always happy to consider your comments and suggestions regarding chapter activities and services. Do you have an idea for a program or a new meeting venue? Do you know about an upcoming local event that should be mentioned in the *AMWA New England E-News*? If you are located in an outlying area, perhaps you would like to host an informal lunch or evening meetup for members and prospective members who may live nearby. Whatever is on your mind, please share your thoughts.

You can send an email to Debbie Ferguson, president (deborah.ferguson@yahoo.com), Brian Head, president-elect/program chair (brihead@gmail.com), Margaret Burke, Connecticut program chair (mburkepharmd@cox.net), Judy Linn, membership director (judyhlinn@aol.com), or any of the other officers and committee chairs.

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2018-19 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

President: Deborah Ferguson
Immediate Past President: Shawn Watson
President-Elect: Brian Head
Vice President/Connecticut: Margaret Burke
Secretary: Ellie Lin
Treasurer: Ana Bozas

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- Connecticut Programs: Margaret Burke
- Membership: Judy Linn
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- E-News: Deborah Ferguson
- Newsletter: Judy Linn
- LinkedIn Subgroup: Haifa Kassis
- Local Networking Coordinators: Andrea Gwosdow, Haifa Kassis
- Nominating Committee: Brian Head
- Web Site: Aaron Federman

Members-at-Large

Dara Chadwick, Marisa Greenfield, Olivier Morteau, Jill Shuman, Theresa Singleton, Debbie von Rechenberg

Representative to AMWA Chapter Advisory Council

Andrea Gwosdow