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Expert Reviews

*Medical Writers  
and Peer-Reviewed  
Journals:*

*Understanding the Rules  
and Responsibilities*

by Elizabeth Wager



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### Pharma Marketing ROI

A KeywordPharma **Conference Insights** by **Dr Barrie G James** Published January 2007

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In-depth report from the eyeforpharma 6th Annual European Pharmaceutical Congress, held in Amsterdam, 23–24 October 2006.

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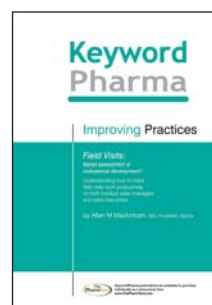
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*Medical Writers and Peer-Reviewed Journals: Understanding the Rules and Responsibilities*

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# Medical Writers and Peer-Reviewed Journals

By Elizabeth Wager

## Executive summary

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Medical writers perform an invaluable role in the dissemination of scientific information, in particular the publication of clinical trial results. However, their work has not always been acknowledged. The pharmaceutical industry has endured much criticism of how it reports clinical trials. High-profile abuses of publication ethics from within the industry have fuelled suspicions of the sector and, by association, damaged the reputations of responsible writers and communications companies. This has led to escalating calls for greater transparency in the relationships between journals, medical writers and pharmaceutical sponsors. Many journals have responded by establishing and enforcing stricter guidelines on the publication of clinical trials.

Editors and readers have responded to concerns about conflicts of interest in publications by demanding greater information on individuals involved in developing publications. Policies of disclosing individuals' contributions to publications have increased awareness of the roles of company employees previously hidden from public view and brought about wider acknowledgement of the work of medical writers.

This Expert Review, *Medical Writers and Peer-Reviewed Journals: Understanding the Rules and Responsibilities*, looks at the complexities of reporting clinical trials and the important role played by medical writers. It outlines guidelines affecting medical writers that are being adopted by many journals and medical editor associations. It calls on journals and sponsor companies to work together to embrace transparency and to agree best practice in the publication of clinical trials.

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## Introduction



Coordinating and publishing clinical trials is a multimillion-dollar global market involving international companies and huge numbers of people. Peer-reviewed journals are an indispensable part of the process. However, many journals are only now becoming aware of the complexities of pharmaceutical research, with published guidelines and some journal conventions failing to reflect the real world.

Healthcare companies deploy thousands of medical writers to work on publications but, until recently, their roles were poorly defined and often misunderstood outside the industry. Indeed, some journal editors and academics viewed professional writers with suspicion or outright hostility. However, in the past 5 years, several guidelines and policy statements relating to medical writers have been published. Professional writers have subsequently gained greater recognition among medical journals and been catapulted from obscurity into a strange new world that demands transparency and the consideration of multiple guidelines. This Expert Review, *Medical Writers and Peer-Reviewed Journals: Understanding the Rules and Responsibilities*, explains the concerns about the role of medical writers in developing peer-reviewed publications and will help writers and communications companies keep abreast of recent guidelines and new journal policies.

**Liz Wager**  
June 2007

### About the author

Elizabeth (Liz) Wager is the author of books on 'Getting Research Published: An A to Z of Publication Strategy' and 'How to Survive Peer Review'. She is a co-author of 'Good Publication Practice for Pharmaceutical Companies' and the European Medical Writers Association guidelines on the role of medical writers.

After obtaining a First Class zoology degree from Oxford in 1983 she worked for Blackwell Scientific Publications, Janssen-Cilag then Glaxo-Wellcome. In 2001, she set up her own company, Sideview, which provides training, writing, editing and publication consultancy services.

She is a member of: the *BMJ*'s Ethics Committee, the World Association of Medical Editors Ethics Committee, the Council of the Committee on Publication Ethics, the editorial board of *European Science Editing* (the journal of the European Association of Science Editors) and the World Health Organization Scientific Advisory Group on trial registration.

She can be contacted at: [liz@sideview.demon.co.uk](mailto:liz@sideview.demon.co.uk) or via [www.lizwager.com](http://www.lizwager.com)

### GETTING RESEARCH PUBLISHED: an A-Z of publication strategy



#### by Elizabeth Wager

This is a guide to publication strategy in medicine. It covers the ethics, conventions and often unwritten rules of publishing in peer-reviewed journals and at conferences. Doctors, scientists and drug companies need to publish their research; however many people who have published successfully admit that the process remains a mystery to them. Some journals reject over ninety percent of the articles submitted to them and may take more than six months to come to a decision. This best-selling, completely up-to-date reference book gives advice on how to choose the right journal, how to avoid

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### Executive Summary

Caught in a tightening vice between declining new product introductions and accelerating patent erosion, the pharmaceutical industry has been cutting back spending across the board to improve profits. Conversely, marketing spend is at an all-time high and is now the single largest pharmaceutical company business expenditure. Inevitably, this has triggered a growing management emphasis on accountability and on value for money for its marketing investments. Pharma marketers' response has been to explore and implement approaches that improve return on investment (ROI).

The 6th Annual European Pharmaceutical Conference, Pharma Marketing ROI, held in Amsterdam on 23–24 October 2006, discussed the challenges that the industry faces and its implications for a healthy financial future, together with some of the measures and practices that could deliver increased ROI in pharma marketing.

The conference raised two burning issues: first, do pharmaceutical companies possess a solid bedrock of marketing expertise in terms of best practice processes and procedures? If not, the expectations of enhanced marketing ROI may not be realised. Second, how many companies have processes in place that can identify, track and allocate marketing expenses? Without these systems it is impossible to calculate an accurate ROI. The evidence presented suggests that very few companies are well positioned in this respect.

Addressing these issues will be critical for the future. It has been projected that global industry growth will continue its unbroken decline from 2000 and will slow to 5–6% growth in 2005/6, down from 6–7% in 2004/5. Reduced growth inevitably increases the level of competition throughout the industry, which will only add to the pressures on those companies that are unable to maximise their marketing ROI.

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### About the author

Dr Barrie G James is internationally recognised as a leading-edge pharmaceutical thinker, for his consulting in pharma strategy, futures, ethics and evidence-based marketing. He manages Pharma Strategy Consulting in Huntingdon, UK, which specialises in creative and pragmatic solutions to fundamental strategic, ethical and marketing problems in the pharma industry.

Earlier in his career, Barrie held executive positions at Ciba-Geigy, Merck & Co., Syntex, Biogen and Schering-Plough in strategic planning, marketing, operating management and business development.

His books and reports on the pharma industry have become standard industry references and his work has been cited in *Business Week*, the *Economist* and the *Financial Times*. His latest publications are *The Little Black Book of Pharma Marketing* and *PharmVision 2015: A Short History of the Future*.

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- MedComms/Service Providers involved with publication planning
- Medical writers, publishers and editors

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