Advice on medical writing

Best if have advanced degree

Don’t have to be expert in specific topic

Don’t insert opinion into topic, unlike in much PhD writing

Compares to being an accounted – you don’t want to distort or tweak. Present information w/o opinion. Don’t try to make things sound better than they are. Job is to present the data clearly.

Types of freelance clients:

Med comms agencies

Training materials for sales and clinicians

Pharma – regulatory writing

Professional med associations for conferences or websites

Pt education, esp for hospitals

Feature articles for journals or magazines

Topics:

Regulatory writing

Feature articles, news pieces

Manuscripts

Needs assessments – scientific section of a grant proposal

Training modules

Critical analysis and **attention to detail** are v impt

Figure out how info can be best presented, consider reader’s perspective

Better to have own website

Join a pro association

American Medical Writers Association

RAPS – Regulatory Affairs Professionals

ACEHP – alliance for continuing education in health professions

Association of Healthcare Journalists

5 clients is enough to be busy as a freelancer

Recs the book “Style: Towards Clarity and Grace” by Joseph M. Williams for building pro writing style.

Also Strunk and White

AMA style good to learn

Acrobat Pro is useful for mocking up PDFs

Very useful to be able to record calls – need a digital voice recorder and a telephone pick-up

How to get clients!

Get 300 names and emails, send a dedicated target email to name and company of each. Takes weeks of fulltime effort.

Blog or podcast is a good way to attract people. Providing value upfront works well.

Contacts you already have in corp or academia

V impt to meet your deadlines

Want to answer emails quickly

To get started as a medical writer or editor, she suggests that editorial professionals do the following:

**1. Join American Medical Writers Association.** The [AMWA](http://www.amwa.org/) offers an educational certificate that can give you credibility as a medical writer. “For people with some experience in the science/editing field, the BELS exam is good to take. This will give the “ELS,” or “Editor in the Life Sciences,” designation after your name which tells others that you have passed a stringent editing test,” she notes.

**2. Join the Council of Science Editors.** This is a [premier industry organization](http://www.councilscienceeditors.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=1) for medical editors.

**3. Get familiar with PubMed.** Most medical writers are on [PubMed](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/) every day, as the site includes 21 million citations for biomedical literature from MEDLINE, or Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online, a database of life science journals and books online. It is an essential tool for medical writers.

**4. Sign up for The Hitt List.** That’s Hitt’s [free newsletter](http://www.hittmedicalwriting.com/hmw/the-hittlist/) packed with medical writing job opportunities.

**5. Learn AMA style.** That’s [American Medical Association style](http://www.amamanualofstyle.com/oso/public/index.html); AP and Chicago style is only used at consumer and trade publications. Simply knowing AMA isn’t enough to become a medical writer, warns Hitt, but it can get you in the door as a medical copy editor.