

Society for Technical Communication
Alternative Markets for Technical Communicators: Medical Writing
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ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR MEDICAL WRITING

1. knowledge/experience in science

Also consider how a background in other fields could relate to specialty areas of medical writing:

- computer science (medical informatics)
- law (health law)
- business (health care and pharmaceutical industry news)
- history or political science (health policy)

2. understanding of statistical concepts
3. skills in researching medical publications (textbooks, journals, internet), including skill in searching online resources (e.g., PubMed – medical abstract database maintained by the National Library of Medicine)
4. zoom out – big picture and zoom in – details

Fact-checking to ensure accuracy is important, especially for clinical material such as drug dosage information.

5. critical judgment/evaluative ability – ability to review large amounts of information, identify credible sources, select important references, and synthesize or summarize the information into a clearly written document

Involvement in professional associations/organizations can provide opportunities for networking, educational programs, and job searching.

Professional groups for medical editing/writing:

American Medical Writers Association (AMWA) <http://www.amwa-rmc.org/>
Council of Science Editors (formerly the Council of Biology Editors)
<http://www.councilscienceeditors.org/>

University of Colorado Health Sciences Center (UCHSC): Mini Med School

a free non-accredited 8-week program of lectures on basic science as it relates to medicine

<http://www.uchsc.edu/community/minimed/>