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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ISMPP Supports Best Practices and Transparency in Medical Publications: Better Understanding of Terms Such as “Ghostwriting” Needed

Briarcliff Manor, NY – Oct 5, 2009: The mission of the International Society for Medical Publication Professionals (ISMPP) is to advance the medical publication profession through education and advocacy. The organization believes that to correct the growing misperceptions in the medical literature and lay press around a number of critical issues involving medical publications, such as the perception that all medical writing is performed by “ghostwriters,” it is critically important for ISMPP to advocate faster adoption of standards and best practices.

“We support full transparency around data disclosure, acknowledgment and disclosure of professional medical writers, and funding sources. We have the same commitment as the health care community and the public in ensuring medical research and opinion are made available via a transparent, rigorous, and professional process, and support all best practices and current guidelines from organizations such as the International Council of Medical Journal Editors,” said Al Weigel, President of ISMPP.

Increased attention has recently been given to the use of unacknowledged medical writers (termed “ghostwriters”), a practice distinct from the appropriate, fully disclosed, and acknowledged use of professional medical writers. The editor of *Annals of Internal Medicine*, Christine Laine, noted the distinction in a related article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (September 20, 2009), saying, “We don’t think the writing assistance per se is bad, it’s when it’s not disclosed that it’s a problem.” A recent article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* also reported a significant decrease in unacknowledged medical writing assistance (ghostwriting), but further progress needs to be made.

“Academic and industry involvement in medical publications will continue to be the subject of media scrutiny and criticism. While it is important to properly identify poor practices, we should not generalize or attribute poor practices in one small area to the entire industry,” said Julia Ralston, President-Elect of ISMPP. “Responsible medical writing and publication planning support the full disclosure of scientific data and ultimately benefit the public.”

ISMPP will continue to undertake a set of educational initiatives and reinforce best practices on timely issues surrounding medical publications. *International Society for Medical Publication Professionals (ISMPP) Position Statement: The Role of the Professional Medical Writer* was published in a peer-reviewed journal (*Current Medical Research and Opinion*. 2007;23(8):1837-1840) to delineate the differences between recognized professional medical writers and undisclosed ghostwriters. As part of the organization’s ongoing commitment, a key guidance document, developed by an ISMPP Steering Committee, will soon be available that updates the initial Good Publication Practice guidelines, published in 2003. This guidance document endorses the need for practitioners to follow other key guidance documents such as those of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. The reality is that publication



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standards have advanced tremendously in recent years and all stakeholders in this multidisciplinary process need to act in a professional manner consistent with the latest standards and guidelines.

About ISMPP

The International Society for Medical Publication Professionals is an independent non-profit professional association with members from the pharmaceutical, medical device, and biotechnology industries; publication planning and medical communication companies; academia; and medical journal staff, including editors and publishers. Its goals are to support the educational needs of publication professionals and to develop best practices that ensure the rigorous maintenance of all ethical standards for reporting results of medical research. Additional information about ISMPP is available by contacting the organization's Executive Director, Kimberly Goldin (phone: 914-945-0507; e-mail: kgoldin@ismpp.org), or online at <http://www.ismpp.org>.