

## Editorial

### ISMPP and advocacy for the medical publication profession

Jackie Marchington<sup>a</sup> on behalf of the ISMPP Issues and Action Committee

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The International Society for Medical Publication Professionals (ISMPP) Issues & Actions Committee's advocacy activities are a priority for the ISMPP Executive Committee and the organization as a whole. ISMPP is striving to take a leadership position on behalf of the profession, so we can refute inaccurate or biased press and publications, correct related perceptions surrounding the role of publication professionals, and communicate that we act appropriately and are compliant with professional standards, thereby playing a significant role in ensuring the integrity of the medical literature. The advocacy program comprises three strategies: government affairs, professional coalitions and public relations.

ISMPP is an international organization committed to raising standards on a global basis in response to the discussion of publication conduct ongoing in many countries. In the US, as a result of the Minority Staff Report, Senate Committee on Finance<sup>1</sup> and discussion in the political arena, the government affairs sub-team has been focussing on US Congress as the target for their activities. To this end, the team has scheduled an advocacy day to coincide with the 2011 annual meeting on April 6, which will provide a structured opportunity to connect ISMPP members to their own legislators, enabling ISMPP to communicate its voice and opinions on relevant publication planning issues to US policy makers. The opportunity then exists to create a network of relationships on Capitol Hill and to establish ISMPP members as 'go-to' experts on relevant policy issues. Through these relationships we can then communicate the value of publication professionals to the quality of scientific literature. To achieve these aims, the government affairs sub-team has been working to schedule visits, organize pre-visit training, and develop leave-behind literature supporting the position papers that have been developed by the public relations sub-team.

<sup>a</sup>Scientific Director, Caudex Medical

Another area where we believe we can build advocacy is with professional associations that have a focus or interest related to medical publishing, as well as medical institutions, which may not fully understand the role and contributions of medical publication professionals. The professional coalitions sub-team has developed a plan for ISMPP to build relationships with three target groups:

- Building collaboration with professional associations that have goals in common with ISMPP, such as AMWA/EMWA and the Council of Science Editors;
- Seeking common ground with associations that are also striving for high quality publications and transparency, such as ICMJE, medical journal editors, medical schools/institutions, and medical societies (e.g., American Society of Clinical Oncology);
- Providing education on medical publication professionals to important influencers, such as the Association of American Medical Colleges, Council of Medical Specialty Societies, American Society for Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics, and International Society for Pharmacoeconomics and Outcomes Research, to ensure that they understand and differentiate professional medical writing support from ghostwriting and other unethical activities.

The final strategy – public relations – is aimed not only at external audiences, but also is designed to assist ISMPP members to discuss media issues with due confidence. By creating position statements on key issues and developing a strategy and process for responding to professional medical publication issues, the public relations sub-team are creating the tools that will enable ISMPP to leverage its leadership position to speak on behalf of the profession. The first two position papers “‘Ghostwriting’ and the Professional Medical Writer”<sup>2</sup> and ‘Rationale and Value of Medical Publications’<sup>3</sup> are currently available on the ISMPP website, with others in development. The team also generated a press release<sup>4</sup> in response to the Minority Staff Report, Senate Committee on Finance<sup>1</sup> last summer, and is monitoring sources for issues of importance to ISMPP so we can respond reactively when appropriate and proactively when we see the opportunity for

media outreach. We plan to identify a number of ISMPP spokespersons for these opportunities, to widen the pool of individuals who liaise with the media.

We believe that these strategies will improve understanding and awareness of medical publication professionals and the positive contribution we make to the medical literature.

## References

1. Available at: [grassley.senate.gov/about/upload/Senator-Grassley-Report.pdf](http://grassley.senate.gov/about/upload/Senator-Grassley-Report.pdf)
2. Available at: [http://www.ismpp.org/initiatives/Files/ISMPP\\_Ghost\\_Writing\\_vs\\_Professional\\_Medical\\_Writing.pdf](http://www.ismpp.org/initiatives/Files/ISMPP_Ghost_Writing_vs_Professional_Medical_Writing.pdf)
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