AMWA e-news
June 2010

Greetings! Registration is now open for AMWA’s 27th annual conference to be held in Melbourne in August. Register online at www.medicalwriters.org or download the registration brochure and mail or fax. Catch the early bird rate, which closes 6 August. See some more conference highlights below.

AMWA conference

Friday 27 and Saturday 28 August, 2010, at the State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.

Taboos in reporting: how far should you go?

Blogger Tom Cullen said on Asylum UK in February, “Doctors don’t much like telling patients that they’re ill. In reality you can’t break news about terminal illnesses with a cheeky grin and a playful punch to the arm.”

Not so long ago, before sildenafil citrate hit the market, who ever talked or wrote about erectile dysfunction – was it just not a subject for polite company, or, was it taboo? So why can’t we talk frankly about medicine and health? What subjects are just too difficult?

Dr Ronald McCoy, GP, journalist and broadcaster (pictured here), will use real life case studies to dissect how an understanding of how taboos operate in health, influence the representation of the proscribed. Exploring use of language and the myth of Pandora, he will discuss concrete and ethical strategies for researching stories and pass on survival tips for the writer.

We asked taboo slayers Andrew Denton and Anita Jacoby for advice. Immediately, Sonya Pemberton (pictured here) was recommended. Sonya is one of Australia’s leading science documentary writers, directors and executive producers and is former Head of Specialist Factual at the ABC. She’s a three times winner of the Eureka Prize for Science Journalism. Her film credits include: Crude (2007), Angels and Demons (2008), Catching Cancer (2009) with Professors Ian Fraser, Barry Marshall and Harald zur Hausen, and this year, Immortal, with Nobel laureate Professor Elizabeth Blackburn.

Covering the conjoined twins

The separation of conjoined twins Trishna and Krishna was a historic occasion for the hospital, the surgical team and the girls, but it was also quite an achievement for those working to tell the story. The Royal Children’s Hospital, the writer and producer of the film Trishna and Krishna: The quest for separate lives and the media each had an agenda and, at times, conflicting priorities. The conference session Coordination — cooperation — communication: covering the conjoined twins separation will give a behind-the-scenes look at how over a two-year period, they were able to work together. The speakers Julie Webber, former RCH public affairs manager; Wayne Dyer, writer and producer; and Grant McArthur, Herald Sun medical reporter, will discuss the roles they played, the challenges and the compromises.
Thanks to conference sponsor The Continence Foundation of Australia. The foundation is is the peak body for continence promotion, management and advocacy. Its aims include:

- Raise community awareness about bladder and bowel health and the prevention of incontinence
- Educate people about treatment and management options for incontinence
- Encourage people with bladder or bowel control problems to seek professional help - no matter how small their problem may be
- Advocate for the development of accessible continence services across Australia
- Facilitate and/or fund continence-related research

The CFA is supported by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing under its National Continence Management Strategy. The organisation also relies on the support of members and corporate partners.

**What’s new?**

- Medical info apps for smartphones and tailormade news services are proliferating. Here’s a couple of new ones:
  - EIN News has started the [Inbox Robot](#) service. It offers e-newsletters in 33 health areas or you can design your own
  - Wiley-Blackwell is now offering its [Essential Evidence](#) info direct to mobile phone
- The MEAA freelance conference will this year be part of a broader endeavour to equip journalists for the future, the [Walkey Media Conference](#), to be held in Sydney 9-12 August.
- Science meets poetry in a new competition, [Science Made Marvellous](#): submissions now being sought with a deadline at 30 June.
- The [Walkley Book Award](#) for published nonfiction also closes 30 June.
- Can we make lung cancer history? Big call?? [Free public lecture](#) presented by Professor Simon Chapman at the University of Sydney on 14 July.
- Free webinars for staff of scholarly publications. Subjects include digital publishing, environmentally sound printing and publishing practices, social media, marketing etc [http://allenpress.com/events/webinar](http://allenpress.com/events/webinar)

**Featured conference**

American Medical Writers Association [70th anniversary conference](#), Milwaukee, Wisconsin. 11-13 November, 2010.

The conference features 40 sessions, 74 breakfast discussions and 94 workshops. The keynote address ‘Ensuring the quality and integrity of the indexed medical literature’ will be delivered by Dr William Lanier, editor-in-chief of *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*, a 130,000 circulation internal medicine journal.

Session topics include marketing a freelance business, medical writing ethics, regulatory writing, writing for patients, visual display of medical information and much more. Registration opens 26 July.
Getting to know one another

Jacinta Miller, editor, Wycheproof (Vic), and AMWA Membership Secretary

After graduating in journalism at Deakin University in the early 80s I first worked on rural newspapers reporting on environmental issues such as salinity, and creek and waterway rehabilitation. On moving to Melbourne’s hinterland, health issues predominated as communities lobbied for improved health care at a local level. Having trained as a nurse at St Vincent’s Hospital in 1981, my interest in health journalism was piqued by the emergence of medical and surgical treatments from being experimental to what we today consider mainstream such as transplant surgery.

The 80s was a great time to be reporting on health in the community sector with a focus on preventative illness and health promotion. To specialise in health writing I went back to uni in the 90s and graduated with a Bachelor of Nursing and worked again at St Vincent’s in the specialist areas of oncology, haematology, renal, and rehabilitation.

I currently work as editorial coordinator of the peer reviewed journal, the *Australian and New Zealand Continence Journal*, and keep grounded as a clinical nurse at my local rural hospital. In my spare time, I keep my hand in writing for local newspapers and mentoring secondary college students. I am also trying to perfect my golf swing and establish a drought-tolerant, productive garden.

In 2005 I joined AMWA and became a committee member in 2007; first as Secretary and currently Membership Secretary. Working with L.E. Ohman we are reinvigorating AMWA in Victoria holding some great networking events and looking forward to the AMWA Conference in Melbourne in August.

**AMWA committee**

The AMWA committee met by teleconference on 11 May and 8 June. We welcome new members Ramy Tadros and Steven Chong.

**Website we like**

[http://clearinghouse.adma.org.au/about.html](http://clearinghouse.adma.org.au/about.html) A wealth of tools, guidelines and resources for those working in chronic disease management, developed by the Australian Disease Management Association and funded by the Victorian Government.

**Newsletter editor**

To contact the AMWA e-news editor email rada_rouse@yahoo.com or call 0407 139 127. Follow me on Twitter [@radarouse](http://twitter.com/radarouse), The deadline for copy for the July issue is Friday 25 June.