

**American Medical Writers Association
Southwest Chapter**

**Position Statement Regarding Application for 501(c)3 Status
September 29, 2002**

The Southwest Chapter of the American Medical Writers Association (AMWA) asks the Internal Revenue Service of the United States of America to consider the chapter for 501(c)3 federal tax-exempt status for the following reasons:

- 1 The Federal Government has already recognized that the primary goals and activities of the American Medical Writers Association are consistent with a 501(c)3 status. Specifically:
 - a. The Federal Government has already given 501(c)3 status to the National AMWA organization. Chapters of AMWA are in effect the local branches of that organization, serving their communities with educational and other programs in line with AMWA's mission to enhance communication in science and medicine, ultimately impacting the knowledge and awareness of health care providers and patients alike.
 - b. The Federal Government has also given 501(c)3 qualification to individual chapters in AMWA, such as the Carolinas Chapter. All chapters of AMWA are equally charged with promoting educational opportunities and programs for improving medical communication.
2. The primary goals and activities of the Southwest Chapter of the American Medical Writers Association mirror those of the National Organization, and are directed at educating and improving medical communication skills and knowledge throughout the medical and patient communities. We do this through the following activities:
 - a. Standards in medical communication are crucial to providing clear, accurate, and understandable health care information. The Southwest Chapter of AMWA seeks to promote these standards while also educating on both the patient and physician levels. No other local organization is dedicated to these ends and very few schools and institutions address them.
 - b. The Southwest Chapter collaborates with and makes its programs available to literally dozens of nonprofit 501(c)3 organizations that make up the Texas Medical Center, itself a large 501(c)3 consortium comprising organizations like the University of Texas Houston Health Science Center, M. D. Anderson Cancer Center, Baylor College of Medicine, Texas Woman's University, the Texas Heart Institute, St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital, the Methodist Hospital, Memorial-Hermann Hospital, and others. (*See attached letters of support.*) The Southwest Chapter of AMWA serves the students and health care workers of this massive nonprofit enclave through programs designed to educate and to improve medical communication skills and knowledge. Such programs include:

The annual student award in biomedical communication, which recognizes excellence in biomedical communication skills.

- ii. An annual medical writing conference that offers classes and symposium talks directed at improving medical communication skills. The first annual conference was held in September 2002. This conference was widely advertised throughout the medical and academic communities of southeast Texas and was open to nonmembers and members alike. AMWA Southwest drew upon established relationships with nonprofit educational institutions to acquire facilities for this program.

We were able to offer financial support to underwrite tuition costs for 10 students to attend this conference. Overall, the conference was attended by 62 registrants, of whom more than half (34) were non-members. We hope to expand this to a full-day workshop next year and in subsequent years.

- iii. Providing voluntary speakers to present to groups of students at local institutions.
- c. The Southwest Chapter conducts regular educational programs that are open to and attended by nonmembers as well as members. Students, teachers, health care workers, and the general public attend our sessions, which have included the following:
 - i. **Guest Lectures:** *These meetings are well-attended by the public and are advertised with local media, encouraging all interested individuals to attend.* Past topics have included, “The Challenges of Biomedical Publishing on the Web,” “Engaging Readers in the Story of your Science,” and “Controversies in Clinical Cancer Research: Gene Therapy, Genomics, and Conflicts of Interest.” Future lectures include, “The Evolution of Institutional Review Boards and their Impact on Clinical Research” and “The Popular Media as Public Health Catalyst.” Most lectures are given in auditoriums of nonprofit educational institutions, such as the University of Texas School of Public Health and The Children’s Nutrition Research Center, which donate the use of the space to AMWA Southwest.
 - ii. **Computer Software Classes:** Past classes have included “Basic HTML,” “Using the Internet for Effective Medical Research,” and “The Ins and Outs of Using EndNote” (bibliographic database software). *Classes are widely advertised throughout the Houston biomedical community and are well attended by faculty and students from the Texas Medical Center.* Computer classroom facilities are donated by nonprofit educational institutions, such as the Houston Academy of Medicine–Texas Medical Center Library.

In summary, the Southwest Chapter of AMWA is **wholly** engaged in efforts to improve medical communications. Misinformation and poor communication can cause deleterious effects on society. The chapter believes that by educating students, health care workers, researchers, and the public, significant strides can be made to improve the quality and purpose of medical and health information. ***Of the chapter’s activities, at least 90% comprise educational programming.*** This includes program

planning and publicity, as well as scholarship organization and processing. The remaining 10% involves newsletter and website production, chapter Board of Directors meetings (for chapter fiscal matters and succession), and reports and representation to the national AMWA Board of Directors meetings. All participation in AMWA is voluntary and geared toward the purposes described above

Respectfully submitted,

Lorraine Cherry
AMWA Southwest Chapter President, 2001-2002