



Southwest
Chapter

AMWA Southwest Chapter Newsletter

May 2007

2006-2007 Chapter Officers

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Eighth Annual Career Roundtables Meeting

Date: May 12, 2007 (Saturday)
Time: 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Place: Baba Yega Restaurant
2607 Grant Street
Houston, Texas

You're invited to AMWA Southwest's Eighth Annual Career Roundtables Meeting, to be held Saturday, May 12, in the Jasmine Room of the Houston Montrose district's Baba Yega restaurant. Join your colleagues in lively discussions about topics important to medical writers and editors. If you're coming from outside Houston, stay a bit longer and take time out for some sightseeing. We look forward to seeing you!

This brunch meeting will give you the opportunity to participate in one of four roundtable discussions of topics of interest to medical writers and editors. Each discussion will begin with a short presentation by the roundtable leader, followed by a discussion with the participants.

This year's roundtable topics will be

1. How to Capture Website Visitors' Attention in Eight Seconds or Less: the First Law of Writing for the Web, presented by Lori Buffum, MA, a website editor and writer at the Texas Heart Institute. Ms. Buffum can remember when building a website meant loading the myriad pages of a college catalog to an online site with a few inspired suggestions to "make it blue" here and there to take the reader on a rather arduous journey through the school. Her own career journey has taken her from technical writing, to college instruction, to public relations, to proposal writing, to corporate marketing, to website design. In settings as

varied as a community college, an engineering firm, a nature store, and a medical institute, she has developed an interest in and appreciation for the unique characteristics of websites and what makes the good ones succeed. The fundamentals of good writing still form the core of web writing, but to get the message to your audience, the website writer has to pay attention to a number of several other important principles.

- 2. The Importance of Instructions for Authors: a Journal Editor's View**, led by Beth Notzon, Scientific Publications Manager, The University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center. The instructions to authors vary widely among journals, and it is sometimes hard for authors and authors' editors alike to make sense of them. Which rules are most important or most universal, and why? Why are instructions so different—some so detailed and some not? And why is it important for authors to follow these instructions?

Ms. Notzon has been an editor for almost 30 years, starting at Little, Brown, and Company in Boston, where she managed five different peer-reviewed journals, *Annals of Neurology* and *The Annals of Thoracic Surgery* being chief among them. She then worked for two years in Saudi Arabia, where she headed up the publications office at King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Centre. After seven years as a freelance copyeditor, she joined M. D. Anderson Cancer Center in 1997 as a scientific editor. During her time at M. D. Anderson, she has managed the journals *Clinical Cancer Research* and *International Journal of Radiation Oncology, Biology, Physics*.

- 3. The Business of Being a Freelance**, headed up by Charles Bankhead, MA, who has been a full-time freelance medical writer since 1992. Having a successful freelance business requires identifying what you do well and marketing those skills to customers who can pay you. This discussion will delve into setting up your freelance medical writing business, maintaining a steady workflow, and dealing with business tasks such as contracts, accounting, liability insurance, and retirement planning. Mr. Bankhead was a public information officer at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston for four years and a publications manager at Texas A&M University for two years. He then became a writer and editor for *Medical World News*, a leading medical trade publication that had relocated from New York to Houston, where he worked for nine years. A part-time freelance for four years, Mr. Bankhead switched to a full-time freelance career in 1992. Most of his experience has involved writing for physicians and other health care professionals, but he also takes on consumer-oriented assignments from time to time.
- 4. What's New in the 10th Edition of the AMA Manual of Style?** with Christine F. Wogan, MS, ELS. The much-anticipated new edition of this style manual contains not only detailed standards for medical nomenclature but also a new, broadened international perspective that encompasses guidelines for electronic submission, citation of web-based content, authorship, conflicts of interest, scientific misconduct, intellectual property, and protection of individuals' rights in scientific research and publication. This roundtable will provide a synopsis of the changes, large and small, in this definitive work. Chris Wogan is currently a

senior scientific editor in the Department of Scientific Publications at M. D. Anderson. In her 20-plus years in the business, Ms. Wogan has written and edited scientific manuscripts, grant applications, and scholarly books on a broad range of medical and applied research topics. In her long and varied career, she has not only used many different style guides but also been involved in creating and revising them. Come hear why the new *AMA Manual* is one of the best!

In addition to the roundtable discussions, the May meeting will include the annual chapter business meeting and the election of new chapter officers. If you are unable to attend this meeting, please complete the absentee ballot below.

Ballot

AMWA Southwest Chapter Officer Candidates for 2007–2008

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>President:</i> | Stephen Palmer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Program Chair:</i> | Ruth SoRelle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Assistant Program Chair:</i> | Kristina Wasson-Blader |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Treasurer:</i> | Alison Woo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Secretary:</i> | Diego Pineda |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Newsletter Editor:</i> | Hanson Yu |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Director-at-Large:</i> | Jude Richard |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Director-at-Large:</i> | Lori Buffum |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Director-at-Large:</i> | Pamela Paradis Metoyer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Director-at-Large:</i> | Jeanie Woodruff |

If you will not be attending the Eighth Annual Career Roundtables Meeting on May 12, 2007, please complete and send this ballot by Thursday, May 10, to Anita Frijhoff, 2905 Dover Place, Austin, TX 78757-4351, or afrijhoff@amwasouthwest.org.

We will gather at 11:30 a.m. at Baba Yega for socializing, with the brunch buffet and business meeting beginning at noon. The price is \$23 for AMWA members and \$26 for guests and nonmembers. The buffet will include vegetable frittatas, home-fried rosemary potatoes, grilled ham, seasonal fresh fruit, and an assortment of freshly baked breads and muffins. Coffee, herbal tea, sodas, and freshly squeezed orange juice will also be served. Mimosas will be available for \$2.

RSVP on or before Thursday, May 10, to Anita Frijhoff at afrijhoff@amwasouthwest.org or 512.320.1612 ext. 1548. Payment will be required for each registration received. Please send your check, payable to AMWA Southwest, to Anita Frijhoff at 2905 Dover Place, Austin, TX 78757-4351. Those registering after Tuesday, May 8, may pay at the door on the morning of the event.

When you RSVP, please include the following information:

- Your name
- Your email address, daytime telephone number, or both
- Whether or not you are a member of AMWA
- Your first and second choices of roundtable discussion topics.

Baba Yega restaurant (www.babayega.com; phone: 713.522.0042) is located at 2607 Grant Street (two blocks east of Montrose Boulevard and between Westheimer Road and Fairview Street). Directions:

- From the Museum District, travel north on Montrose and pass Westheimer. The second street after Westheimer is Missouri Street; turn right and go two blocks. The restaurant is at the intersection of Missouri and Grant.
- From I-10, take exit 767A (Studemont Street). Turn right and travel south on Studemont, which changes into Montrose,

and then pass Fairview. The second street after Fairview is Missouri; turn left and go two blocks. The restaurant is at the intersection of Missouri and Grant.

Sightseeing in Houston

Houston offers a variety of activities. Visit any of the 16 museums, including the Houston Zoo, in the Museum District (www.houstonmuseumdistrict.org/default.asp?id=1). Or check the calendar of the Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau for sports events and theater shows at www.visithoustontexas.com/visitors/events.php.

Lodging in Houston

Lodging in Houston is listed by region at www.houstonareahotels.com. Following are some suggestions for conveniently located or reasonably priced hotels:

Holiday Inn Express Hotel & Suites - Houston Medical Center/Reliant Park
8080 Main Street
Houston, Texas 77025
Phone: 713.665.4439
www.ichotelsgroup.com/h/d/ex/1/en/hotel/HOUHX?&refid=1&

Best Western Plaza Hotel & Suites
6700 S Main Street
Houston, Texas 77030
Phone: 713.522.281

<http://book.bestwestern.com/bestwestern/productInfo.do?propertyCode=44520#null>

Best Western-Reliant Park

2364 South Loop W
Houston, Texas 77054
Phone: 713.799.2436

<http://book.bestwestern.com/bestwestern/productInfo.do?propertyCode=44567#null>

La Quinta Inn Houston Greenway Plaza

4015 Southwest Freeway
Houston, Texas 77027
Phone: 713.623.4750

www.lq.com/lq/properties/propertyProfile.do?id=ent=LQ505&propId=505

Sara's Bed & Breakfast Inn

941 Heights Boulevard
Houston, Texas 77008
Phone: 713.868.1130; 800.593.1130

www.sras.com

Annual Membership Appreciation Event Features Two Presentations on Medical Errors

Patient safety—viewed from both personal and medical professionals' perspectives—was the theme of the Southwest Chapter's Annual Membership Appreciation Event, which was held on Monday, March 19, at Majors Books in the Texas Medical Center.

The death of the teenage son of John James, PhD, sparked his interest in both patient rights and safety. Dr. James is trained in pathology

and has been a board-certified toxicologist for 20 years, working on air-quality technology for present and future spacecraft. However, the death of his teenage son from sudden cardiac arrest drew his attention to the subject of medical errors.

A month before his death, Alex had undergone a series of tests at two hospitals after collapsing during a run and was soon given a clean bill of

health. After his son's death, which occurred while Alex was running again, Dr. James examined Alex's medical records and discovered what he described as a multitude of medical errors: important test findings went unnoticed, potassium replacement recommended by widely known medical guidelines was not performed, a cardiac MRI that was supposed to have been done had actually been aborted, and other mistakes had been made, as well.

Dr. James described several medical certification and licensing board practices that might lead to medical errors, including the exemption of many older physicians from demonstrating that they are maintaining competency in their specialty. State laws do not require that continuing medical education be within the doctor's specialty, and the Texas Medical Board's mechanisms for acting on complaints are not transparent. Dr. James also noted that doctors do not need to be board-certified in a given specialty in order to practice it. The presentation described the Patients' Bill of Rights, which (in another form) was debated and ultimately rejected by Congress several years ago. These rights include the right to obtain information about one's doctor's specialty, certification, and competency; to be offered a copy of one's own medical records (which should be legible); to receive genuine informed consent for invasive procedures; to be told in advance what tests and procedures will cost; and to have an effective means of addressing grievances when any of these rights are not observed.

Dr. James concluded by citing studies and estimates by physicians in peer-reviewed medical journals showing that medical errors are the third leading cause of death behind heart disease and cancer in the United States. He asserted that the time for patients to have more rights is long overdue.

The second presentation of the evening was given by Grace Kuo, PharmD, MPH, an assistant professor of Family and Community Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine and the program director for Houston's Southern Primary-care Urban Research Network ([SPUR-Net](#)). Dr. Kuo's talk focused on medication errors, which are said to occur any time a medication is used without the five "rights": the right patient, the right medication, the right dose, the right time, and the right route. These opportunities for failure are magnified by the large number of prescriptions (more than 3 billion) filled in the United States each year and by the fact that more than 80% of Americans take at least one medication in any given week. Thus, errors made by health care professionals—including errors associated with bad handwriting—injure approximately 1.5 million patients each year in the US, costing billions of dollars in extra hospital and outpatient care. In 77% of these cases, Dr. Kuo reported, the adverse event results from a series of errors made by the many people typically involved in prescribing, dispensing, and administering medications and in monitoring and documenting their use.

Dr. Kuo went on to explain that medication errors occur in every kind of healthcare setting. Hospital inpatients are subjected to an average of one or more medication errors per day, and such errors are also common in nursing homes, ambulatory clinics, and community and mail-order pharmacies. Then there is the myriad of mistakes that people make when using over-the-counter medications; these missteps include not only dosage errors but also the simultaneous use of medications that can reduce each other's effectiveness or, in some cases, augment it to a dangerous degree.

Dr. Kuo also discussed the Institute of Medicine's recommended strategies for reducing medication errors. She was part of the

panel that devised these strategies, which include standardizing the format of both written and verbal medication orders, involving hospital pharmacists more directly in inpatient care (e.g., including pharmacists in hospital rounds and having them review all medication orders before the first dose is given), and improving communication between health care providers to reduce duplicate prescription and the likelihood of drug interactions. Dr. Kuo also provided a great many resources for people seeking additional information about medication and patient safety.

Attendees at the meeting enjoyed wine, cheese, and various *hors d'oeuvres* and sweets, courtesy of the chapter. The attendees also had the opportunity to browse through Majors' collection of more than 50,000 medical books and other resources.

The meeting ended with an opportunity for the attendees to ask questions of both speakers. We thank Drs. James and Kuo for their willingness to speak, and we are grateful to Majors Books for giving us a convenient and practical meeting place.

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