



Southwest
Chapter

Newsletter of AMWA Southwest Chapter

September 2006

2006-2007 Chapter Officers

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Joint October Meeting with STC Houston

Speaker: Linda Driskill, Ph.D., Director
Cain Project at Rice University

Date: October 10, 2006 (Tuesday)

Time: 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.

Place: Holiday Inn Select
Greenway Plaza
Houston, Texas

Come network with members from both the Houston Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC) and AMWA Southwest at their joint October meeting. Dr. Linda Driskill, Director of the Cain Project in Engineering and Professional Communication at Rice University, will explain the Cain Project's unique approach to teaching writing to students in science and engineering. The presentation will be educational for novice and experienced writers alike.

The Cain Project (www.owlnet.rice.edu/~cainproj/index.html), named for financial donors Gordon and Mary Cain, prepares science and engineering students to lead through excellence in communication, both written and oral. Communication instruction is integrated into the curriculum. The Cain Project's instructors work with faculty in science and engineering to plan and implement communication instruction in existing courses. Furthermore, separate courses on communication instruction are taught by the Cain Project's faculty to faculty, graduate students, teaching assistants, graders, and others at Rice University.

Dr. Driskill, a member of STC, received her Master of Arts and PhD from Rice University, where she is a professor of English and Management Communications. Her research areas include engineering and professional communication, academic writing, international communication, and writing in the disciplines. Dr. Driskill is a co-author of the textbook *Business and Managerial Communications*.

We will meet for hors d'oeuvres and socializing at 5:30 p.m. Officers from STC-Houston will make announcements at 6:20 p.m., and the presentation about the Cain Project will begin at 6:30 p.m.

Continued on Page 2

To register for this event, RSVP by Friday, October 6, to Anita Frijhoff at frijhoff@sbcglobal.net. Please include your first and last names, address, and phone number. Also, indicate whether you are an AMWA member, STC member, or nonmember. Please be prepared to pay (\$10 for members, \$15 for nonmembers, and \$5 for students and unemployed members) by cash or check (payable to AMWA Southwest) at the door on the day of the event, or mail your check to Anita Frijhoff at 2905 Dover Place, Austin, TX 78757-4351. Payment will be required for each email registration received.

Note: AMWA members who are also STC members may RSVP on the STC-Houston website (<http://www.stc-houston.org/events.html>). To have

the meeting attendance count toward AMWA's Professional Development Certificate (www.amwa.org/default.asp?Mode=DirectoryDisplay&id=252), RSVP to Anita Frijhoff.

The Holiday Inn Select Greenway Plaza is located at 2712 Southwest Fwy (Hwy 59, east of Kirby Drive) in Houston. Parking is available (admission fee includes a \$2 ticket for self-parking). For those taking MetroRail, a complimentary shuttle leaves from the hotel around 4:30 and 5:30 p.m. to pick up passengers from the TMC Transit Center Station. For detailed directions, visit www.ichotelsgroup.com/h/d/sl/1/en/hotel/HOUGP/transportation or call the hotel at 713.523.8448.

Guided Tour of Body Worlds 3 by Drs. Bordelon, Mong, and Ross

On Saturday, July 22, a fantastic tour of the *Body Worlds 3* exhibit was held at the Houston Museum of Natural Science (HMNS). The event had been organized by Anita Frijhoff, Program Chair, and Ruth SoRelle, Assistant Program Chair. As a result of an enthusiastic turnout of 61 participants, Anita had to invite a third tour guide, Franz Mong, PhD, in addition to Drs. Lawrence Ross and Cassius Bordelon (please see their biographies in the [July 2006 newsletter](#)). Although the request was a last-minute one, Dr. Mong graciously accepted our invitation.

Dr. Mong, an associate professor at the Department of Neurobiology and Anatomy, The University of Texas (UT) Health Science Center at Houston, primarily teaches gross anatomy to medical and dental students, providing hands-on experience in preparing anatomical specimens. His research interests include neuromuscular junctions, muscle regeneration, and visualization of morphological changes in motoneuron dendrites using special labeling techniques.

Anita Frijhoff, Steve Palmer, Denise Wenner, and Ruth SoRelle with her husband, Paul, waited at the front entrance of HMNS for participants to check

in. Although they picked a well-shaded spot, the outdoor temperature was quite high for a sunny day around noon. Their enthusiasm and endurance were very much appreciated. After getting our lunch boxes and beverages, most of us went inside the high-ceilinged and air-conditioned museum hall, where we could enjoy our excellent food provided by Jason's Deli.

At 12:45 p.m., each tour guide led a group of about 20 people to the entrance of the exhibit. Despite the big Saturday-afternoon crowd at the museum, we were able to enter, in an orderly fashion, the *Body Worlds 3* exhibition hall uniquely decorated with an impressive design. However, the number of people looking at the exhibits greatly exceeded the number of specimens displayed. In several instances, when our tour guides were discussing specimens in detail, their lively conversational style attracted other visitors looking for more information about the exhibits.

Initially, a few of us were intimidated by some of these "action figures" showing well-preserved muscles, bundles of nerves, and colored, resin-molded blood vessels. As we tried to turn away from them, several skeletons standing behind

greeted us with lively gestures. Some distance away, three more such action figures were sitting at a table, playing cards; they were apparently expecting another player, perhaps from the audience, to join them. Fortunately, our tour guides were able to ease our anxieties by turning our attention to the anatomic details and artistic aspects of these figures. Soon enough, we all got more comfortable going through the rest of the exhibits.

In many exhibits, our tour guides' explanations were really necessary to understand and appreciate the work. For example, in an exhibit of preserved brains, Dr. Ross pointed out that the spaces among the cortical convolutions in the Alzheimer's patient's brain were visibly wider than the normal, healthy brain as a result of excessive fluid accumulation caused by the disease.

One of the most elaborate exhibits was "The Horse and Rider," in which the rider held the horse's brain in one hand and his own brain in the other. The horse was huge, with all four legs hanging in the air, unsupported, seemingly frozen in time during a vigorous gallop. We discovered that the single, powerful support that held the entire piece aloft was hidden under the long hairs of the horse's tail. Both the rider and the horse were fantastic sculptures of

skillfully preserved muscles, so detailed that individual muscle fibers could be seen.

Both Drs. Mong and Ross were very excited in explaining this particular exhibit. Although they emphasized that they were not comparative anatomists, both named the horse's muscles correctly, which we later verified by reading the exhibit label. These muscles were obviously much larger and more powerful than the rider's. Speculating about the purpose of the rider holding the two brains, one participant suggested that it could highlight the difference in brain size between the two.

Time passed quickly as we walked around these exhibits. Before we knew it, we had reached the last one: a dancer who, like many of the other figures, had well-preserved muscles captured in an artistic moment frozen in time. At the exit, some of us came together and expressed our wonder at the fact that a specimen prepared primarily for medical education could be transformed into an astounding piece with great artistry.

Although the entire tour lasted less than two hours, we needed the rest of the day to assimilate the overwhelming experience of these informative exhibits. It was one fantastic Saturday!

AMWA Southwest Chapter Sixth Annual Career Roundtables and Business Meeting

by Anita Frijhoff, Diego Pineda, Nita Costello, Jane Krauhs, and Denise Wenner

Thirty-three members and guests attended the sixth annual career roundtables discussion and business meeting at Baba Yega restaurant on Saturday, May 27. Outgoing president Chris Wogan, ELS, announced the winner of the fifth annual AMWA Southwest Chapter Scholarship for Biomedical Communication, Meenal Sinha. Ms. Sinha received a certificate of recognition, a check for \$500, and a complimentary 1-year membership in AMWA. Please read her winning essay on page 7.

Thereafter, the new chapter officers and board members were voted in. The new officers are

Stephen Palmer, PhD, ELS, President; Anita Frijhoff, PhD, President-Elect/Program Chair; Ruth SoRelle, MPH, Assistant Program Chair; Alison Woo, Treasurer; Jude Richard, ELS, Secretary; Hanson Yu, PhD, Newsletter Editor; and Martha Morrison, Diego Pineda, MS, Natasha Calder, MA, Denise Wenner, PhD, and Penny Logan, MS, Directors-at-Large. A complete list of officers, directors, and committee chairs is on page 3 in the [July 2006 newsletter](#).

Newly elected president Stephen Palmer welcomed everyone and announced the theme of the July

meeting. Next, attendees picked out their brunch choices and the leaders of the five roundtables started their discussions. Following are summaries of the roundtable discussions written by participants.

Ghostwriting and Guest Authorship roundtable leaders Herbert Fred, MD, MACP (UT Health Science Center at Houston) and Natasha Calder, MA (Cyberonics) discussed the issues faced by medical writers and editors working with manuscripts. Ms. Calder, who has been working as a medical writer in industry for five years, noted that while the pharmaceutical industry has come under scrutiny for its unacknowledged use of ghostwriters, the industry's support of costly clinical trials is indispensable. Her employer makes every effort to not influence the reporting while helping the studies' investigators with writing. Ms. Calder referred to the distinction that Thomas Lang¹ makes between ghost authorship (doing the work of the authors) and ghostwriting (working with the authors). She has requested to be mentioned in the acknowledgments of articles that she helped write. However, she has noticed that this is not permitted by some journals not wishing to reveal that their articles have been ghostwritten.

Dr. Fred urged medical writers to keep insisting on acknowledgment and, if possible, to state in their contracts that the author will only submit to journals allowing such acknowledgments. As a prolific writer himself, Dr. Fred knows that medical doctors are intent on getting published and don't shy away from ghostwriting or guest authorship. Early on, he recognized the dangers this behavior posed to readers of medical literature and, eventually, to patients, and wrote an editorial² about this type of dishonesty in medicine (not surprisingly, he had difficulty finding a journal that would accept it). He approaches medical literature critically. Such an approach may be the best way for medical writers and editors to deal with ghostwriting and guest authorships.

1. WAME Listserv Discussion, December 2003 to January 2004. Ethical Guidelines, Plagiarism, and Ghost Writing. Available at www.wame.org/ghost.htm. Accessed July 3, 2006.

2. Fred HL. Dishonesty in medicine. *South Med J*, 1984; 77(10): 1221-1222.

Participants at the *Education for Medical Communicators* roundtable discussed two available options for medical writers—professional certification and academic degrees (bachelor's and master's). Ms. Laurel Prokop, ELS(D), MT(ASCP), President and CEO of Techstyle Group LLC, described the certification process offered by the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS). Participants at the table were particularly interested in the BELS examination leading to the Editor in the Life Sciences (ELS) certification. After Ms. Prokop's presentation, Ann Jennings, PhD, from the University of Houston-Downtown (UHD), gave an overview of UHD's Professional Writing Program. Discussion centered on the program's curriculum and its admission requirements.

At the *Interpretation and Presentation Issues of Statistical Results* roundtable discussion, Myrna Khan, PhD, MBA, an assistant professor of Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine and a statistician at Houston's Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center, shared tips on how to best evaluate the results reported in abstracts and scientific papers to determine whether those results are reliable. First, discriminating between good trial designs and not-so-good ones is important, and a critical part of reliability in trial-results reporting is looking at the data collection methods employed by researchers. Second, it is important for reviewers and editors to recognize various statistical methods and under what circumstances their use is appropriate. Third, reviewers and editors must become keen at putting presented data into context by ensuring that the statistical results shown in graphical form make sense and match the conclusions being made in the abstract or scientific paper. Lastly, no matter how appropriate or sophisticated the statistical analysis may be, the results are not valid if the data are of poor quality. For anyone wanting a statistics reference book, Ms. Khan recommends *How to Report Statistics in Medicine* by Thomas Lang.

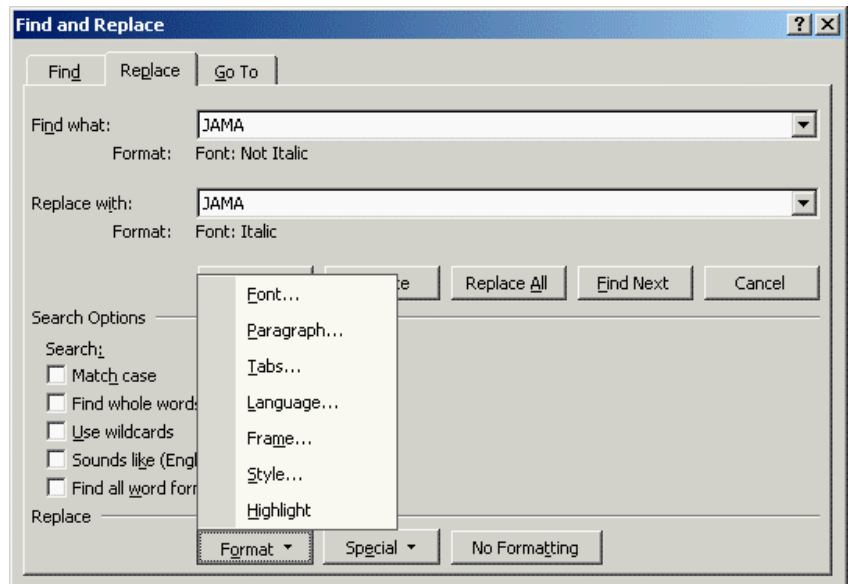
Stephen Palmer, PhD, ELS, from the Texas Heart Institute, led the discussion of *Getting More from Microsoft Word* and distributed a very useful handout summarizing the tips he covered on

customizing Word to your preferences (including using shortcut keys), working with format, using macros, working with symbols, using Track Changes, miscellaneous tips, and resources. No doubt all participants heard something they had not known before or needed to be reminded of for more efficient editing. Did you know,

Figure 1 Word's Replace function is useful for changing the formatting of a (frequently occurring) phrase.

for example, that a list of all shortcut keys can be found buried under Macro in the Tools menu (Macro name is ListCommands), or that you can use Replace to change text alignment or font (Figure 1), or replace text with clipboard contents?

Jude Richard, ELS, from PPD, Inc., shared knowledge he acquired as managing editor of *Heart Watch*, a newsletter for cardiovascular surgeons, cardiologists, and physicians that he developed while employed at the Texas Heart Institute. The discussion began with a description of the evolution of the newsletter—from an idea to its current form—and included helpful information about areas such as design challenges, methods of cultivating



contact with writers, eliciting new possibilities for stories, and maintaining a balance in topics. Participants discussed their experiences writing stories and producing a publication for this audience.

If you have any ideas for roundtable topics, want to have a favorite topic return at a future roundtables meeting, or are interested in leading a roundtable discussion at the career roundtables meeting in May 2007, please contact Anita Frijhoff (afrijhoff@amwasouthwest.org; 512.323.5171) or Ruth SoRelle (rsorelle@amwasouthwest.org; 713.798.7959).

AMWA Southwest's First Conference Outside Houston a Success

by Anita Frijhoff and Jude Richard, 2006 Chapter Conference Coordinators

On Friday, May 19, 2006, the idea of holding a conference in Austin, Texas, became a reality when the AMWA Southwest Medical Communications Conference was held at St. Edward's University. Organizing the conference was quite a job but the team effort—first with Pamela McAlpin and, after her move to Colorado, Jude Richard—made this a lot easier.

The excellent AMWA faculty, Barbara Gastel, Marianne Mallia, and Joan Nilson, as well as the outstanding plenary speaker, James Pennebaker (see Kathryn Hale's report of his lecture in the [July 2006 newsletter](#)), ensured a good conference experience for the 66 workshop registrants and four registrants for the plenary talk and lunch only. Conference registrants came from almost all states of the Southwest chapter (one from Arkansas, one from Louisiana, two from Oklahoma, and 60 from Texas)

as well as from California (2), Illinois (1), Ohio (1), and Pennsylvania (1). Of the 70 conference registrants, 21 were nonmembers and six signed up as new members at the time of registration.

The Medical Communications Conference took in \$12,375 and cost \$11,316 (high costs were the combined workshop rebates, curriculum enrollment fees, membership dues of \$5,790 to be paid to AMWA headquarters, and catering for \$1,450). The net income for the chapter was \$1,059.

How did these numbers compare with those of previous AMWA Southwest Chapter Conferences? The 2002 and 2004 Conferences were both held in Houston. The 2002 Conference, offering two core curriculum workshops, was attended by 85 people and brought in \$750. Two years later, the conference curriculum was extended to three core curriculum workshops, one advanced curriculum workshop, and one noncredit workshop. This conference was attended by 59 people and had a chapter income of \$1,865. So, both in attendance and chapter income, the Austin location proved successful.

Successful conferences can still be improved upon, and this conference was no exception. It turned out that the curriculum workshops offered (*Journal Submissions Other Than Research Articles; Grant Writing: NIH and Non-NIH Resource Options and Strategies; Bibliographic Resources for Medical Communicators; and Advanced Writing*) were more popular than the two noncredit workshops that had originally been scheduled. While enough participants registered for the noncredit *Giving Effective Presentations* workshop, the second noncredit workshop (*DNA,*

Cell Cycle, and Cancer: An Introduction) had to be cancelled because of too little interest.

A more serious issue was that the conference information did not state that upon registration homework would be sent by first-class mail from AMWA headquarters in Maryland, meaning that late registrants had little time to submit their homework in time and had to pay extra if they preferred overnight shipment of their homework. Apart from clarifying this, the next conference coordinator(s) may want to take advantage of technological advances and organize not only online registration but also online retrieval and submission of homework.

Other suggestions for improvement came from conference survey participants and included having

the lunch before or during the plenary session, having a shorter lunch break to allow afternoon workshop attendees to leave early and avoid rush hour traffic, offering a more comfortable conference hotel, and introducing an easy-to-understand conference fee structure.

What's next? Since AMWA Southwest is a nonprofit organization, chapter conferences should be (modest) moneymakers and certainly not cost the chapter any money. A sure way to do so is by offering a location or workshops (or both) that are of interest to AMWA Southwest members. Let's think about a great location in Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, or Oklahoma for the

2008 AMWA Southwest Medical Communications Conference! We've got the conference notes for another energetic team of conference coordinators. Are you up to the task? Please contact Steve Palmer (spalmer@amwasouthwest.org; 832.355.8902) or Anita Frijhoff (afrijhoff@amwasouthwest.org; 512.323.5171).

For making the 2006 Medical Communications Conference a success, a huge thank you to

Kristina Anderson

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Pierrette Lo

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Steve Palmer

Tegra Rosera

Ann Sutton

Kristina Wasson-Blader

Alison Woo

Hanson Yu

Winning Essay

AMWA Southwest Chapter Student Scholarship

Complement Anaphylatoxins: Novel Therapeutic Targets for Allergic Asthma

by Meenal Sinha

Our lungs work in an external environment that constantly bombards them with a variety of airborne pathogens and pollutants. The immune system, armed with a variety of effector cells and molecules, comes into play to protect the delicate lung tissue from these agents. However, when these defense mechanisms do not function properly or are not tightly controlled, a host of pathologies, mild or severe, can result.

One of such pathology, asthma, is caused by chronic immune inflammation of the airways. Despite current medications, the burden of asthma is high and increasing. In the USA alone, over 17 million individuals, with approximately one-third of those being children, are affected. In developing countries, asthma incidence is on the rise making it a public health concern worldwide.

Allergic asthma is caused when T helper type 2 (Th2) cells of the immune system generate a vigorous but inappropriate response to nonpathogenic inhaled environmental allergens like grass, and weed pollen, animal dander, dust mites and cockroach droppings. Traditionally, the complement system, an ancient part of our immune system, was not thought to be involved. Two peptides in particular, C3a and C5a, commonly known as complement anaphylatoxins, are produced when the complement system is activated and mediate a host of inflammatory responses similar to those observed in the allergic phenotype.

More recently, studies in humans and rodent models of allergic asthma have provided strong evidence for a critical role of the complement system in the

pathology of asthma. Asthmatic human subjects generate significantly higher levels of C3a and C5a in bronchoalveolar lavage (BAL) fluid compared to healthy controls after bronchoscopic allergen introduction in their lungs.¹ Furthermore, plasma C3a levels are elevated during acute exacerbations of asthma.² In addition, single nucleotide polymorphisms in human C3 (the parent molecule for C3a generation) and C3aR (the receptor for C3a) increase susceptibility to asthma.³ Collectively, these findings support the role of complement system in asthma.

Murine models also show complement involvement in allergic asthma. C3^{-/-} mice, which lack the central C3 protein of the complement cascade, have a nonfunctional complement system. In an allergic asthma model, C3^{-/-} mice exhibited significant reduction in the Th2-driven hallmarks of the asthmatic response, compared to wild-type.⁴ Similar findings were reported when using an inhibitor of complement activation in mice.⁵ C3aR^{-/-} mice^{1,6} and guinea pigs with a natural defect in C3aR,⁷ which lack C3a signaling and biological responses thereof, show marked reduction in the Th2-driven hallmarks of asthma. Together, these results show that the complement system, C3a / C3aR in particular, promotes allergic asthma.

In contrast, apparent protection is provided by C5a / C5aR. C5, the parent molecule for C5a, has been identified as a susceptibility locus for asthma.⁸ C5-deficient mice show significant worsening of the allergic response.⁹ Collectively, the above studies show an important protective role for C5 in allergic lung disease.

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In summary, critical but opposing roles are played by the complement anaphylatoxins and their receptors, C3a / C3aR and C5a / C5aR, in modulating the hallmarks of allergic disease. Delineating the mechanism of action and the target cells in further detail will facilitate the evaluation of anaphylatoxins and their receptors as targets for asthma therapy.

References

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SCIREX Sponsorship of the AMWA Southwest Medical Communications Conference

The AMWA Southwest Chapter gratefully acknowledges SCIREX Corporation for its generous gift of \$300 in student scholarships for the AMWA Southwest Medical Communications conference.

The SCIREX scholarship recipients were

- Liz Ann Baéz Aguilar, Texas A&M University
- Kurt Bischoff, UT San Antonio
- Heather Honore, Texas A&M University
- Maribel Robledo, Texas A&M University
- Daniel Ryder, UT Health Science Center at Houston



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