

What They Do

Medical Writers involved in clinical research write the clinical documents needed to obtain approval from regulatory agencies for new drugs or medical devices. These documents include new drug application documents, investigator's brochures, marketing authorization application documents, reports of clinical trials, and special regulatory requested documents. The writing style is objective and non-promotional. They may also edit similar material written by other writers. They must be well versed in biomedical terminology and the requirements of regulatory agencies. They work closely with research staff and may assist them in the preparation of protocols. Medical Writers may also write product reviews, training manuals for sales force, slide presentations, video scripts, posters, abstracts and manuscripts for science journals, and textbooks. They should have the ability to organize and prioritize work to meet deadlines and will need proficiency in word processing or desktop publishing software, statistics, epidemiology, demography, public health, and geographic information systems.

*Medical Writers in the biotech industry share characteristics of Technical Writers. Detailed descriptions of these occupations may be found in the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) at online.onetcenter.org.*

Important skills, knowledge, and abilities include:

- ▶ English Language – Knowledge of the structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.
- ▶ Communications and Media – Knowledge of media production, communication, and dissemination techniques and methods. This includes alternative ways to inform and entertain via written, oral, and visual media.
- ▶ Active Listening – Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
- ▶ Active Learning – Understanding the implications of new information for both current and future problem-solving and decision-making.
- ▶ Critical Thinking – Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.
- ▶ Writing – Communicating effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience.
- ▶ Monitoring – Monitoring/assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action.

Training/Requirements

- ▶ Bachelor or master's degree in life sciences.
- ▶ Extension programs at several California colleges and universities offer certificates in technical writing.

Pharmaceutical firms usually hire Medical Writers with several years' experience in regulatory processes. Contract research organizations (CROs) offer more opportunity for the fledgling Medical Writer to gain experience writing for clinical trials in various stages of development. Professional associations offer classes or certification specific to medical writing. The Drug Information Association has a certificate program in Medical Communication.

Medical Writers (Technical Writers)

What's the California Job Outlook?

While the Bureau of Labor Statistics does not collect data on Medical Writers, the occupation listed below is found in the biotechnology industry and has similar duties. Medical Writers are found within the broad occupational group, Technical Writers. The California outlook and wages in the figures below are drawn from all industries and represent a comparable occupation.

Standard Occupational Classification	Estimated Number of Workers 2004	Estimated Number of Workers 2014	Average Annual Openings	2007 Wage Range (per hour)
Technical Writers				
27-3042	7,300	8,900	370	\$26.64 to \$44.67

These figures do not include self-employment.

Average annual openings include new jobs plus openings due to separations.

Source: www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov, Employment Projections by Occupation and OES Employment & Wages by Occupation, Labor Market Information Division, Employment Development Department.

Additional Sources of Information

Northern California Science Writers Association
www.ncswa.org

National Association of Science Writers, Inc.
(304) 754-5077
www.nasw.org

Northern California American Medical Writers Association
www.amwancal.org

Council of Science Editors
(703) 437-4377
www.councilscienceeditors.org

Society for Technical Communication
(703) 522-4114
www.stc.org

Drug Information Association
(215) 442-6100
www.diahome.org

Occupational Information Network (O*NET)
<http://online.onetcenter.org>