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Introduction & Medical Communications and Writing

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Medical Communications and Writing: Important Skills for the Pharmacist

Medicine is a dynamic field. Every year, new drugs and treatments are added to the health care practitioner’s armamentarium. Many years of research and testing, involving numerous scientists and health care professionals, are needed to launch a successful drug. Each step of the way requires concise and accurately written communication. Scientific writing is a vital component of medical communications and essential to the maintenance and improvement of our overall medical system.

The medical industry needs skilled writers. A professional medical writer must possess many traits in addition to writing skills and familiarity with medical journals. He or she must possess scientific expertise in pharmacology, pharmacokinetics, pharmacotherapeutics and drug safety. Also, the successful medical writer must display proficiency in literature retrieval skills and knowledge of the drug-development process. All of these areas are core components of the training of a pharmacist.

The medical industry needs ethical writers. Pharmaceutical manufacturers perform and sponsor significant amounts of medical research and analysis, especially clinical trials. They also fund many articles that contribute substantially to the medical literature, such as meta-analyses, disease and treatment reviews, epidemiology reports, and health economics research. Often, medical writers are hired by the drug manufacturer to write these articles. At times, the line between objective, responsible writing and study bias may become blurred. Because of their sworn Code of Ethics and commitment to patient care, pharmacists can navigate through any potential bias and determine appropriateness. Pharmacists, functioning as medical writers, are uniquely qualified to ensure that clinical trials, continuing education programs and other enduring medical communications are published in a responsible and ethical manner.

In this inaugural edition of The Pharmacy and Wellness Review, under the direction of Editor-in-Chief Maggie Allen, a fifth-year pharmacy major from Olean, N.Y., a select group of Ohio Northern University PharmD students display their research skills and professional writing abilities.

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