

Medical Writing Branches and Official Samples

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Goals of document: This document serves as a curated resource to help early-career and aspiring medical writers explore and understand the diverse branches of medical writing. It provides links to official samples from established industry sources, including pharmaceutical companies, medical news organizations, and others. These deliverables may come in many forms such as slide decks (PowerPoint presentations), Word documents, videos, pdf print outs, and digital interfaces displayed on kiosks.

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Medical Communications

Medical communications is an umbrella term covering the broad field of creating and delivering scientific and medical information to healthcare professionals (HCPs), patients, and other stakeholders. Within this field, specialized areas such as promotional medical education, medical affairs, and publication planning have distinct goals and regulatory requirements and are therefore separated.

Outside these specialized subcategories, medical communications covers scientific and educational materials such as educational overviews of diseases, materials prepared for expert advisory meetings, and training resources designed for internal staff. These materials focus on educating and informing audiences by combining scientific accuracy with organizational objectives.

Examples of Deliverable Types:

- **Disease state overview:** A clear, structured summary of a medical condition, its causes, treatments, and key statistics, written for HCPs or internal teams
- **Advisory board report:** A concise record of expert panel discussions, capturing key insights and recommendations for future strategy
- **Internal training module:** Educational content designed to teach company staff about scientific topics unrelated to specific promotional claims

Official Examples:

- [Eli Lilly disease state overview](#)

Finding publicly available deliverables in medical communications can be quite difficult. Although **investigator reports** themselves may not fall under medical writing, the slides within these presentations that display data and information on the company's products are often included in advisory boards and internal training modules.

- [Novartis 2025](#) (starting at slide 18)
- [Novartis ASCO 2024](#) (starting at slide 5)
- [Roche Q1 2025](#) (focus on the slides with data like #27)

Promotional Medical Education

Promotional medical education is a specialized subset of medical communications focused on educational activities and materials often sponsored or funded by pharmaceutical or biotech companies. These programs educate HCPs and internal communications teams within the context of supporting a specific product or therapeutic area. They balance scientific accuracy and educational objectives with commercial goals and are subject to regulatory oversight and medical-legal review.

Examples of Deliverable Types:

- **Branded or unbranded HCP material:** Educational resources created to support awareness or understanding of a product or therapeutic area
- **Sales team training guide:** A structured reference for commercial teams to accurately discuss a product with customers
- **Media backgrounder:** A short, factual document giving patients or HCPs essential information about a product or condition.

Official Examples:

- [Pfizer media backgrounder](#)

Continuing Medical Education (CME)

CME is a strictly regulated subset of medical education aimed at maintaining and improving healthcare professionals' clinical competence. Although CME activities may be funded by pharmaceutical or biotech companies through independent educational grants, they must remain fully independent of commercial influence. Accredited providers ensure that CME content is free from bias, based on objectively identified educational needs, and compliant with rigorous accreditation standards to uphold scientific integrity and objectivity.

Examples of Deliverable Types:

- **Needs assessment:** An evidence-based analysis identifying gaps in HCP knowledge or skills to guide accredited education
- **Webinars:** Videos of presentation given by clinicians with accompanied slide decks
- **Digital Text-Based Activities:** Text-based training modules that often intersperse recordings of clinicians answering questions related to the material

Official Examples:

There are numerous websites offering free courses and other CME materials. To see them you will usually need to create an account.

- [Haymarket Medical Education webinar](#)
- [Physicians Education Resource digital text-based activity](#)

Medical Affairs

Medical affairs is a non-promotional area of medical communications that supports scientific strategy and ensures the accurate communication of clinical and therapeutic information. Writers in this area develop evidence-based materials such as clinical trial summaries, medical science liaison (MSL) talking points, and internal training content. While supporting company scientific strategy, this work prioritizes objective, unbiased communication distinct from promotional marketing.

Examples of Deliverable Types:

- **Clinical pipeline infographic:** A visual showing the company's products and their stages in development or clinical trials.
- **MSL briefing document:** A fact-based guide for field medical staff to use when discussing data with HCPs.
- **Scientific response letter:** A written reply to an unsolicited HCP question, supported by evidence and regulatory review.

Official Examples:

- [Revolution Medicines pipeline](#)
- [Regeneron pipeline](#)
- [Sumitomo pipeline](#)

Regulatory Writing

Regulatory writing focuses on creating scientific documentation needed to support the approval and ongoing oversight of pharmaceutical and medical products. This work supports regulatory submissions to agencies such as the FDA, EMA, and others worldwide. Regulatory writers follow strict templates and guidelines to present clinical trial data, safety information, and manufacturing details clearly, accurately, and in compliance with regulatory standards. Precision, consistency, and adherence to timelines are critical in this highly structured and detail-oriented field.

Examples of Deliverable Types:

- **Clinical study report (CSR):** A largely text-based document submitted for regulatory approval that details the design, ethical conduct, and results from a clinical trial
- **Study protocol:** The official plan for how a clinical trial will be conducted, including objectives, methods, and analysis
- **Regulatory briefing document:** A structured summary provided to agencies like the FDA or EMA to support product approval discussions

Official Examples:

- [Sanofi CSR aflibercept clinical study report](#)

- [Pfizer COVID-19 Vaccine briefing document](#)

Publication Planning

Publication planning involves strategically organizing the dissemination of clinical study results through scientific journals and conferences while ensuring compliance with regulatory and ethical standards. This includes managing the development and submission of abstracts, posters, oral presentations, and full journal articles. Depending on the organization, publication planning may be considered a distinct function or part of the broader medical communications field.

Examples of Deliverable Types:

- **Manuscripts:** a long-form report detailing the objectives, endpoints, results and conclusions of a study
- **Plain language summaries (PLS):** a brief summary that uses clear, accessible wording, often supported by visuals, to explain results from a scientific publication or clinical trial for a general audience
- **Scientific poster:** Typically a single large printed sheet presented at a conference that uses text, graphics, diagrams, or charts/tables to summarize the study information that would be included in a manuscript (results may not be available)
- **Conference presentation:** A structured slide deck summarizing the background of a condition or topic, the knowledge gap the research addresses, and the design and results of relevant studies when available

Official Examples:

- [Revolution Medicines manuscript](#)
- [Revolution Medicines poster](#)
- [Revolution Medicines conference presentation](#)
- [Scientific Reports manuscript](#) with [plain language summary](#)

Medical Journalism

Medical journalism involves researching, reporting, and providing commentary on healthcare, biomedical research, and industry developments. It aims to inform and engage both the general public and specialized audiences such as healthcare professionals and policymakers. Medical journalists translate complex scientific information into accessible, timely content, often through news articles, features, interviews, analysis, and health-related blogging. This field requires balancing accuracy, clarity, and relevance while striving for editorial independence from commercial or promotional influences.

Examples of Deliverable Types:

- **News article:** A concise, timely report on a new study, guideline, or health trend for the public or HCPs.
- **Feature article:** An in-depth piece exploring a medical topic, often including expert interviews and background research.
- **Expert interview write-up:** A formatted summary of a conversation with a medical specialist, tailored for publication.

Official Examples:

- [Cancer Therapy Advisor news article](#)
- [Stat News feature article](#)
- [Onc Live expert interview write-up](#)

Now that you reviewed the main branches of medical writing, you may want to start focusing on the areas that best fit you. I've created an activity that can guide you on finding your fit based upon your values, needs, interests, skills and goals. [Complete the activity today.](#)

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