

## Role of professional medical writing in high-quality publications



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Whilst central and western Europe have witnessed declines in absolute numbers of cardiovascular deaths between 1990 and 2013, regions such as South and East Asia have witnessed the largest increases<sup>1</sup>. Despite these observations, Asian countries remain under-represented in cardiovascular research and scientific output. The reasons for this are complex and multifactorial, but there can be little doubt that, moving forward, the Asian region is a crucial element in the effort to understand and treat cardiovascular disease better, and AsiaIntervention will continue to work tirelessly to promote the region globally.

Proudly, we have witnessed a steady influx of submissions since our first issue in January 2015. Our founding vision remains to be the premier English-language peer-reviewed interventional journal that showcases the rapid expansion of technological advances and innovations in interventional cardiology. Without a doubt, the rapid population growth and formidable economic development across the Asia-Pacific region will see our journal become an increasingly important vehicle to share such scientific data, and it remains critical that this information be disseminated in an accurate, clear and unbiased fashion.

Our region is unique in many ways. With its cultural and linguistic diversity, primary communication often takes place in local and regional languages. At best, English may be a second or even third language for patients, staff, physicians, and scientists. Whatever the competing opinions, the current reality is that most international scientific communication still takes place in English. This seems to play a major role in limiting scientific engagement between Asia and the rest of the world. This is a huge loss for scientific communities on both sides of the language barrier.

It is widely recognised that numerous papers submitted are rejected by biomedical journals due to poor content organisation and writing style. Grammatical and simple spelling errors too frequently remain the bane of editors' and reviewers' lives. Writing a scientific paper can be arduous and requires a special skill set that not all of us possess to the same degree. An example of how to craft a manuscript is apparent by looking at one of the many thousands of published papers by our very own Senior Consulting Editor Patrick W. Serruys. These clearly demonstrate the art of medical writing to engage the target audience and provide the greatest scientific clarity and impact.

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In a globalised world with increasing information sharing and understanding of cultural diversities, high-calibre scientific discussion should not be limited by language. Scientific researchers should not be expected to be fluent in English, particularly because there are numerous high-quality professional medical writing services that can assist authors with expressing their content in a coherent, concise and effective manner and assist in the preparation and submission of articles to biomedical journals.

Such services can include simply aligning language style and grammar, to careful review of regulatory, quality-control, and clinical data documents. It should also be noted that English translation and writing services are routinely used and made available at top research institutions in Europe and the USA. Professional medical writing support is associated with more complete reporting of clinical trial results and increased adherence to Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT). Authors globally, and particularly in industry-sponsored studies, have increasingly adopted the support of professional medical writing over the past decade<sup>2,3</sup>. The international Good Publication Practice guideline (GPP3) has recognised that professional medical writers have an important role in assisting authors with the development of publications, particularly where authors have limited time and knowledge of publication ethics and reporting guidelines<sup>4</sup>. It is hoped that the English-speaking scientific community will not penalise non-English-speaking scientists for utilising similar services to improve the quality of their contributions responsibly. Nonetheless, it should go without saying that the standards for scientific research and publication will remain unchanged at the highest levels regardless of language, culture, or creed.

The wealth of scientific data across Asia and the Pacific Rim provides a critical and unique opportunity for cardiovascular research. First, with Asians accounting for the greatest population numbers, it is crucial to have a better understanding of treatments in diverse ethnic groups. Second, with large, ethnically heterogeneous and high-density populations, the Asian region is naturally very attractive as a location for large clinical trials. These populations have tremendous socio-economic diversity with pockets of treatment-naïve populations in under-resourced regions among those with access to comprehensive medical care. Third, in addition to potentially quicker patient recruitment, Asia's cost-effectiveness also provides an attractive advantage for the sponsors of such trials<sup>5</sup>.

Reflecting the increase in commitment and research funding, the international community has also witnessed rising engagement from Asian scientific communities. In fact, China has surpassed the USA with the largest science and technology workforce globally<sup>6</sup>. Although medical research articles emerging from Asia

have increased accordingly, they are dwarfed in comparison by the number of articles emerging from Europe and the USA. This has been accompanied by slow growth in the number of highly cited research articles and patent applications. Clearly, there is still a large gap between Asian scientists and their American and European colleagues.

Part of the gap that exists in the scientific community arises from the diversity within Asia, with its vast array of ethnicities, nations, cultures, histories, and languages. Despite the current geopolitical waves roiling our world, we believe that language should not remain a primary barrier to publishing vital, high-quality research that has the potential to improve lives across the globe. We encourage clinicians and scientists in Asia and around the world to continue to pursue high-quality cardiovascular research, and to engage professional medical writing services as necessary to allow fluid communication across global scientific communities. Equally, we look forward to continued discussions, collaborations, and shared progress in the fight against cardiovascular disease and hold true the privileged and powerful position of our journal.

### Conflict of interest statement

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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