

# AMWA MID-AMERICA

Winter 2014



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# A Note from the Editor

Magdalena Berry, MA

Dear Chapter Members,

Greetings in this holiday season!

No, that's not an odd Christmas tree on the cover. Those colorful "balls" are booties that Alaskans put on their sled dogs to protect their feet when they're working. This tree is at a small museum outside of Anchorage, which I was fortunate to visit a few years ago.

The deadline for the next newsletter is **March 22, 2015**. Newsletters are generally issued quarterly, in March, June, September, and December. Your contributions are welcome. If you come across any information that might be of use or interest to other members, pass it along!

With the addition of **Linda Landon** as Secretary, we now have a full complement of officers. Welcome, Linda! Also, thanks to all who have volunteered to help with local events in Kansas City! We can look forward to a fruitful year ahead as the chapter grows.

I encourage you to check out our **chapter website**: [www.amwa-midamerica.org](http://www.amwa-midamerica.org). You'll find, among other topics: information about chapter activities, an archive of past newsletters, and a list of past St. Louis area Freelance Luncheon speakers and topics, with some links to handouts. See also this issue's article on the most recent luncheon, which links to helpful information on tax preparation, which was the topic presented.

Best wishes for the New Year,

Magdalena

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## Chapter Officers

**President:** Rona Clair Grunspan, MD

**Treasurer:** Joanne M. McAndrews, PhD

**Secretary:** Linda Landon, PhD

**Membership chair:** Nicholas Russell

**Newsletter chair:** Magdalena Berry, MA

**Webmaster:** Lisa M. Balbes, PhD

**St. Louis Freelance Luncheon Coordinators:**

Lisa M. Balbes, PhD, Joanne M. McAndrews,  
PhD

# Chapter Business

Magdalena Berry, MA

Chapter officers hold regular meetings, usually via conference call, to report on and plan events and to discuss any issues or needs. The next meeting is scheduled for January 9, 2015. Under discussion will be the next semiannual report and attendance at the next Board of Directors meeting.



## PRA HEALTH SCIENCES

PRA Health Sciences is looking for a Medical Writer- Early Development Services located in Lenexa, Kansas office.

**Overview:** Researches, writes and edits clinical reports, summarizing statistical data from clinical studies, writes clinical study protocols, clinical plan outlines and sections of regulatory submission documents by applying therapeutic expertise and clinical drug development knowledge and relevant experience to the development of drugs, biologics, devices and or other products for human use.

**Responsibilities include:**

- Coordinates and leads project teams in drafting report specifications, medical writing, and coordination of data analysis
- Coordinates and leads the writing of technical documents for regulatory submissions (e.g. meeting packages, INDs, sections of NDA/MAA/CTD)
- Serves as an active mentor to one or more junior staff members
- Provides formal in-service training as requested by the project manager
- Maintains familiarity with current industry practices and regulatory requirements that affect medical writing

**Qualifications:**

- Moderate science or medical related writing experience required
- An advanced degree (M.S., PharmD, Ph.D.) from an accredited institution in science or a health-related field, or equivalent international education
- Advanced degree (M.S., PharmD, Ph.D.) preferred

**PRA is an EEO/AA employer and is committed to providing opportunities to minorities, women, veterans and individuals with disabilities.**

To apply please visit [www.prahs.com](http://www.prahs.com) (ID: 2014-26067)

# St. Louis-area Freelance Luncheon Series: TechWrite STL

Joanne McAndrews, PhD  
Lisa Balbes, PhD



The TechWrite STL group continues to hold its bi-monthly lunch meetings. At each meeting, a topic of interest to freelance medical and technical writers is presented by a member and discussed by the group, usually over lunch at a local restaurant.

On November 12, Dana Delibovi lead a discussion on “Taxes that Aren’t Taxing: Simple Solutions for Tax Preparation.” She shared tips learned from her accountant, and simple systems that save her time and money. Other members shared what has worked for them as well. **A handout with some of these tips is available on the web site at <http://amwa-midamerica.org/history.html>.**

Upcoming meetings include

- “What to Charge: Pros and Cons of Hourly Rates and Flat Fees” January 2015, and
- “Breaking into Regulatory Writing” in March 2015.

Topics and speakers are being solicited for the May and July meetings – contact Lisa Balbes ([lisa@balbes.com](mailto:lisa@balbes.com)) to volunteer.

Lisa Balbes and Joanne McAndrews have been co-organizing the group since 2006.

All interested parties are invited to attend – membership is not required.

For details or to RSVP, see the chapter website (<http://www.amwa-midamerica.org/index.html>). A list of past topics is also available under the History tab on that website, as are handouts from selected luncheons (<http://www.amwa-midamerica.org/index.html>). A list of past topics is also available under the History tab on that website.

# FYI: Ivan Oransky's Retraction Watch

Magdalena Berry

You may have noticed this announcement in the November 24 2014 AMWA Update:

## DRUM ROLL PLEASE...

AMWA is excited to announce the 2015 Walter C. Alvarez Award winner is Jay Ingram (Canadian science broadcaster and recent author of *Fatal Flaws* and several other books). And the 2015 John P. McGovern Award winner is *Ivan Oransky (Medical reporting professor, Vice President and Global Editorial Director of MedPage Today, and co-author of A-Z Common Symptom Answer Guide)*.  
(italics mine)

Ivan Oransky's name was familiar to me, as I'm a subscriber to his blog, *Retraction Watch* ([retractionwatch.com](http://retractionwatch.com)). The full name of the site is *Retraction Watch: tracking retractions as a window into the scientific process*.

Because, as Tom Lang has noted, "Publication is the final stage of research," Oransky's site is useful to medical writers as a guide to the terrain of scientific publishing – a way to learn about its pitfalls, pressures, and practices.

In addition, the site makes concrete for students the concepts of academic dishonesty by connecting them (unfortunately) to the "real" world.

Here are a couple of recent posts, with the brief introductions supplied by the authors. Links to the entire posts and supporting articles are supplied on the site.

### ***"Does irony have a place in science?"***

Take us at our word when we tell you this isn't some exercise in meta-irony or meta-criticism or any other meta-bullshit, but a pair of researchers at Drexel University in Philadelphia have published a paper calling for an end to irony in science.

First, some background: In 2001, an Israeli researcher named [Leonard Leibovici](#) wrote a [letter](#) to the famously lighthearted Christmas issue of the *British Medical Journal* describing a randomized controlled trial in which intercessory prayer at a distance — in other words, people praying for other, sick people — was found to improve the health of patients with bloodstream infections. All the more remarkable was that this prayer was "retroactive," as in, it purportedly occurred years after those sick patients had either left the hospital or died.

### ***"Peer review isn't good at 'dealing with exceptional or unconventional submissions,' says study"***

One of the complaints about peer review — a [widely used but poorly studied process](#) — is that it tends to reward papers that push science forward incrementally, but isn't very good at identifying paradigm-shifting work. Put another way, peer review rewards mediocrity at the expense of breakthroughs.