

AMWA MID-AMERICA

Winter 2015



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A Note from the Editor

Magdalena Berry, MA

Dear Chapter Members,

Greetings!

We hope you are having a pleasant holiday season, and that you've avoided the flooding plaguing our region this winter.

The deadline for the next newsletter is **March 20, 2016**. Newsletters are generally issued quarterly, at the end of March, June, September, and December.

You can find more information about the chapter and some other resources for writers at our chapter web site: www.amwa-midamerica.org

As always, feel free to send any suggestions or contributions!

Magdalena Berry

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Chapter Officers

President: Rona Clair Grunspan, MD

Treasurer: Joanne M. McAndrews, PhD

Secretary: Linda Landon, PhD

Interim **Membership chair:** Magdalena Berry

Newsletter chair: Magdalena Berry, MA

Webmaster: Lisa M. Balbes, PhD

St. Louis Freelance Luncheon Coordinators:

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

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 most meetings, 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.

Bob Saigh was the presenter at our November luncheon, speaking about the topic “Don’t Get Technical with Me: The Truth about Technical Writing”. Bob described the scope of technical writing and the current job market. He provided information on what others think of technical writing, and inspired discussion of what it is, what it pays, and how it has changed over the years.

Upcoming luncheons in 2016 include “The ABCs of regulatory writing” by Christine Feely in January

and “Diversifying Your Workstream” by Dana Delibovi in March.

Lisa Balbes and Joanne McAndrews have been co-organizing the group since its founding in September 2006. A schedule of upcoming luncheons can be found on our chapter website (<http://www.amwa-midamerica.org/index.html>). A list of past topics is available on the History tab on that website, as are handouts from selected luncheons.

AMWA Mid-America Officers' Meeting Minutes from November 11, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 1:35 pm by chapter president, Rona Claire Grunspan. Four members were present, including Joanne McAndrews, Lisa Balbes, Magdalena Berry, and Linda Landon.

Events in St. Louis

The St. Louis TechwriteSTL Freelance group is continuing to organize the St. Louis-area Freelance Luncheon Series every other month to discuss topics of interest to freelance medical/technical writers in the St. Louis, MO area. Speakers on a number of interesting and useful topics present at each meeting, and all meetings are set for the remaining meetings in 2015 and meetings in 2016. The topic for the November 12, 2015 meeting will be the truth about technical writing. Luncheons are scheduled for January and March of 2016. The annual TechWriteSTL dinner will be held on September 2016 to celebrate 10 years of TechWriteSTL luncheons. Joanne McAndrews is organizing the dinner. For information on TechwriteSTL activities, please visit <http://www.amwa-midamerica.org/>.

Events in Kansas City

The Kansas City area members currently have no planned events at this time. Contact Rona Claire Grunspan (ronaclaire@gmail.com) if you or someone you know is interested in organizing an event in Kansas City.

Chapter Leader Call with the AMWA Board of Directors

Magdalena Berry attended the Chapter Leader Call and reported on the topics that were discussed.

The next call will be the second Monday of December.

Housekeeping

Chapter Officer Meetings – The next Chapter Officers Call will be on Tuesday January 12, 2016 at 1:30 pm by using a Google Hangout.

Treasurer's report - The final CD at Boone County National Bank (now under a new name, Central Bank of Boone County) has matured and has been redeemed. The Boone County National Bank checking account is closed. All accounts are consolidated in U.S. Bank.

Chart of chapter officer duties – Joanne will begin to edit the list of duties for the chapter officers and then will pass the list onto other officers for additional editing.

Membership - The membership list will be forwarded to the newsletter chairman.

Minutes – The September 2015 minutes were approved.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:51 pm.

Signed,
Linda A. Landon, PhD. ELS
Secretary, AMWA Chapter 14

Book Review: The Checklist Manifesto: How to Get Things Right

Magdalena Berry

One of the class projects in my undergraduate introduction to medical writing course is to create a scientific poster based on a piece of published research. The students can choose between two articles: one on the efficacy of placebos, the other on the World Health Organization research into checklist implementation, published in the NEJM (A Surgical Safety Checklist to Reduce Morbidity and Mortality in a Global Population, N Engl J Med 2009; 360:491-499 January 29, 2009 DOI: 10.1056/NEJMsa0810119). Soon after I began using the article in class, Atul Gawande, who was instrumental to the study, published an entire book about checklists.

I've had the book on my shelf for a while, and finally got around to reading it (one more thing off my personal checklist). While it may appear so, Gawande hasn't written a self-help book. Rather, he describes the development of the checklist idea and how it can be applied in various industries. Checklists were used initially, and very successfully, in aeronautics, and we learn a lot about how pilots use them and how integral they are to the safe operation of planes. A system of lists is also essential in the construction industry, Gawande discovered, for getting those high rises built. Some financial analysts were able to employ a basic list that made them more efficient and more likely to avoid common errors in judgment. A major focus of the *Manifesto* is research done on the benefits of a surgical

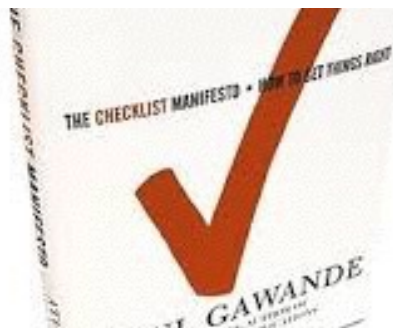
checklist, the results of which were published in the NEJM.

Checklists address "the problem of extreme complexity" in part by systematizing basic steps and forcing communication between the various experts involved in a complex endeavor (building construction, surgery). They're not instructions, expertise is assumed. But when an unusual event occurs, the right checklist can save crucial time and mental energy. Unfortunately, even the ordinary and obvious steps all too often get overlooked. We all make mistakes; checklists help us avoid many of them. As the many examples Gawande provides show us, checklists can save lives.

I suspect that many of us use some kind of a checklist, likely a mental one, when approaching a complex task

that we undertake routinely, such as editing a paper for publication. Gawande's book could, and I think, should, inspire the use of more and better lists to address the already enormous and ever-increasing complexity of the modern workplace.

Here is the WHO Checklist. Its use resulted in significantly lower mortality across the wide spectrum of hospitals in the study,



Before induction of anaesthesia



Before skin incision



Before patient leaves operating room

SIGN IN

- PATIENT HAS CONFIRMED
 - IDENTITY
 - SITE
 - PROCEDURE
 - CONSENT
- SITE MARKED (NOT APPLICABLE)
- ANAESTHESIA SAFETY CHECK COMPLETED
- PULSE OXIMETER ON PATIENT AND FUNCTIONING
- DOES PATIENT HAVE A:
 - KNOWN ALLERGY?
 - NO
 - YES
 - DIFFICULT AIRWAY/ASPIRATION RISK?
 - NO
 - YES, AND EQUIPMENT/ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE
 - RISK OF >500ML BLOOD LOSS (7ML/KG IN CHILDREN)?
 - NO
 - YES, AND ADEQUATE INTRAVENOUS ACCESS AND FLUIDS PLANNED

TIME OUT

- CONFIRM ALL TEAM MEMBERS HAVE INTRODUCED THEMSELVES BY NAME AND ROLE
- SURGEON, ANAESTHESIA PROFESSIONAL AND NURSE VERBALLY CONFIRM
 - PATIENT
 - SITE
 - PROCEDURE
- ANTICIPATED CRITICAL EVENTS
 - SURGEON REVIEWS: WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL OR UNEXPECTED STEPS, OPERATIVE DURATION, ANTICIPATED BLOOD LOSS?
 - ANAESTHESIA TEAM REVIEWS: ARE THERE ANY PATIENT-SPECIFIC CONCERNS?
 - NURSING TEAM REVIEWS: HAS STERILITY (INCLUDING INDICATOR RESULTS) BEEN CONFIRMED? ARE THERE EQUIPMENT ISSUES OR ANY CONCERNS?
- HAS ANTIBIOTIC PROPHYLAXIS BEEN GIVEN WITHIN THE LAST 60 MINUTES?
 - YES
 - NOT APPLICABLE
- IS ESSENTIAL IMAGING DISPLAYED?
 - YES
 - NOT APPLICABLE

SIGN OUT

- NURSE VERBALLY CONFIRMS WITH THE TEAM:
- THE NAME OF THE PROCEDURE RECORDED
 - THAT INSTRUMENT, SPONGE AND NEEDLE COUNTS ARE CORRECT (OR NOT APPLICABLE)
 - HOW THE SPECIMEN IS LABELLED (INCLUDING PATIENT NAME)
 - WHETHER THERE ARE ANY EQUIPMENT PROBLEMS TO BE ADDRESSED
 - SURGEON, ANAESTHESIA PROFESSIONAL AND NURSE REVIEW THE KEY CONCERNS FOR RECOVERY AND MANAGEMENT OF THIS PATIENT

THIS CHECKLIST IS NOT INTENDED TO BE COMPREHENSIVE. ADDITIONS AND MODIFICATIONS TO FIT LOCAL PRACTICE ARE ENCOURAGED.