A Career in Science Communication

Notes from the Workshop

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Most people associate science communication only with manuscript writing and science journalism.

While both of these are important facets of science comms., they represent only a part of this developing field.
My journey so far
Careers can take interesting detours sometimes… just like an experiment

- You plan an experiment, thinking you know what the outcome will be
- The experiment gives you an unexpected finding
- You find the observations reproducible
- You decide to see where the findings lead!
The beauty of science communication: variety

- The variety of clients with whom you can work
- The variety of subjects on which you work
- The variety of audiences for whom you write
Content for different audiences, to serve multiple purposes

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<th>PHARMA &amp; ASSOCIATIONS</th>
<th>CONSUMERS</th>
<th>PUBLIC</th>
<th>PATIENTS</th>
<th>DOCTORS</th>
<th>HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS</th>
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<td>Press releases and notes</td>
<td>Newspaper articles and advertorials</td>
<td>News updated on doctor portals</td>
<td>Newsletters</td>
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<td>Narratives</td>
<td>Website news stories (bylined)</td>
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<td>Training slide decks</td>
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<td>Briefing documents</td>
<td>Consumer-friendly website content</td>
<td>Publication summaries</td>
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*Content is co-created with the client and other experts and must receive all the necessary approval before being available in the public domain.*
Perks of a career in this field

- A combination of science with communication and expression
- Opportunity for creativity
- Opportunities to pitch an idea/strategy
- Intense, but a more proportional balance between effort and results
What may seem challenging

- Tight deadlines, multiple stakeholders
- Having to delve into issues that are initially completely new to you
- Being required to switch communication styles many times a day, depending on your audience
- Knowing exactly what you need to communicate
Then again, some challenges stay the same no matter where you go! 😊
Skills and Qualifications
A science communicator’s toolkit

A strong scientific background*
A passion for research
Scientific accuracy
An ability to simplify complex scientific concepts
Readiness to work on diverse topics
Language skills
Strong vocabulary
An eye for detail#

*Personal opinion  #Did you catch the typo?
Tips to sharpen your skills

Read as much as you can about the subject
Just – read!
Never neglect grammar

Do an online course or a formal course

Practice
Find a mentor
Qualifications

Any Masters or Ph.D. degree in science

Any medical degree

Then again, there is no rule here. There are brilliant science communicators who do not have a science degree but effectively communicate science with clarity, accuracy and simplicity.
A high science degree e.g. a Ph.D. is valuable…

… for the following reasons:

• It teaches you to think, critique, troubleshoot, problem solve and grasp new information quickly

• It teaches you to be scientifically accurate

• You know where to look for credible information

• The degree lends credibility to the work you do.

• You can easily interact with the experts in your client team
Jobs to Consider
Some job openings to consider

Medical communication agency
Develop collateral largely for in-clinic use, doctors, healthcare professionals; may also include patients and consumers.

Publication support firm
Support the communication of research findings and clinical data to the scientific community.

Public Relations agency
Work with clients to strategically communicate with various stakeholders, primarily through media.

Pharmaceutical writer
Develop non-promotional medical content to support clinical trials; may include some promotional material too.

Newspaper or News portal
Write news stories for newspapers; or news portals of popular journals/scientific websites.

Journal publication
Plan journal and magazine themes and topics and take part in the review process.

In recent years particularly, there has been quite a bit of overlap between these careers.
Points to remember
• Careers are not set in stone. It is ok to shift tracks. It is also ok if things don’t work out.

• Know what you’re good at. It helps to have a second opinion.

• Look for the right kind of mentor.

• It’s ok not to have a 10-year plan at the start of something new. Go where the “results lead you”.

• If you have the necessary skill set and mindset, then a career in science comms may be just what the ‘doctor’ ordered!