EMWA vetSIG 2022 1st Quarterly Meeting (January 28th)
Observer Report

We opened our year's activities on a Red-Letter Day for veterinarians in Europe: January 28th was the day the new EU regulations for veterinary medical products came into force. We marked the (possibly coincidental) occasion with a scintillating discussion, courtesy of a 'double header' on career migrations between human and veterinary medical writing delivered by Louisa Marcombes and Miyuki Tauchi, followed by some veterinary verbalization, our first collaborative writing practice.

Part 1. VMW<>HMW Career Migrations

Louisa started the main discussion with a short presentation on her move from clinical practice into medical writing, an abrupt transition accompanying a necessary shift in target species. Enthused by her love of writing, Louisa had consulted *A Career Guide to Medical Writing* by EMWA members Sally Jackson and Raquel Billions, and found that the spectrum of medical work was somewhat human dominated. So, from the start she realized that she was going to be writing about another species. Preparing herself through a formal medical writing course, she found human medical writing—mainly in the form of ongoing education and needs assessments—accounted for 60% of her first year's work (in the MedComms field; regulatory writing is still a delight yet to come!). Louisa commented that, although there were times human medical writing was not 100% within the comfort zone, the work had felt manageable overall, and she discussed a couple of advantages and disadvantages that veterinarians may possess for human medical writing.

The advantages could be summed up as omnicompetence and cross-species thinking. Omnicompetence (a wonderful word from a quote on one of her slides) describes the uncompartmentalized existence of many veterinary general practitioners, who do their own surgery, anesthesia, obstetrics & gynecology, ophthalmology, etc. This may give veterinarians a wider breadth of knowledge than the average human medical GP. For example, Louisa had found herself well equipped to write about human cardiology (and enjoy it), despite the differences from (and between) canine and feline cardiology, areas in which she had done a lot of work in her time as a clinician. Such differences come as a second nature to veterinarians used to thinking about the similarities and differences between species; essentially, writing about humans means adding just another species to the list.

Louisa cited depth of knowledge and quality of literature as the two disadvantages. Although veterinarians undoubtedly have a wide area of knowledge, they sometimes may lack something in depth, especially in areas where human medicine is well in advance of

animal medicine. She gave genetics and immunotherapies as relevant examples. With regard to the literature, it seemed that human medical writing tended to be more rigorous than the veterinary equivalent. Although progress is being made, there was still a gap, and veterinarians going into human medical writing might need to think about how much the level was being raised when writing on human projects. In some ways, veterinary medical writing appeared to still be in its infancy, as Louisa had encountered clients who were making their first forays into the veterinary medical field.

Miyuki started her contribution with a brief self-introduction before we went into question-and-answer format. She had originally qualified as a veterinarian in Japan, before studying abroad in Germany and then starting a production-animal-related PhD in the United States. At this point, she realized she wanted to delve deeper into the science in fields like physiology, and that maybe this interest could only be satisfied by moving into human medicine. That was the motivation behind her decision to do a PhD (and then a post-doc) in neuroscience in the United States.

While pursuing her postgraduate studies, Miyuki also decided that medical writing and translation would be a useful string to her bow, and took some medical writing courses. Although not being an English native speaker could have been daunting, Miyuki was able to score top marks in some writing tests (including higher grades than some of her English native speaker fellow-trainees). She soon realized that writing is about summarizing skills and the ability to present complicated data in an easily intelligible way as well as knowledge of the English language, and this encouraged her to take the plunge into a medical writing career. In fact, after several years of post-doc experience, she even found herself concentrating full time on medical writing for a time, before being called back to the laboratory by her colleagues, and she was now in 50:50 split between research (as the deputy head of a university laboratory) and freelance medical writing.

Miyuki's writing work now is almost exclusively in the human medical field. Like Louisa, she worked mainly in the MedComs area, often on manuscripts and conference presentations across multiple research fields. She has also done some regulatory work, for example quality control of Investigator's Brochures, and writing manuscripts from clinical study report. Her recent work covered chronic kidney disease, diabetes, immunotherapy and oncological imaging, showing there is a quite a wide range to take on in the human field.

Miyuki too commented on advantages that veterinarians bring to the field of medical writing. Veterinarians should have the basic ability to read a study and interpret data. While it might be true that a veterinarian's knowledge was broad rather deep, the same might be true of many others. For example, a physician in the field might not have a

knowledge of molecular biology but Miyuki was confident in tackling this field based on her own studies.

She then highlighted one crucial advantage for vets as they venture into the human field: human medicine involves animal research. In the research itself, Miyuki had often been called on to deal with the animal procedures, and suggested that sometimes some physicians may have underestimated the difficulties of handling experimental animals. When she started her research career, the approach to experimental animals had not always been ideal, but the situation was much improved.

Both speakers addressed some common points. Miyuki said that she had found researchers from in the field of human medicine very welcoming to veterinarians (perhaps because it was useful to have someone who could do the rodent surgery!). Louisa also made a point that when writing work is subcontracted, the end client may not realize a veterinarian has worked on it. Both Louisa and Miyuki seemed satisfied with their careers, and it is more likely we will see them holding a pen than getting hands on with dogs or cows in the future. Both appeared to have come by medical writing work quite quickly, within Louisa getting a lot of work through social media contacts as she set out, and Miyuki getting replies from agencies within a month of sending her CV out. In replying to a final question, both speakers agreed that companion animal veterinarians may fit more quickly into human medical writing overall, and perhaps for pharmaceutical companies. Large animal veterinarians should not despair though, because Miyuki felt they would be a good fit for medical device writing.

Part 2. Veterinary Verbalization

Veterinary Verbalization was our first "writing corner"-type exercise, devised in response to the number-one-ranked request (from our survey) for collaborative writing practice. The principle behind this exercise was that verb choice is a key part of the medical writer's skill; the raw data, patients/subjects, researchers, therapies and methods tend to become the subjects or objects in the sentences we write, and the verbs represent the terminology we choose to explain the relationships between these things. Attention to verbs has the added benefit of encouraging a pivotal approach to sentence structure. With that in mind we set out trying to identify a missing verb for nine example sentences. Each sentence was inspired by a real sentence in the veterinary literature (from regulatory guidelines to a veterinary horror novel), but the sentences were edited (sometimes heavily) for the purposes of the workshop. For anyone who want to try this exercise, the sentences with missing words are reproduced on page 5 (suggested answers from participants are also shown, with font size reflecting popularity of the choice among

meeting participants). The answers are given (together with the actual sources of the literary inspiration) on page 6. However, please remember these are not right or wrong answers; this exercise was intended to be thought provoking by showing other writers' verb choices, and in may cases, these choices are not intuitive. Perhaps the exercise could provoke thoughts on the desirability or otherwise of choosing the simplest verb, especially where SIG members choose different verbs from the author.

After verbalizing, we had a couple of announcements. The SIG now has a dedicated discussion forum in the form of LinkedIn unlisted group (please contact Henry @ k5908476@kadai.jp for details if you haven't joined already). Our Q2 meeting is planned to coincide with the EMWA spring conference, COVID situation permitting. Further details will be forthcoming soon. The Q3 and Q4 meetings are planned to go ahead on the last Friday of the quarter at 3 pm, as usual.

Reports ends (Writing exercise slides on next pages; 7-8 for questions; 9-10 for answers).

An accurate diagnosis _____ an animal's signs and symptoms.

predict
reflects explains
clarifies needs

151 cats were _____ in this study, of which 111 were excluded because they could not provide fecal samples at all time points.

enrolled
examined
included randomized
subjected used
screened

Hedgehogs may have _____ methicillin-resistant bacteria for more than 150 years.

acquired evolved
reservoirs hosted harbored
carried

VMPs are _____ by the Control Regulations of Veterinary Medical Products.

regulated
controlled
required

Many studies in ovine models of human neurological disorders have _____ in potential treatments moving into first-in-human trials.

contributed
resulted failed
evolved helped

Meningoencephalomyelitis of unknown origin (MUO) _____ a group of idiopathic, inflammatory central nervous system diseases that cause clinical, diagnostic and treatment challenges to veterinary neurologists.

comprise
describe causes
englobes describes

The risk factors for catastrophic racehorse injury identified in this meta-analysis _____ with those reported in the analysis for a previous systematic review, although the methodologies were similar.

contradicted contrast
differed differ
compare

A paucity of literature on differentiating the Andean mountain cat from other small sympatric felines _____ any attempt at establishing an accurate population census for this endangered species in Peru.

counfounds
militates inhibits
prevents
stops hindered hinders
preclude

The young vet's partially formed words _____ by his diaphragm when he noticed that the heifer had delivered a transparent calf.

inaudibly
produced
lodged

Item 3: Veterinary Verbalization

An accurate diagnosis __explains__ an animal's signs and symptoms.

Inspired by (with editing for quiz purposes)

EUROPEAN MEDICAL WRITERS ASSOCIATION

Item 3: Veterinary Verbalization

151 cats were __enrolled__ in this study, of which 111 were excluded because they could not provide fecal samples at all time points.

Inspired by (with editing for quiz purposes)

EUROPEAN MEDICAL WRITERS ASSOCIATION

Item 3: Veterinary Verbalization

Hedgehogs may have __harboured__ methicillin -resistant bacteria for more than 150 years.

Inspired by (with editing for quiz purposes)

EUROPEAN MEDICAL WRITERS ASSOCIATION

Item 3: Veterinary Verbalization

VMPs are __regulated__ by the Control Regulations of Veterinary Medical Products.

Inspired by (with editing for quiz purposes)

EUROPEAN MEDICAL WRITERS ASSOCIATION

Item 3: Veterinary Verbalization

Many studies in ovine models of human neurological disorders have __culminated__ in potential treatments moving into first-in-human trials.

Inspired by (with editing for quiz purposes)

EUROPEAN MEDICAL WRITERS ASSOCIATION

Item 3: Veterinary Verbalization

Meningoencephalomyelitis of unknown origin (MUO) __encompasses__ a group of idiopathic, inflammatory central nervous system diseases that cause clinical, diagnostic and treatment challenges to veterinary neurologists.

Inspired by (with editing for quiz purposes)

EUROPEAN MEDICAL WRITERS ASSOCIATION

Item 3: Veterinary Verbalization

The risk factors for catastrophic racehorse injury identified in this meta-analysis __conflict__ with those reported in the analysis for a previous systematic review, although the methodologies were similar.

Inspired by (with editing for quiz purposes)

EUROPEAN MEDICAL WRITERS ASSOCIATION

Item 3: Veterinary Verbalization

A paucity of literature on differentiating the Andean mountain cat from other small sympatric felines __bedevils__ any attempt at establishing an accurate population census for this endangered species in Peru.

Inspired by (with editing for quiz purposes)

EUROPEAN MEDICAL WRITERS ASSOCIATION

Item 3: Veterinary Verbalization

The young vet's partially formed words __quivered__ by his diaphragm when he noticed that the heifer had delivered a transparent calf.

Inspired by (with editing for quiz purposes)

Alan Reece is a young, unhappy vet. A nocturnal encounter with a miracle will quickly turn into a nightmare. As the world collapses around him, and accompanied by Kate, a psychic-turned physicist, Alan will pit himself against a man who has already conquered death, and now has designs on the world.

EUROPEAN MEDICAL WRITERS ASSOCIATION