Position Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Medical Communication

Executive Summary

The American Medical Writers Association (AMWA) recognizes both the opportunities and responsibilities associated with the growing use of artificial intelligence (AI) in medical communication. This position statement sets forth AMWA's principles for the responsible, ethical, secure, and compliant use of AI, with the goal of supporting innovation and productivity while safeguarding scientific integrity, data security, quality, and public trust.

Background

AI tools, including large language models, generative AI platforms, and AI-enabled workflow applications, are transforming how medical communications are planned, researched, developed, reviewed, and published. Their rapid adoption across the healthcare and life sciences industries has created both opportunities and risks, outpacing the development of professional guidance for medical communicators and their stakeholders. Since 1940, AMWA has supported professional medical communicators and is uniquely positioned to provide practical, principle-based guidance that reflects the realities of professional practice.

This statement presents AMWA's position on the responsible use of AI in medical communication and is intended to complement AMWA's Code of Ethics. This position highlights how the enduring principles, including objectivity, scientific rigor, professional competence, confidentiality, and accountability, apply in a rapidly evolving technological environment. Throughout this statement, the term "medical communicator" includes professionals who develop, review, and refine medical and scientific content for publication, regulatory submission, education, and promotional purposes.

AMWA’s Position

AMWA’s position is that AI tools can support medical communication but cannot replace the judgment, expertise, and accountability of the professionals who use them. AMWA therefore affirms that, in all AI-assisted medical communication:

- Responsibility for the content rests with people, not AI tools.
- Medical communicators should disclose AI use as appropriate for the document type and in accordance with applicable guidelines.
- The professional standards that govern medical communication apply in full to AI-assisted work, including the duty to verify.
- Responsible use of AI is itself a professional skill, and AMWA is committed to helping medical communicators develop this skill.

The considerations that follow explain what these commitments mean in practice. They are not exhaustive, and AMWA expects to supplement them with domain-specific guidance as practice and regulation evolve.

Considerations for the Responsible Use of AI

Accountability and Human Oversight

Medical communicators remain responsible for the content they produce, regardless of whether AI is used. AI tools can support professional judgment, but they cannot replace it. Medical communicators should be able to defend every claim, statement, and recommendation in the documents to which they contribute. Responsibility for that content cannot be delegated to an algorithm, a software vendor, or an employer's AI policy.

Transparency and Disclosure

Medical communicators should disclose AI use as appropriate for the document type and in accordance with applicable guidelines. Effective disclosure is specific, describing how AI was used (e.g., drafting, literature summarization, translation, or editing) and, when confidentiality allows, identifying the type of AI tools involved. Disclosure obligations may extend to clients, employers, collaborators, publishers, journals, and regulatory authorities. Failing to disclose AI use when disclosure is expected or required is inconsistent with the professional standards upheld by AMWA.

Accuracy and Verification

All medical communication must be verified and accurate. Because AI tools can produce plausible yet incorrect output, medical communicators must verify all AI-generated content against primary sources before finalization.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

Medical communicators should not enter confidential information into AI tools, including commercial AI platforms, unless they have confirmed that such tools operate under data-security and privacy controls that satisfy the applicable legal, contractual, and ethical obligations. Medical communicators should understand the data-retention and model-training policies of any AI tools they use professionally and should seek explicit client or employer guidance before processing sensitive material through external AI systems.

Authorship and Attribution

AI tools do not satisfy established criteria for authorship. AI tools cannot assume responsibility for content or be held professionally or legally accountable. Accordingly, AI tools should not be designated as authors, co-authors, or contributors in professional documents. The use of AI does not diminish the accountability of the human authors, contributors, or medical communicators.

Recognizing and Mitigating Bias

AI tools are trained on large collections of existing text and may reproduce or amplify biases within those materials. These biases may relate to race, ethnicity, sex and gender, geography, or socioeconomic status and may not be apparent in otherwise fluent output.

Potential effects include:

- overemphasis on certain study populations;
- omission of underrepresented perspectives; and
- perpetuation of outdated or inaccurate characterizations of diseases or population groups.

Since AI may encode and magnify existing biases, medical communicators should make bias mitigation a deliberate, documented component of AI-assisted work rather than assume that routine review will identify and correct all concerns.

Intellectual Property and Copyright

Medical communicators are responsible for ensuring that all content they deliver complies with applicable copyright laws. When AI is used, two distinct issues require consideration.

Whether AI-generated material qualifies for copyright protection depends on the applicable jurisdiction and the extent of human authorship. This area of law continues to evolve. In the United States, the Copyright Office has issued guidance on the copyrightability of works created with AI. Because American medical communicators often prepare work governed by the laws of other jurisdictions, medical communicators should also consider how those jurisdictions treat AI-generated content.

AI tools may reproduce or closely paraphrase copyrighted source material. To manage this risk, medical communicators should:

- review the intellectual-property terms of the AI tools they use;
- follow the intellectual-property provisions in client and employer agreements;
- comply with relevant policies issued by publishers, journals, and regulatory authorities; and
- review AI-generated output for reproduced or closely derived text and, when necessary, revise the material or obtain permission for its intended use.

Professional Competence and AI Literacy

AI tools cannot replace the scientific knowledge, regulatory expertise, therapeutic-area understanding, and communication skills essential to professional medical communication. However, they can expand the capabilities of skilled professionals by supporting tasks beyond their individual expertise. Medical communicators must be able to critically evaluate AI-assisted output and accept professional responsibility for the final work. AMWA therefore considers responsible AI use an emerging professional competency that requires ongoing learning and encourages medical communicators to develop AI literacy as part of their continuing professional development.

Organizational Quality Systems and Workflow Design

Effective AI use depends on effective processes. Organizations that employ or engage medical communicators should establish clear policies covering acceptable AI uses, data handling, disclosure requirements, quality control, and documentation standards. Since the quality and integrity of medical communications depend on the final output rather than the specific tools used, and because AI technologies evolve rapidly, policies are most sustainable when they focus on review, documentation, and approval of AI-assisted work rather than on lists of approved products. As AI-assisted and increasingly automated ("agentic") workflows become more common, they require careful design, clear points of human oversight and accountability, and documented procedures that are regularly reviewed and updated. Medical communicators in leadership and quality assurance roles are well positioned to champion and implement these practices.

The Role of Professional Medical Communicators

Professional medical communicators are uniquely qualified to help lead the responsible adoption of AI in medical communication. Core professional competencies of medical communicators include critical appraisal, adherence to reporting standards, rigorous referencing, and careful quality review. The same skills are essential for evaluating, overseeing, and appropriately using AI-assisted workflows. AMWA encourages medical communicators to apply this expertise to AI-assisted work, contribute to the development of effective organizational policies, and help educate colleagues, clients, and the public about the differences between AI-assisted content and content that has been independently verified and reviewed. For further information see, AMWA-EMWA-ISMPP Joint Position Statement on the Role of Professional Medical Writers.

AMWA's Ongoing Commitment

AMWA recognizes that no single statement can fully capture the rapid evolution of AI or its diverse applications in medical communication. To support medical communicators as the field evolves, AMWA is committed to providing education, practical resources, and opportunities to share experiences and best practices. AMWA also intends to supplement this statement with guidance tailored to the distinct regulatory, ethical, and professional contexts in which medical communicators work. This position statement will be reviewed periodically and updated as needed to reflect significant technological, regulatory, or professional developments. Through these efforts, AMWA aims to help medical communicators realize the benefits of AI while upholding the accuracy, integrity, and trustworthiness on which medical communication depends.

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Selected References

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