



## Tools and Trends in Medical Communication

By Faith Reidenbach, ELS, CMPP

Caley-Reidenbach Consulting, LLP, Corvallis, OR  
[www.caleyreidenbach.com](http://www.caleyreidenbach.com)

❖ **Images** ([www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/images](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/images)), a new database linked to PubMed Central, allows users to search for figures and illustrations, some of which may be freely reproduced. Type in keywords such as topic or author, and you'll get a list of citations to medical and life science journal articles, along with thumbnails of the relevant figures they contain. Simple topical searches can return thousands of hits, so you may need to be quite specific or use the Advanced Search feature. Images and data can be saved to your collection and shared with others through My NCBI. Figures identified may be reproduced without charge as long as the article is labeled as being distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, or a similar license, and the original author and source are credited.

❖ **The Alliance for CME** ([www.acme-assn.org](http://www.acme-assn.org)) has launched a series of online learning tracks for CME professionals. Termed CALLS (Competency Assessment & Lifelong Learning Series), the program includes 6 components, priced separately: "Proficiency in CME" (15-21 hours); preparation for the CCMEP certification exam (16-18 hours); a set of 51 sample CCMEP exam questions; and three 12-week certificates: Best Practices in Assessment and Evaluation, Directing Physician Self-assessment for Learning and Change, and Facilitating Improvements in Healthcare by Addressing Barriers. Each certificate requires a final project, so the Alliance has prepared a guide for managers that explains how companies will benefit. Group discounts are available, and individuals are welcome to form a "Community of Practice" with colleagues of their choice.

❖ **Authors of meta-analyses** rarely report the funding sources of the randomized controlled trials (RCTs) they include, according to research published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* (2011;305[10]:1008-1017). Michelle Roseman and colleagues reviewed 29 meta-analyses from high-impact journals and the Cochrane Database, which synthesized data from 509 RCTs. Of those, 318 RCT

reports disclosed a funding source, 219 disclosed that the trial was funded wholly or in part by the pharmaceutical industry, and 126 had at least one industry-employee author. Nevertheless, only two of the 29 meta-analyses reported the funding sources of included RCTs. Of the 6 meta-analyses that assessed risk of bias, none considered funding as a possible source of bias. Roseman et al suggest that reports of meta-analyses should disclose the funding sources and any author-industry financial ties of the RCTs analyzed, and that this information should be included when evaluating potential sources of bias.

❖ **Ghostwriting of federally funded research** may be punishable by the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), according to Dr Frances Collins, head of the National Institutes of Health. In a letter (<http://digbig.com/5bdqfr>) to Paul Thacker, formerly an investigator for US Senator Chuck Grassley, Dr Collins said that in some cases ghostwriting could be considered plagiarism. The HHS Office of Research Integrity (<http://digbig.com/5bdqfs>) considers plagiarism a form of research misconduct, and, if it is proven, the possible consequences for researchers range from a letter of reprimand to debarment (temporary suspension from seeking research grants).

❖ **Ever had a beef with a reporting guideline?** For example, do you chafe when trying to write a 250-word abstract that includes all the elements prescribed by the CONSORT Extension for Abstracts? Officials at the EQUATOR Network are looking for examples of how useful—or not useful—various reporting guidelines are for medical writers and editors. "You don't need to write a lot; a few sentences about your experiences, both good and bad, would be fantastic," they say. Send your comments to [shona.kirtley@csm.ox.ac.uk](mailto:shona.kirtley@csm.ox.ac.uk). Comments will be posted on the EQUATOR Network Web site ([www.equator-network.org](http://www.equator-network.org)), which is a good place to look if you want to learn more about the many guidelines for reporting research findings.

*Items in "Briefly Noted" appear earlier on selected AMWA listserves.  
To subscribe to a listserv, go to [www.amwa.org](http://www.amwa.org) and click on Membership>AMWA Listserves.*