YOU CAN DO IT TOO! CREATING SCIENCE VIDEOS FOR THE PUBLIC

Speaker
Jessica Meade
Office of Science Policy and Communications, National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering, Bethesda, MD

By Kelly Schrank

Jessica Meade works for the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering, a part of the National Institutes of Health, and she was quick to say that she has no government endorsement. Her goal in giving the presentation was to simply show others her journey from novice to creating animations. You can see some of her videos on the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering website at https://www.nibib.nih.gov/. One that she showed was "6 Awesome Technologies Your Tax Dollars Are Paying to Create."

Meade started the session by answering the question, "Can I make videos without buying any software?" Her answer was "yes" as Mac has iMovie and Windows has MovieMaker.

She continued by answering the question, "Why create videos?" The first part of her first answer was a quote from Haig Kouyoumdjian, PhD: "I believe the right visuals can help make abstract and difficult concepts more tangible and welcoming, as well as make learning more effective and long lasting." The second part of her answer was to only make a video if it serves the content. If visuals such as video don't add anything to your story—or if you don't have the right visuals that add to the story—then use a different medium. Meade advised attendees to not waste time and energy making a video if it adds nothing to the content.

Research

Learning how to create videos was a passion for her; Meade admitted to spending some of her personal time on learning how to make good videos. But she also researched and created videos at work when she had time between projects. Meade said that making the videos was not a requirement of her job, but a passion they let her pursue on the job as she had time.

Part of her research involved watching other videos and seeing what works for others. Meade estimates spending 2 to 3 hours per week watching YouTube videos, and she tries to copy those she loves.

Sites she watches and recommends include

- TED-Ed (https://www.youtube.com/user/TEDEducation)
- AsapSCIENCE (https://www.youtube.com/user/AsapSCIENCE)
- minutephysics (https://www.youtube.com/user/minutephysics)
- NIH (https://www.nih.gov/news-events/videos)
- PBS Nova Profiles (http://www.pbs.org/show/nova-science-now/)

Things to think about

- Audience
- Attention span
- Titles and thumbnails
- Gaps

Audience

In thinking about audience, Meade recommends thinking about what the video will accompany. Will it be paired with some type of PR, a blog post, or an article? While creating, keep in mind people's attention spans: the sweet spot is 2 to 3 minutes, up to 4 to 5 minutes if it's something that grabs them or is important. Speaking of attention-grabbers, Meade talked about how she did not realize just how important titles and thumbnails would be to the popularity of a video. The title needs to be short and sweet. The good thing is you can change the title and thumbnails after the fact, so if they don't seem to be getting any traction, you can try something else. Last but not least, she discussed gaps. If you Google a topic and you can't find anything, then there is a gap: fill it!

Elements of Video

Meade touched on many of the elements involved in a video, including music, images, and words.

Music

She finds free background music online. Her recommendation was to Google "free background music," but when pressed, she admitted that her favorite is Longzijun (https://longzijun.wordpress.com/).

Images

When you need a static image or an image to make into an animation, search Google for an .obj object file. For example, if you search "lungs .obj free," you will be provided with images of lungs.

You can use 1 image for 10 to 15 seconds or longer while there is voice behind it. Seven seconds is about average. Meade discourages you from having a talking head, but if you have one, have a clean and neat background and only show for 30 seconds. Always check that the mic is working, because you

can replace bad video with a still photo or B-roll, but "if you don't have the audio, you don't have the audio."

Text

When you have text in a video, do not use light text on a dark background. When asked for a word requirement, Meade stated that there was not a clear answer. She estimated that a 3- to 4-minute video might contain 600 words.

Storyboards

To help illustrate how she moves forward with a video, she provided a copy to attendees of one of her rough-sketch storyboards and walked us through it. Meade started with empty boxes and some text typed below them. They were numbered by hand and there were rough sketches inside the boxes, also written by hand. There were also a bunch of handwritten notes around the boxes, showing how her thought process progressed from her initial thoughts to more detailed instructions for herself. She thought this was an important step in the process, but also cautioned not to spend too much time making it perfect, as the project will continue to change as you start to put it together.

Meade mentioned that analytics in YouTube are helpful to see how your video is doing, but she felt that was out of scope for this beginning session.

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Tips:

- Have a watermark on the video to ensure branding
- Strive for 2 to 3 minutes for a video
  - 5 seconds of an intro with branding at the beginning and again at the end
- Use the "Ken Burns effect," wherein you focus in on something then zoom out

REGULATORY INSIGHTS

From the Editor / Jennifer Bridgers, MWC®

Greetings! It is my pleasure to be serving as the editor for the Regulatory Insights section.

This section focuses on topics relevant to global regulatory medical writing, such as submission formats, specific document types, and ethics relative to research and regulatory documents. I am grateful to the originators of the series, Peggy Boe and Barbara Snyder, and the previous section editors, and I appreciate their initiative.

The regulatory environment is dynamic, but I think there has been even more rapid change in the last few years. Just as CORE helped revise the clinical study report process, current initiatives are helping invigorate protocol development. In the Winter 2017 issue, Lisa Ambrosini Vadola and Robin Whitsell presented an excellent, detailed look at the National Institutes of Health–Food and Drug Administration Clinical Trial Protocol Template. In a future issue, we will discuss the Common Protocol Template developed by TransCelerate. We will also begin to take a critical look at structured authoring tools and how they affect the medical writer role.

Regulatory medical writers work in a global environment where our documents may be submitted to multiple health authorities and read by a global audience. Planning ahead for and an awareness of global requirements is critical. I recently attended my first European Medical Writers Association (EMWA) conference in Barcelona, Spain. I learned about the revised MEDDEV guidance for medical devices and new revisions to the risk-management plan (RMP) guidance. I heard about writing lay summaries and clinical data protection and transparency. All of these topics directly affect our work as regulatory writers in the United States. I look forward to sharing with you a balance of content about US and global regulatory insights.

If one of these topics resonates with you, or if you have other suggestions, I welcome your input. Please contact me at coolwriterj@yahoo.com. The *AMWA Journal* is a great way to be involved with AMWA and build your exposure through a peer-reviewed publication. Also, the *AMWA Journal* has a blog within AMWA Engage. This is another great way to contribute in a shorter format.

About me:

Medical writing is my passion—to encourage scientific exploration through quality communication. I have been a regulatory medical writer for 18 years, primarily with contract research organizations. Protocols are my specialty, but I enjoy working in all aspects of drug development.

The AMWA community is my muse. I have attended 14 annual conferences and continue to be inspired at each one. I love sharing experiences with other attendees and learning new developments in the profession. It is fascinating to me the plethora of ways the term "medical writer" can be defined.

It has been my honor to support AMWA as a workshop and a roundtable leader; on the Educational Committee, Constitution and Bylaws Committee, and Regulatory Education Advisory Group; and with the Carolinas Chapter as president and as a delegate to the AMWA Board of Directors, and now to the Chapter Advisory Council.

I am currently a Managing Medical Writer with Merck and Co., Inc., and am based in Raleigh, North Carolina. I look forward to exploring the evolving regulatory environment with you!