

COLLABORATING ON CLINICAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Background

A small medical device company had commissioned a study of its newest product. The study – completed in Asia – offered positive assessments of its product. The company understandably wanted to communicate these results to its customers in a white paper.

The Challenge

English was not the first language of the primary physician. The raw data and conclusions were present in the physician's first draft, but not easily understandable.

The Request

"We need someone who can not only make it readable, but someone who also understands the clinical jargon behind the text." The project involved substantial grammatical editing, as well as proofreading and cross-referencing the supporting clinical studies that the authors had cited.



The First Step

The first step of any clinical editing project is to always do my research prior to beginning my collaboration with the original author.

I began by reviewing all of the raw materials that I could access. This included the authors' first draft; slides from a talk that they had given on the same topic; detailed information about how the referenced medical device worked; and raw, anonymized data that showed the positive patient outcomes.

I also reviewed competitors' devices and supporting research to better understand the technologies that are available in the marketplace. This helps me to place the patients' outcomes in the context of other available treatment protocols.



What Changed?

- Confusing text was clarified with the author and rewritten in a straightforward style.
- The text was written to fit the structure of the company document template.
- Images, charts and graphics were included. This served as both a visual break for the reader, as well as additional clarification of the authors' data.
- The text now flows smoothly, with clear subheads that allow customers to glean the highlights of the company's message, even when they're only skimming the document.

The Company

Revenue: \$100 million

Employees: <500

Industry: Medical Devices

Image courtesy Alejandro Escamilla via Unsplash.com.

The Process

Understanding the underlying research is particularly important to me when trying to interpret text that has been written by a non-native speaker. It gives me a solid understanding of where the authors are coming from, and what they mean when they use certain words, or reference other studies. I read all of the raw material in detail, and asked questions where necessary.

The next phase is the editing itself. In this case, it involved a substantial edit for grammar and readability. I also drew from the authors' slide deck and made suggestions for supporting imagery, charts or graphs that might further clarify the points that were being made.

I worked closely with the primary author, finessing text and clarifying data.

The Result

The process took three rounds of edits, but finished with a clear, readable document that read as smoothly in English as it had in their native language.

As the paper was designed for use by the sales force, I wrote with skimming in mind. I knew that none of the clinician-prospects would have the opportunity to read the document in depth while in the presence of a sales rep. The paper provided at-a-glance subheads and imagery to quickly communicate important information. The text and referenced studies offered deeper detail for review after the meeting, when the clinician had time to sit and actually review the data.

The paper is currently in use by the company's worldwide sales force.