

Book Review

Medical Writing: A Prescription for Clarity

Medical Writing: A Prescription for Clarity
By Neville W. Goodman and Martin B. Edwards
with cartoons by Andy Black
©1991 Cambridge University Press
40 W. 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211
205 pages, 16 chapters, 12 cartoons
\$14.95

The final challenge for researchers and clinicians who have acquired information they want to share with their colleagues is being able to effectively put this information into writing. Many perfusionists, physicians and other health care professionals have had little formal training or experience to help with this task. There are many books that describe acceptable formats for different types of papers and detail the mechanics for citing references, using proper units and so on. Medical writers need a comprehensive, easy to use book that will help them express their findings in clear, precise and concise language. *Medical Writing: A Prescription for Clarity* accomplishes just that in a readable and often entertaining way.

Dr. Neville is a consultant anesthesiologist and Dr. Edwards a freelance medical editor. They draw from their experience as both authors and editors. Dr. Andy Black, who is also an anesthesiologist, provides the entertaining and illuminating cartoons. The authors are from England, and therefore use British spellings in the book, but this does not detract from its

effectiveness for American readers.

The book is divided into three sections: first, the problem (bad medical writing) is defined; Then, solutions are offered; and finally, examples of bad writing are given with suggestions for rewriting. The middle section contains 12 of the 16 chapters and is the most useful. You will learn to choose the best word to convey your meaning and, just as importantly, to eliminate superfluous words and phrases. Correct verb usage, word order and punctuation are described, as is the use of the passive voice. There is a list of commonly misused words paired with proper terms. Numerous examples provide the reader with a clear sense of good versus bad writing.

Medical Writing: A Prescription for Clarity lives up to its sub-title, A self-help guide to clearer medical English. The authors observe, "The ability to write clearly is a skill, not an art, and it is learned by practice." This book will help novices to develop their writing skills and experienced writers to enhance theirs.

— Phyllis Palmer, CCP
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