



The screenshot shows the top of the BMJ website. The logo 'BMJ' is on the left with the tagline 'helping doctors make better decisions'. To the right is a search bar and links for 'Advanced search', 'Register for free services', 'Subscribe', and 'Sign in'. Below this is a navigation menu with links for 'Home', 'Research', 'FREE', 'Education', 'News', 'Comment', 'Topics', 'Video', 'Archive', 'About BMJ', and 'Explore the BMJ'. A breadcrumb trail shows 'Home > Rapid Responses'. Below the navigation is a news alert box with the headline: 'And now for something practical... the "ANTI-GHOSTWRITING" checklist is freely and readily available!'. The author is listed as 'Karen L. Woolley, CEO, Professor' from the 'University of Queensland, University of the Sunshine Coast, ProScribe Medical Communications'.

1. And now for something practical... the "ANTI-GHOSTWRITING" checklist is freely and readily available!

o Karen L. Woolley, CEO, Professor

University of Queensland, University of the Sunshine Coast, ProScribe Medical Communications

I commend Joseph Wislar and his JAMA colleagues for their research on authorship practices.* In the discussion, Wislar et al. call for editors to ask corresponding authors a series of questions about medical writing assistance and funding. Editors might find it easier to require authors to complete a freely and readily available "ANTI-GHOSTWRITING" checklist, which was published in PLoS Medicine in 2009(<http://tiny.cc/dw8eq>).

We require any author whom we work with to submit this checklist, even if editors have not yet required such proactive and complete disclosure. The use of this checklist is recommended in the Good Publication Practice 2 guidelines (published in the BMJ 2009).

The legitimate and ethical use of professional medical writers is increasing. Professional medical writers want to eradicate ghostwriting (perhaps more than any other stakeholder in the publishing sector); our job in educating authors about appropriate disclosures would be made easier if editors insisted on the use of this ANTI-GHOSTWRITING checklist. Writers and authors (and sponsors) who have done nothing wrong have nothing to fear. Editors who want written assurance that ethical medical writing assistance has been used have nothing to lose.

Every editor can re-invent the wheel or they can mandate the use of a freely and readily available checklist. Editors are practical types aren't they? Let's see what happens...

Sincerely,

Professor Karen Woolley, PhD
Certified Medical Publication Professional

* Their results for acknowledgement of medical writing assistance are remarkably similar to those we published in JAMA back in 2006 (Woolley et al., Declaration of medical writing assistance in international peer-reviewed publications). We studied a larger sample size, but showed that 6% of articles included declared medical writing assistance (vs Wislar's 6.3% in 2008). We also showed that acknowledgement was higher (9.8%) in articles with declared industry sponsorship. The online questionnaire indicates that Wislar et al. would have industry vs non-industry data; I hope they will publish these data soon.

Competing interests: I conduct and publish research on ethical medical writing practices. I am actively involved in not-for-profit associations that educate members on ethical publication practices. I am paid to provide ethical medical writing training courses and services for not-for-profit and for-profit clients.

[Submit rapid response](#)

Published 31 October 2011