

Invisible ink and invisible writers - common solution?

Karen L. Woolley

BMJ (Published 28 January 2007)

[Full text]

## 1. Invisible ink and invisible writers - common solution?

- o **Karen L. Woolley, A/Professor, Uni Qld Uni SC; CEO**

ProScribe Medical Communications, Queensland, Australia 4566

The problems with invisible ink (nonpublication of research) and invisible writers (ghost writers) may share a common solution. Reduce the amount of invisible ink by replacing invisible writers with visible writers.

Given that one-third to two-thirds of medical research may remain unpublished [1,2], primarily because researchers have limited writing time or expertise, we should support deserving researchers with professional medical writers who (and here is the clincher...) know how to work in an ethical and efficient manner. [3] If the unnecessary veil of secrecy surrounding medical writers was lifted, the appropriate and visible declaration of medical writer involvement in industry publications would increase from approximately 10%. [4] More importantly, the risk of nonpublication, due to limited writing time or expertise, could be reduced.

A/Professor Karen Woolley (www.proscribe.com.au)

References 1. Camacho LH, Bacik J, Cheung A, et al. Presentation and subsequent publication rates of phase I oncology clinical trials. *Cancer* 2005; 104:1497-1504. 2. Wise P, Drury M. Pharmaceutical trials in general practice: the first 100 protocols. An audit by the clinical research ethics committee of the Royal College of General Practitioners. *BMJ* 1996; 313:1245-1248. 3. Woolley KL. Goodbye Ghostwriters!: How to work ethically and efficiently with professional medical writers. *Chest*. 2006;130:921-3. 4. Woolley KL, Ely JA, Woolley MJ, Findlay L, Lynch FA, Choi Y, McDonald JM. Declaration of medical writing assistance in international peer-reviewed publications. *JAMA*. 2006;296:932-4.

Competing interests: KW is a University lecturer in medical writing and employs PhD-qualified professional medical writers, who work for academic and industry clients.

[Submit rapid response](#)

Published 28 January 2007