

Medical Writing Doesn't Have to Be Complicated.



The fourth quarter of every year is always a busy time. I've worked hard this month, but I want to share a few valuable lessons learned along the way.

The Link Between Tissue Regeneration and Science Fiction

What Hollywood and Science Fiction Can Teach Us About Modern-Day Technology



Image source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vacanti_mouse

This year, several of my writing projects have brought me back to my roots as an early career scientist. Many of the topics have focused on materials science and biochemistry. One of my recent pieces was the by-product a thought-provoking

interview with an expert in regenerative medicine.

What started an otherwise routine interview took a surprising turn when Dr. Juan Taboas, Ph.D. equated tissue engineering to scenes from the blockbuster movie *Face Off*. My jaw dropped when he drew an analogy between the removal of Nicholas Cage's character's face and creating tissue in the lab to transplant to another living being. I guess you could say scientists were already doing this around the time *Face Off* and *The Fifth Element* were released since they grew a human ear on the back of a [mouse](#) around the same time.

Taboas' correlation immediately caught my attention because my interest in sci-fi books and movies slumped as I grew older. By the time I entered college, my childhood excitement over *E.T.* had morphed from fascination into eventual disinterest because my scientific training had slanted my perceptions of sci-fi media into something that was unrealistic and far-fetched.

Sure, there were a few exceptions, such as the cult classic *Somewhere in Time* starring Christopher Reeves and Jane Seymour. But as I grew up, sci-fi media of any sort seemed too far-fetched for me to believe—or use my imagination.

But Taboas thought-provoking statement made me re-examine these seemingly futuristic movies. I now see them as live-action previews of what's to come in the dynamic worlds of technology and medicine.

Who knows? Maybe there really is a Wakanda somewhere carefully tucked away as a closely guarded secret— if not on the African mainland, then perhaps shielded from “modern” man in the rainforests of the Amazon, Madagascar, Costa Rica, or Appalachia. After all, were the Yanomami found living in the rainforest long after self-proclaimed “civilized” man thought he had discovered all cultures on earth?

Ultimately, this interview is a reminder that imagination is the first step to bringing an idea to life—whether it be an invention, a movie, or an article.

You can read the full article with Dr. Taboas' commentary on some new, cutting-edge research in tissue regeneration [here](#).

Pain Management is Important Even in Less-Obvious Conditions

I shared some important takeaways from the American College of Clinical Pharmacy's (ACCP) keynote address last month in the [October issue](#) of my newsletter. This month, I would like to share a timely gem given our nation's ongoing opioid epidemic.

A session I attended on managing pain patient in patients who were either awaiting or had received solid organ transplants highlighted something that never occurred to me before: It's important to recognize the less-obvious conditions that require pain management and increase a patient's risk for addiction.

Take solid organ transplants, for example: Controlling pain in these patients becomes more complicated not only because patients who are about to receive solid organ transplants will require pain medications following surgery. Additional challenges arise for some of these patients who were taking opioids and other pain medications before surgery. And for patients who may be taking high doses of some of the stronger opiates on the market, devising a strategy to manage

their pain before and after surgery plays a crucial role in determining how well the patient recovers after receiving the transplant. In other words, successfully managing pain in these patients means the planning process starts long before the patient is wheeled into the operating room.

Key Points:

- Pain management before operation plays a critical role in the patient's recovery, but it may not always get the attention it deserves.
- Patients who are opioid-dependent may not get adequate pain relief without adjusting their medications before surgery because they have developed tolerance to their pain medications.
- Proper pain management for patients who receive transplants means that the patient's medical team must work to review, adjust, and change pain medications before surgery as necessary.
***This concept reaches far being holding medications that increase the bleeding before surgery.

So... what's next?

November and December projects include writing a slide deck along with a few journalism projects such as my usual quiz column for *Diabetes Self-Management* and some service pieces on sleep quality and heart disease. On the more creative side of things, I am working on pulling together a memoir feature about a former professor whose influence helped shape me into an insatiable science geek whose newsletter you're reading at this very moment. I will also be attending a science writing workshop in Austin next month. I'll be sure to include a few gems from the workshop in either the December or January edition of my newsletter.

Stay tuned!

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