

## Medical Writing Doesn't Have to Be Complicated.



October was a busy month. I worked on a variety of projects that included writing trade publication articles, drafting a needs assessment, summarizing new studies, and writing an article about new university research for an alumni magazine. And somehow, I managed to attend two conferences amidst making all these deadlines.

Yes, the 10th month of the year definitely kept me on my toes, but I worked hard, had some fun, and learned many fascinating things along the way--some of which I want to share here in the belated October edition of my newsletter!

## Key Takeaways from Herbal Medicine Conference

### Southeast Wise Women's Conference Attract Diverse Attendees



As a child, my great-grandmother was the official family healer. Long before I was

born, relatives went to the doctor only if she told them their ailments were something that her plant- and home-based remedies could not heal. Since my great-grandmother lived in a rural area where doctors were scarce during an era that included the Great Depression and its aftermath, many considered her services quite valuable. It amazes me to see that decades later, the lack of access to medical treatment in rural communities remains a challenge in the healthcare industry....

Today, I study plants as a way of reconnecting with my roots while honoring my beloved great-grandmother's memory. This brought me to the [Southeast Wise Women Herbal Conference](#) for the second year in a row. Quietly nestled in a small town near the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina, this women's-only conference offers workshops, educational sessions, and continuing education to its attendees.

Perhaps the idea of a pharmacist trained in conventional Western medicine seems a bit odd, but don't let the labels and titles mislead you. This conference attracts very diverse groups of individuals hailing from all regions of the continental United States and all walks of life. Some attendees traveled from Texas, California, and even Alaska in addition to the East Coast. People came from a variety of backgrounds, ranging from folk and clinical herbalists to nurses, lawyers, and yoga teachers. While I did not meet other pharmacists or any physicians, that doesn't mean they were not in attendance. Maybe we will connect next year if I return?

## Sleep Deprivation Classified as a Carcinogen?

Perhaps one of the most important sessions I attended at the Southeast Wise Women Conference was on sleep quality. All too often do we struggle to keep up with the rigorous demands of the fast-paced world in which we live. Carving out time for additional activities usually comes at the expense of our sleep and ultimately, our overall health and well-being. Dialing back on sleep may initially seem like a very practical solution when time management remains a constant challenge. Unfortunately, when we don't get enough sleep, we pay the ultimate price with our health. Some effects of deprivation may be common knowledge, but I wanted to share a few surprising ways lack of sleep can harm your health that I learned at the conference:

- Sleep deprivation decreases immune system function so much that the **World Health Organization (WHO) classifies sleep deprivation as a carcinogen.** That's pretty scary!
- Daylight Savings Time (DST) increases the risk for stroke and heart attack. In fact, the healthcare system has seen a 24% spike in strokes the Monday after DST goes into effect. Perhaps this is another reason to consider moving to Arizona (save the Navajo region near the Four Corners), Hawaii, or some of the U.S. territories that do not observe DST.
- Not only is [cognitive behavioral therapy \(CBT\)](#) helpful in managing certain psychological conditions such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), but CBT can also be an effective, non-pharmacological, or non-medication-related, tool to help treat insomnia.
- Taking a magnesium supplement can help support restful sleep, and the speaker stated that topical dosage forms (sprays, oils, etc.) are better

absorbed than other dosage forms of magnesium; however, whether the body absorbs magnesium better in the form of products that absorb through the skin better than oral powders, tablets, or liquids remains [a highly debated topic](#) in medicine. I, too, now ponder this topic: In my [functional medicine](#) studies, I learned that magnesium glycinate, which comes in oral tablets or capsules, was better absorbed than other forms of magnesium. In pharmacy school, we were taught mainly about using oral and intravenous magnesium to treat magnesium deficiency while magnesium sulfate flakes were good additions to baths for muscle aches, sprains, and relaxation. Sounds like we may need more research to be sure.

## Clinical Pharmacists Share Best Practices in Pharmacy at Global Meeting

I covered the global conference for the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP) in Seattle. Not only was this my first [ACCP conference](#), but the event also marked my first pharmacy conference in 7 years. I learned so much that I walked away with enough content to easily fill the next 12 issues of my newsletter.

I covered sessions on topics such as opioid therapy in solid organ transplant, pharmacogenetics, international pharmacy practices, and telemedicine. However, as fascinating as I found these sessions, it was the keynote speaker's address that made the biggest impression on me. Allison Massari, a motivational speaker who survived two life-threatening car wrecks including one in which she sustained severe burns covering more than 50% of her body, captivated the audience with her relentless optimism for life and will to survive.

Among her numerous insightful takeaways, Massari left the audience of healthcare professionals with an important, heartfelt message about the patient experience:

**Be mindful of your patient's dignity and respect it. Sometimes, this may involve thinking objectively and putting yourself in your patient's shoes.**

During her address, Massari shared several thought-provoking stories about how she was often left fully exposed during her treatment before a room full of medical practitioners. Because her burns were so severe, the healing process often left Massari so drained that she was unable to talk. I cannot begin to imagine how humiliating lying naked in a room full of people might be—especially when you are so weak you are unable to speak and request some sort of cover-up. Given the nature of her injuries, I would imagine that any additional stress—physical or mental—might have recovering a little bit more difficult.

As healthcare providers, we're encouraged to engage with our patients. However, many of us are trained not become emotionally involved with our patients so that our emotions don't overpower our ability to think clearly and help our patients. Massari's story clearly illustrates how we can alienate our patients if we're not careful despite our best efforts to show them we care.

I want to thank Ms. Massari for sharing her journey and offering her inspiration, and for reminding healthcare professionals why we took an oath to serve.

### So... what's next?

My current projects include writing more scientific summary, some plain language

services pieces, and a slide deck. It doesn't look like I will have any conferences to attend in November, but I'm quite sure I will still have some more gems to share in next issue. In the meantime, free to visit my [website](#) for more about me, or contact me at [frieda@friedawiley.com](mailto:frieda@friedawiley.com) if you have any questions.

Until next time...

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**Frieda Wiley, PharmD**  
**Freelance Medical and**  
**Science Writer**

[frieda@friedawiley.com](mailto:frieda@friedawiley.com)

(832) 781-1662



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