



# health writer online

GUILD OF HEALTH WRITERS NEWSLETTER



DECEMBER  
2013



## A word from the chair

**I know that not everyone made the party this year but I do hope those who**

**did enjoyed themselves.** Dukes Hotel did us proud and it was a perfect place for a Christmas party – there were even carol singers as we arrived! A big thank you to our sponsors, the Meat Advisory Panel, who made it all possible.

**The Guild have had a busy few months. Apart from the HRT debate** – a great evening with a terrific line-

up of speakers – there was also the lunchtime event at Millbank hosted by Health Ombudsman, Dame Julie Mellor – we'll have a full report on this in our next newsletter.

**We've a number of exciting things planned for next year** so do keep a lookout for alerts from Jatinder and, if you haven't already booked a place at the vitamin D conference on the 29th, make sure you do – it promises to be a ground-breaking event – see details on page 3.

Meanwhile, wishing you all well over the festivities and a happy, healthy New Year.

**Michele**

## OUR CHRISTMAS PARTY

We ate, we drank and we were *definitely* merry!



*Making merry (clockwise from top left): Tessa Hilton, Patsy Westcott and Amanda Overend; Maggie La Lourelle and Gill Jacobs; Professor Robert Pickard and Nexus's Phillipa Short; Marie Claire Masson; Jane Dean, Sabeha Syed and Susan Aldridge*



For further information on Members' News and forthcoming events visit [www.healthwriters.com](http://www.healthwriters.com)

## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

Danny  
Buckland

With more than 20 years' experience on national newspapers, Guild member Danny gives us an insight into his working week

**I kid myself that I have a free-wheeling life with a blank canvas for every day.** But 20 years as a staffer on national newspapers leaves a mark like a dagger-and-snake tattoo that even laser surgery can't shift. I read the papers every day looking for stories to follow or take in different directions. It works; it always has done. Talking and listening to friends and people I meet provides a bubbling spring of stories and the thrill of researching an idea and fashioning something from virtually nothing is the best feeling in journalism for me.

Of course, I have lots of patient groups, charities, universities, companies and PRs who send me a combination of potential stories – and aimless releases – that are vital sources.

When I first went freelance, after a career on the Daily Mail, Sunday People, Sun and Daily Mirror, a venerable journo advised me to take advantage of the

quieter moments to play golf and relax. Easier said, but it is important to take the heat out of what can be a loop tape of worry for freelancers these days.

**I'm sports obsessed – apart from golf – so run in the park,** go to the gym when possible and play lacross, football and cricket for league teams at the weekend. It helps energise the soul and clear the mists of most problems. But I also thrive on the stress and challenge of deadlines and difficult stories and feel uneasy when it is quiet.

My work is aimed mainly at the tabloids then broadsheets and health websites and the seismic upheavals in health politics, services and technology are perfect for news.

Rarely a day goes by without me picking up a new idea or a story but pitching them, getting feedback and tracking payments is a nightmare. That's not going to change anytime soon but



there's little point in worrying.

**The twin fuses of the internet and economic constraints still burn into our profession**

but we have a duty to maintain editorial standards and stand up for proper payments whatever the climate.

I miss the office camaraderie but belonging to the Guild and other organisations have helped replace that loss and, as a relative newcomer to health, I've been delighted by the friendship within the profession.

I'm envious of colleagues who have written books but will follow suit soon – there's a romantic novel or two in there, somewhere!



**Don't forget we're on Twitter...** Help us get to 1,000 followers by the end of the year! If you know someone who is on Twitter and isn't following us, do pass on our details – @HealthWritersUK.



## Get web wise!

Liz Hollis recently attended a training course with [www.yodelay.com](http://www.yodelay.com) – a digital innovation company based in Norwich – and was impressed by how much she learnt

**Yes, I know you're probably thinking 'really, Norwich?'**, but Alan Partridge's home town is fast becoming a hub for tech businesses.

The course was about content and SEO (search engine optimisation) and was designed to give delegates essential knowledge to boost their website visitor traffic. I learned lots of new web stuff which could be useful for health writers.

### **feedly** [www.feedly.com](http://www.feedly.com)

This is a magazine-style news reader. Use it to monitor quickly and easily the new content on any sites you want to keep an eye on. It's useful for tweeting and for possible feature ideas.

### **buffer** [www.bufferapp.com](http://www.bufferapp.com)

If you know you should tweet, but find it time consuming, this website can help. Sign up and you'll see a little Buffer icon on the top right of your screen. When you see something on the web that looks tweetable – click on the Buffer icon and it will send it straight to Twitter in the right format. Job done quickly and easily. You can line up tweets and

schedule them daily or twice a day. Use Feedly and Buffer together and tweeting becomes a lot easier.

### **Good content has become crucial for boosting a company's SEO ranking on Google.**

Every time an embedded blog is updated Google re-indexes the site rankings – possibly taking it higher in Google searches. An embedded blog is one which is an intrinsic part of the site rather than a link to a blog hosted elsewhere. Good content also brings customers to the site looking for information – this is called 'inbound marketing'. Many health companies will now want a decent blog with quality content – and they may need you to write it.



### **Google+**

Sign up to this and start using it – a lot! Apparently, it's going to be the next big thing, according to Yodelay. It's Google's version of Facebook and LinkedIn rolled into one. Google are the big players and this is likely to be influential – possibly overtaking many older social media sites.

**BOOK  
YOUR  
PLACE  
NOW!**

## THE GUILD OF HEALTH WRITERS PRESTIGIOUS VITAMIN D CONFERENCE

How much do you know and what do you need to know about vitamin D?

**This is one of the biggest developing health stories of our age and yet most of us are bewildered by conflicting medical messages on the subject.**

Which is why the Guild of Health Writers is holding a major, day-long academic meeting – to give all our members and guests the chance to hear world-experts from various specialties explain their research on how a lack of vitamin D impacts on child-development and adult health.

So, discover answers to crucial questions, such as why your birth date has an impact on your long-term health, why rickets is making a comeback and whether MS could be eradicated in a generation.

You'll also have the chance to find out what your vitamin D level is with a free finger prick blood test worth £25, pick up some free D samples as well as the opportunity to write a first person piece for national or consumer press.

**WHERE: The King's Fund,  
11 Cavendish Square, W1G 0AN**  
**WHEN: 29 January, 9.00–17.30**  
**(Members £10. Guests £15)**

- *To obtain your free vitamin D test result quickly, and ensure your place, please confirm your attendance by 6 January.*
- *The Guild of Health Writers thanks Danone for the generous sponsorship of this event.*





## HRT – yes or no?

The pros and cons of hormone replacement therapy continue to arouse controversy as our debate showed. Patsy Westcott weighs up the evidence



From left to right: Profs Tim Hillard and Jance Rymer, Chair, Christine Webber, Prof Klim McPherson and nutritional expert, Marilyn Glenville

**With our very own Christine Webber doing a splendid job of keeping us all in order,**

we were privileged to welcome four prestigious and eminent speakers who all spoke passionately to a packed audience.

**First up was TIM HILLARD, Clinical Lead for Gynaecology and Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist, Poole Hospital NHS Foundation Trust; past chairman and current trustee of the British Menopause Society.**

**He argued...**

- There would be five extra cases of breast cancer per 1000 women after five years of taking combined HRT, while oestrogen-only HRT confers no increased risks.
- Oestrogen may promote growth of existing tumours rather than causing breast cancer.
- Oestrogen-only HRT reduces the risk of mortality from heart disease in under-60s, although it goes up for over-60s.
- For most women under 60 the risk-benefit ratio favours HRT.

● *The debate was kindly sponsored by Pharmicare.*

**He was followed by KLIM MCPHERSON, visiting professor in the Nuffield Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology; Fellow of New College, Oxford; Chair of the UK Health Forum who argued...**

- In favour of short-term HRT for severe symptoms.
- There is a significantly increased risk of heart disease, stroke and breast cancer with longer term HRT.
- For women with mild or no menopausal symptoms the disadvantages outweigh the benefits.
- Women must be aware of the risks involved if taking HRT but are not given accurate information.

**Prof McPherson was followed by JANICE RYMER, professor of Gynaecology, King's College London School of Medicine and Consultant Gynaecologist at Guy's and St Thomas's hospitals, who believes:**

- The downturn in HRT use since the 2002 Women's Health Initiative Study is a scandal.

- GPs are reluctant to prescribe HRT. The result? A generation of women has been deprived of its benefits.
- Epidemiologists have a lot to answer for – many have their heads in the sand.
- There should be a greater understanding of how to interpret risk.
- There is high use of unregulated complementary products for which there is no evidence.
- There is a window of opportunity for prescribing HRT between ages 45 and 60.

**Finally, MARILYN GLENVILLE, nutritional expert specialising in women's health, and author of Natural Solutions to the Menopause, spoke. She believes that:**

- Calling it Hormone Replacement Therapy rather than Hormone Therapy suggests that nature has got it wrong.
- HRT is necessary for women with premature ovarian failure (POF), a medical condition, but not for 50-year-old women.
- Herbs such as black cohosh and sage plus lifestyle measures can be safe alternatives to HRT.

Following the summing up, it was left to Chair, Christine Webber, to put the motion to the floor: 'The advantages of HRT outweigh the disadvantages.'

**And the result?** 14 voted for and 12 against the motion and 10 don't know! So, it seems the HRT debate is not over yet!



## MEMBERS' NEWS



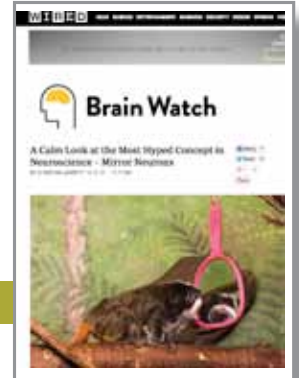
**HealthInsightUK.com** gives progressive doctors and health experts a platform to make a science-based case for change in the treatment and avoidance of disease. Edited by award-winning health journalist **JEROME BURNE**, HealthInsightUK explains, without bias, why drugs are not the only – and may not be the best – way to approach the big three killers, cancer, heart disease and diabetes, or the major debilitators, obesity and Alzheimer's.

● For more details please go to [HealthInsightUK.org](http://HealthInsightUK.org) and see Jerome's blog at [jeromeburne.com](http://jeromeburne.com)



A new blog by **CHRISTIAN JARRETT** called **Brain Watch** for **Wired:**

[www.wired.com/wiredscience/brainwatch/](http://www.wired.com/wiredscience/brainwatch/)



**KAREN EVENNETT** has a new website [www.karenevennett.co.uk](http://www.karenevennett.co.uk).



**Fit for Life** is a new magbook, being published by Dennis Publishing this month. Written and edited by Guild member, **Sarah Russell**, Fit for Life covers every health, fitness and nutrition topic imaginable and is aimed at the over-50 age group. There are sections on the health topics most relevant to the over-50s including cancers, Alzheimer's and depression, along with symptom checkers and expert advice.

● £7.99 from **WHSmith**

Sarah has an MSc in sport science and also has her own consultancy.

● With expertise in running and sport she can be contacted at: [www.sarah-russell.co.uk](http://www.sarah-russell.co.uk)

### NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome to:

#### FULL MEMBERS

- DR CARRIE RUXTON**  
- Freelance Dietitian & Health Writer
- LISA BUCKINGHAM** - Freelance
- CAROLINE JONES** - Freelance

#### ASSOCIATE MEMBER

- CHARLOTTE STIRLING-REED** - Freelance Registered Nutritionist



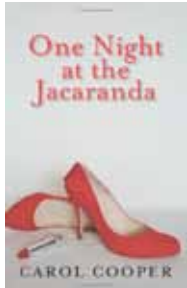
The General Medical Council's annual publication, **The State of Medical Education and Practice in the UK 2013**, written by member **Jacqui Thornton**, concentrates on risk in medical practice and health systems.

● It can be read online at: [www.gmc-uk.org/publications/23435.asp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/publications/23435.asp).

Jacqui has also started a blog called **Not Just Malaria** about the challenges and opportunities in global health.

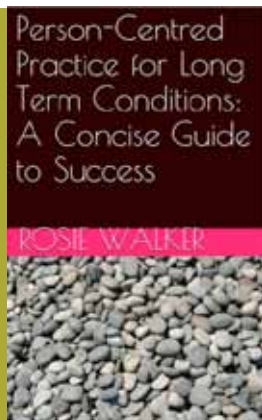
● Read more at [notjustmalaria.wordpress.com](http://notjustmalaria.wordpress.com)

## MEMBERS' NEWS



**Carol Cooper's** debut novel **One Night at the Jacaranda** is now available on Amazon in Kindle and paperback. It's a story about a group of 30-something Londoners looking for someone special and, as you might guess, the plot has a heart-rending medical strand.

**Rosie Walker's** latest ebook, **Person-Centred Practice for Long Term Conditions: A Concise Guide to Success** is available from [www.amazon.co.uk/Person-Centred-Practice-Long-Term-Conditions-Concise-ebook](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Person-Centred-Practice-Long-Term-Conditions-Concise-ebook)



## ROOM/STUDIO TO LET?

A postgraduate male in his twenties is due to start a one-year Law Conversion course at Moorgate Law School early September 2014. He is looking for accommodation in London. If you have a room to let or other suitable accommodation, please contact member JANETTE MARSHALL, [janettemarshall@btinternet.com](mailto:janettemarshall@btinternet.com) 07740 475 120 for more details.

### PLEASE NOTE:

The Guild Office is closed from  
19 December 2013 to 6 January 2014

## THE GUILD OF HEALTH WRITERS

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