

Raising the volume:

# TURNING UP THE IMPACT IN PUBLICATIONS

## HCG Insights from the 21st Annual Meeting of ISMPP

**“AI is designed to go through you, not around you. The most valuable thing in the AI era is domain expertise.”**

The 21st Annual Meeting of International Society for Medical Publication Professionals (ISMPP), held in Washington, DC, in May under the theme “Diversity and Innovation: In Concert,” marked a defining pivotal point for the future of medical publications. The focus of this year’s meeting was firmly on converting emerging innovation—especially generative AI—into practical, quality-driven solutions while advancing equity, transparency, omnichannel engagement, and patient partnership.

HCG had a visible presence throughout the meeting, through our sponsorship, exhibition booth, roundtable discussions, and research posters. The following report unpacks the key themes and insights from the 21st ISMPP Annual Meeting and their impact across the scientific publications landscape.

### Generative AI & human expertise

The transformative presence of generative AI was palpable at ISMPP 2025. Pfizer’s statistic of cutting manuscript first-draft time by 40% and total submission time by 15% showed what is possible. Yet, as keynote speaker Connor Grennan emphasized, “AI can behave like a human, but it doesn’t have the lived experience.” The consensus throughout the meeting was that the future of medical communications is not about removing human writers but enabling them to operate at a higher level: focusing on critical thinking, strategic storytelling, scientific synthesis, and adaptation for diverse audiences. Authenticity and domain expertise remain the bedrock of trust, compliance, and impact.



## From insight to action

- > Embed “human-in-the-loop” standards across all AI-enabled workflows in Publications and Medical Affairs
- > Globally use AI to accelerate tactical execution, freeing expert staff for scientific narrative development, strategic input, storytelling, insight generation, and quality assurance at every step
- > Launch internal education to upskill teams not just on AI tools but on the new roles required in an AI-augmented content pipeline

The most important thing in the AI era is the domain expertise of an individual—AI goes through you, not around you.

**Conor Grennan, NYU Stern**

### HCG IN ACTION



HCG facilitated ISMPP roundtable discussions on audio enhancements in medical publications, where delegates unpacked the practical realities and barriers of integrating AI into the creation of audio enhancements (e.g. podcasts, translations, audio manuscripts). There was an overall sentiment that while AI will increasingly support content adaptation and personalization, the scientific judgment, authenticity, and expertise of experienced publication professionals remains essential.

## Collaboration, business models, and change management

The rapid adoption of AI is exposing the limits of legacy business models and siloed planning in medical publications and reshaping how organizations collaborate, plan, and lead change. A recurring theme across sessions was that AI adoption is not just a technical challenge but a human and behavioral one. Successful and effective transformation requires more than new tools: it demands intentional change management, leadership buy-in, transparent best practices, and a

willingness to rethink core processes. Companies investing in cross-functional upskilling, feedback loops, and adaptive, outcome-focused partnerships are best positioned to realize the value of AI and omnichannel strategies. In this new medical publications landscape, teams that proactively nurture cross-functional relationships, consensus-building, and a growth mindset will be best positioned to scale and sustain AI-enabled impact.

## From insight to action

- > Initiate bold innovation pilots with clients and partners, co-funding rapid AI experimentation with clear measurement plans and sharing lessons learned
- > Scale cross-functional upskilling and continuous training to embed new ways of working and empower teams at all levels. Ensure every team is ready to adapt, lead, and thrive as AI moves from pilot to enterprise scale
- > Establish transparent, co-authored best practice frameworks and feedback loops to drive alignment and accountability across all collaborators

We must recognize that the greatest value comes not from technology alone, but from how we empower people to use it—building trust, encouraging upskilling.

**Conor Grennan, NYU Stern**

### HCG IN ACTION



HCG's joint IMCP framework poster with Otsuka, demonstrates this model: cross-functional teams, a unified scientific messaging, living dashboards, and continuous measurement – designed to break down organizational silos, align goals, strengthen share of scientific voice, and drive organizational change in a rapidly evolving environment.



## Audience-first language and adaptation

Effective communication now requires adapting language not just for accuracy, but for literacy, culture, and patient perspective—one session, “A Pubs Rhapsody,” exposed persistent barriers for non-native English authors and underrepresented patient voices. Differences in language and culture are not barriers to overcome, but rather perspectives to embrace as communication experts. Involving patients in lexicon and summary creation ensures language is both accurate and relevant. Storytelling is a science, and the use of narrative structures and metaphors are increasingly recognized as necessary for meaningful engagement, retention, and emotional resonance. The language of medical publications is being redefined by audience needs, co-creation, and digital innovation. Success now relies on the ability to adapt, translate, and humanize—making science accessible, meaningful, and actionable for all. Without this, global data exchange—and ultimately patient care—remains skewed.

### From insight to action

- > Champion global voices, and advocate for and implement multilingual, culturally relevant, and patient-led content strategies—ensuring our work amplifies underrepresented perspectives in every publication.
- > Offer AI-powered translation and language support, but always pair with expert human review.
- > Drive policy change through fostering partnership between agencies, publishers, pharma, and advocacy groups to expand access, remove language barriers, and shape industry standards.

Such differences in spoken language and culture are not barriers to overcome. They are diversity that needs to be embraced.

Jonathan Lee, Takeda

## HCG IN ACTION



HCG's real-world evidence (RWE) poster demonstrated that there is a significant lack of patient authorship and regional representation in current RWE publications. By highlighting these gaps and using effective extenders such as graphical and plain language summaries, HCG is advocating for more inclusive practices. We encourage the industry to prioritize diverse voices, regional equity, and patient engagement in both publication development and authorship.

## Omnichannel and social media migration

The digital landscape for scientific conversation is in flux, with a marked shift in HCP digital engagement. Research presented at ISMPP showed BlueSky dethroning X (Twitter) as the platform of choice for original research posts, especially in infectious disease and oncology, as BlueSky now surpasses X in active engagement and congress-related discussions among HCP digital opinion leaders (DOLs). However, audiences are yet to migrate, with only a minority of pharma companies present on these new channels, most being inactive. The cross-platform migration of HCPs and DOLs means omnichannel engagement strategies must become more agile, dynamically following conversations wherever they happen—whether it's BlueSky, Threads, or LinkedIn—which is essential for reaching and amplifying real-time scientific dialogue among HCPs.

### From Insight to Action

- > Be where the conversations are. Expand omnichannel monitoring to emergent platforms and track HCP migration in real-time
- > Lead in omnichannel strategy, and develop content and engagement strategies tailored for each digital channel and new audience, ensuring credible, relevant presence everywhere scientific dialogue is happening
- > Equip teams and clients with weekly “heat maps” and actionable analytics on digital scientific discourse



New publications linked to research get more attention on BlueSky than X...This is a change beyond anything I would have imagined.

**Mike Taylor, Digital Science**

## HCG IN ACTION



In a comprehensive analysis of podcast adoption by oncology journals, HCG revealed that while the use of podcasts is growing, there are still major limitations in accessibility, discoverability, and format diversity. HCG recommends offering transcripts, adopting modular formats, and working with DOLs to help journals and sponsors optimize reach and engagement across new and emerging platforms.

## From insight to action

- > Integrate extender planning at the outset—ideally by manuscript draft two—with all authors involved
- > Vet target journals for extender and PLS policy early in manuscript planning to understand journal requirements and limitations, and advocate for inclusion through proactive, coordinated communication
- > Maintain a central repository for PLS and extenders, ensuring discoverability and easy stakeholder access

Standardizing how we develop and review publication extenders will elevate both their scientific rigor and their power to connect research with real lives.

**Lana Vegman, Regeneron**

## Plain language summaries (PLS) and publication extenders

PLS and inclusive communication are now recognized as essential for reaching broader audiences, including patients, caregivers, and non-specialist healthcare professionals. Discussions at ISMPP 2025 highlighted the ongoing need to increase both the quality and discoverability of PLS, supported by indexing initiatives and education on best practices. Inviting community members and patients to review materials improves relevance and readability, while the use of tailored messaging and diverse formats (including social media content) helps ensure that information is both accessible and credible. The data are clear: articles with extenders are viewed, downloaded, and discussed more widely, but success depends on early, strategic planning and proactive dialogue with publishers.

## HCG IN ACTION



HCG's poster collaboration with Boehringer Ingelheim examined the online reach of standalone plain language summary publications (PLSPs). The findings highlighted that PLSPs most often fail to drive Altmetric attention of original articles. The authors advocated for earlier planning, coordinated dissemination, and proactivity to increase awareness and measure attention among clinical audiences to support their interactions with patients.



## Metrics and analytics – “return on intelligence”

The industry is moving beyond “vanity metrics” like downloads, mentions, and raw citations. ISMPP 2025 popularized “return on intelligence” as a new north star—measuring the true impact of publications on treatment guidelines, clinical decision-making, and patient outcomes. As communication moves beyond print to audio, video, and interactive formats and traditional channels, new benchmarks for success are emerging, such as listens, shares, feedback loops, Google ranking, and discoverability. AI/ LLMs are also reshaping metrics, enabling a deeper dive into the “why” behind citations, not just the “how many.” They provide qualitative context to citations and can help uncover nuanced forms of scientific influence that basic counts miss. However, careful human oversight is required, where quality, authenticity, and the right voice are seen as differentiating factors. Publication professionals must continuously adapt their measurement strategies to align with evolving formats, stakeholder expectations, and the dynamic landscape of medical science dissemination.

### From insight to action

- > Co-create advanced impact dashboards for clients, linking publication output to outcomes such as clinical guideline inclusion and real-world behavior change
- > Harness AI for insights. Explore LLMs and AI for qualitative context to citations, sentiment, and engagement analysis, but validate with human expertise
- > Lead benchmarking and advocate for industry-wide metric harmonization to drive better decision-making and demonstrate true scientific value

It’s not just about downloads, are we actually changing people’s confidence in a particular therapy area? Are we actually getting into guidelines?

Jennifer Ghith, GSK

## HCG IN ACTION



Across multiple posters, HCG analyzed how different extenders and supplementary materials are utilized and measured for impact. While graphical abstracts and PLS can increase news and social shares, their success varies by placement and promotion. HCG is advancing the conversation on impact—moving the industry toward measuring engagement, reach, and real-world influence, advocating for new ways to measure value and impact.

### Final takeaways

ISMPP 2025 proved that medical communications has crossed the AI threshold. The competitive advantage now belongs to organizations that combine technological fluency with human insight, equity, and omnichannel dexterity. The path forward is clear: lead with transparency, invest in talent and partnership models, and set the pace for what “impact” truly means. The next era will be defined by those who can fuse scientific rigor, authentic storytelling, and actionable intelligence—delivering not just more content, but better outcomes for clinicians, patients, and society. ■

For more information please contact:



**Enda Millar**  
SVP, Publications Strategy  
& Transformation  
HCG Publications Powerhouse  
[enda.millar@hcg-int.com](mailto:enda.millar@hcg-int.com)



[hcg-int.com](http://hcg-int.com)

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