



Email Address  
raluca-maria.chereji@univie.ac.at



Institution Name  
University of Vienna



Country  
Austria



Research Area  
Translation Studies



Thematic Focus  
Improving expert-to-lay medical communication



Stakeholders involved  
Healthcare regulators, pharmaceutical companies,  
patient groups, professional translators



Research Phase  
In preparation

## RESEARCH ASSET

### *Improving the comprehensibility of expert-to-lay medical writing and translation*

Within healthcare, the need for clear and comprehensible medical information has become an important concern in recent years. Legislation such as the European Union Clinical Trials Regulation (EU) No 536/2014 is increasingly making provisions to benefit patients and laypersons, whether by requiring Plain Language Summaries to be provided alongside technical trial documentation or by ensuring that patient-facing texts are written in a language which meets the comprehension and health literacy levels of their intended lay target audience.

However, there is a considerable body of research within both industry and academia which suggests that despite these initiatives, medical texts for patients exceed the readability and lay-friendliness criteria needed for these texts to be appropriately understood by patients or laypersons. While there is a range of factors contributing to this asymmetry, from document length to the lack of visual aids, the complexity of the text itself (e.g., long words and sentences, specialized medical terminology, complex syntax, etc.) has been shown to considerably impact comprehensibility.

This issue becomes more challenging when these texts are translated from one language into another, for instance in international clinical trials. There is evidence

that medical translators risk exacerbating challenging textual features through their translation choices, rendering the text more difficult to understand for patients.

This is the focus of my PhD research and valorisation project. I take a two-pronged approach to first investigate the linguistic features which make medical texts for patients difficult to understand using linguistic analyses and specialised software. Secondly, I research ways to support professional medical translators in producing more lay-friendly texts using technologies such as Neural Machine Translation and Automatic Speech Recognition tools.

My aim is developing best practice guidelines and recommendations, information resources and training materials for healthcare stakeholders, patients and translators alike on how best to write and translate for laypersons, for a stronger, more effective healthcare system.

## POTENTIAL VALORISATION AREAS

- **Collaborations** with healthcare industry partners on patient communication policies
- **Training** for medical writers and translators on producing patient-friendly content
- **Consulting** pharmaceutical companies on lay communication requirements
- **Advocacy** for patient associations



*Clear and understandable medical texts are essential for patient autonomy and empowerment, fostering informed decision-making and promoting better health outcomes.*

## DESCRIPTION OF VALORISATION ACTIVITY

Developing an online multimedia platform on lay-friendly medical communication aimed at three stakeholder groups:

- **Healthcare partners:** research-backed policy recommendations and consulting
- **Medical translators:** information resources, training materials and e-learning courses on translating expert-to-lay medical texts
- **Patients and their representatives:** informative brochures and materials, explainers and best practice examples

## VALORISATION TARGETS/POTENTIAL FUTURE COLLABORATORS

**Healthcare partners**, e.g., pharmaceutical companies, the European Medicines Agency, national health regulators

**Medical writers and translators**, e.g., the European Medical Writers Association, the Institute of Translation and Interpreting, the Chartered Institute of Linguists

**Research centers**, e.g., the Textual Genres for Translation research group, Universitat Jaume I (Spain), the Center for Health Communication, Aarhus University (Denmark)

**Patient groups**, e.g., European Patients' Forum.