

Helios Hotspot

Our team of experts share their key takeaways from the recent **2026 European Meeting of ISMPP**, which took place on 26–28 January 2026 in London. Reflecting on the event, there was a strong focus on publications best practice, sustainability and AI and automation.

Publications best practice

Building partnerships with patients across the publication lifecycle is critical to ensure the development of high-quality publications that address patient needs

Including patients in the publication process, ideally as early as possible, can improve the relevance and accessibility of publications. Patient involvement might be expected in plain language summaries, but could also be extended to authorship and inclusion in advisory boards / task forces. However, patient involvement remains inconsistent. There is clear need for defined processes, compliance and flexibility to support meaningful patient contributions. Patients should also receive fair remuneration, where appropriate, for their contributions. In summary, patient advocates can enhance research integrity and strengthen public trust in scientific publications.

Understanding the gap between publication metrics and real-world outcomes

It is essential to define success at the outset of the publication process. This includes identifying the target audience, establishing communication strategies and selecting impact metrics in advance. Insights can be gained from sentiment analysis, geospatial analysis and social media listening; understanding when and where negative information appears is important in developing a response. Platforms like Reddit and Facebook can be analysed to understand patient discussions, while guidelines, health technology assessment documents and medical information requests are key indicators for HCP engagement. Post-publication impact can be further assessed through collaboration with patient advocacy groups and feedback from field medical teams. Where content gains wide circulation, it is important, but challenging, to separate background noise from meaningful signals.



Simultaneous publications aim to maximise data impact, but assessing their success remains challenging

Simultaneous congress and manuscript publication can maximise data impact and reach, but require considerable time, resourcing and planning. Faster dissemination of clinical data can lead to more timely updates to guidelines and, therefore, can improve patient care. However, there remains a need to identify metrics to fully assess the success of simultaneous publications.

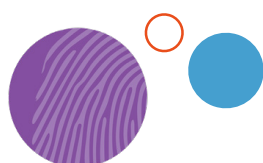
Good Practice for Conference Abstracts and Presentations (GPCAP) is being updated in 2026

The updated guidelines aim to enhance transparency, inclusivity and patient-centred practices, and to address gaps that were identified in previous versions. This new version for 2026 will build on GPCAP 2019 and be aligned to the recommendations in GPP 2022.

The lifecycle of a manuscript: practical approaches to improve quality and efficiency

The manuscript review process is often complex, with delays from reviewers, the need to adjudicate comments and requests for additional analysis. Misalignment among key stakeholders can further complicate the publication process. These challenges can be mitigated using collaborative review platforms that support transparent communication but early alignment on objectives, data scope, journal priorities and scenario planning, particularly for high-impact or parallel publications, is critical.

Early author involvement is essential to ensure alignment on content development and journal selection. Target journals should be prioritised based on audience reach, accessibility and acceptance rates rather than impact factor. Journal-agnostic formatting can also minimise delays to first submission. In addition, presubmission enquiries are valuable for assessing journal interest and feasibility of publishing to required timelines.



Publication development: AI-powered tools can enhance editorial processes

Novel tools are under development to automate formatting, conduct style checks against editorial guidelines / lexicons and detect errors, with oversight from medical writers and editors. Handling these tasks automatically allows teams to focus on higher-value activities. The modular design enables scalability across different workflows in the future.



Sustainability

The medical communications industry continues to evolve to adopt more sustainable practices

Changes in office culture, including widespread uptake of remote/flexible working, have enabled more environmentally friendly ways of working while supporting improved work-life balance. Print journals, historically considered environmentally wasteful, now represent a diminishing proportion of publications as digital formats predominate. Where print remains necessary, more sustainable approaches, such as print-on-demand, localised printing, environmentally friendly inks and recycled paper, have reduced associated carbon footprints. Face-to-face engagement at global congresses remains integral to collaboration and the exchange of data and expertise. However, concerns persist regarding excessive emissions and barriers to access for those unable to attend in person. In response, congress models are evolving to address challenges related to sustainability, resourcing and inclusivity. While the environmental impact of AI remains a significant concern, advances in efficiency, including the use of smaller, fine-tuned models, are enabling task completion with reduced resource demand.



AI and automation

Smarter publication planning: the power of automation

The use of AI in scientific communications was at the forefront of conversations at ISMPP EU 2026, but automation is another innovative tool at our disposal and may be more appropriate for speeding up time-consuming, mundane tasks.


AI offers the potential to revolutionise the medical communications industry by speeding up tasks, improving quality and providing innovative approaches to patient care

In the medical communications industry, therapy areas are becoming more complex and data volume is exploding. With appropriate human oversight, AI offers innovative solutions to support our work, augmenting our roles and freeing up time to focus on scientific insight and strategic thinking. AI can scan vast amounts of information, scale across systems and support activities such as summarisation, prioritisation and accuracy checks. AI assistants are being piloted to accelerate evidence generation or reduce the time spent on first draft development of publications, allowing greater focus on higher-value scientific and strategic activities.



From pilot projects to practice: AI in scientific communications

Large language models are increasingly the first readers of scientific content. These models favour clear, simple and consistent language; inconsistent terminology, excessive jargon or missing DOIs can result in data being overlooked. As a result, writers will need to consider not only human audiences, but also how publications are detected, interpreted and retrieved by AI systems. Looking to the future, health-specific models, AI agents and modular content will enable more accurate data retrieval. In this environment, the availability of AI-accessible, accurate, non-promotional data will be critical.



Across most organisations, AI is still in the pilot/experimental phase. When setting up pilots, the following guidance can help drive success.

- Use strong prompts with an emphasis on clarity, specificity, purpose, audience and examples; never use untrusted content
- Ensure compliance with copyright and congress/journal/general guidelines
- Support AI adoption by building AI skills
- Carefully scrutinise, validate and verify output quality to mitigate hallucinations, bias and accuracy concerns
- Build awareness using success stories and allow time to experiment
- Address funding, inertia and collaboration barriers by investing in the right tools and allocating time for training and experimentation
- Communicate AI as enhancement, not replacement, and establish clear internal policies, compliance guidelines and training
- Comply with the EU AI Act, which will come into full effect on 2 August 2026

AI could be applied to strategic assistance, publication planning, literature review findings, meeting summaries, proofreading, draft development, and data and QC checks. Whatever the use, make sure it is achievable and scalable.



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If you're keen to learn more about the group and our broad therapeutic area expertise, contact Helen.

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