

THEME ARTICLE

Copilot — Essential AI Assistant to Medical Writers

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This article presents a conversation between a medical writer and a system administrator, who discuss their experience with the deployment and use of Microsoft Copilot for creating content. The medical writer is Noelle Ochotny, PhD, a certified medical publications professional who works as a freelancer in publications. The system administrator is Mario Morel, who specializes in digital collaboration, cybersecurity, and privacy. They work together and have recently integrated Copilot into their workflow. This article aims to communicate their insights on working with Copilot in a medical writing environment.

Among the available licensing options, Noelle and Mario have *Microsoft 365 E5*, supplemented with the *Copilot for Microsoft 365* add-on. Please be aware that the *Copilot for Microsoft 365* add-on was only made available to all Microsoft 365 business customers on January 15, 2024, 6 weeks prior to writing this article.

Noelle Ochotny: Mario, I consider Copilot to be indispensable. Copilot has definitely improved my efficiency since you deployed it a few weeks ago.

Mario Morel: I am glad to hear that Copilot is proving helpful to you. Nevertheless, my role involves ongoing assessment of any system we use in our organization, considering factors such as cost, cybersecurity, and privacy compliance. With that in mind, could you share a few of your experiences using Copilot in your daily work?

TOP USE CASES FOR COPILOT

Noelle: One application is creating titles for articles or abstract submissions. Titles that are catchy, informative, and have relevant keywords for searchability can influence whether an article is read. Copilot assisted by rapidly producing several title options based on the content of an article. For those times when I need help generating ideas, Copilot provides a fresh perspective and proposes original and unique title options that I had not considered. Inspired by Copilot's options, I then easily create the title.

Mario: Intriguing. Do you have more examples?

Noelle: Copilot has been an effective tool in assisting me with writing presubmission letters. The process was expedited by requesting Copilot to generate an engaging statement that encapsulates the unique aspects of the research, all while having the manuscript open in Word. Subsequently, I asked for a 1-page summary of the research. Copilot was able to produce a satisfactory summary. Following some editing and tweaking, the letter was successfully crafted.

Another use case is rephrasing. Occasionally, I have encountered awkwardly constructed sentences while editing a document. The authors wanted elegant prose. Interpreting these types of sentences can be time consuming. I prompted Copilot to provide me with 3 different renditions of a phrase. I selected the most suitable one, made a few edits and adjustments, then added it to the manuscript. This process is both faster and better.

Mario: Got it. Can you share one more use case?

Noelle: Copilot has been valuable in aiding me with creating abstracts. Clients require assistance with different types of abstracts for manuscripts, conferences, and more. I am impressed with Copilot's ability to understand the different contexts of each abstract type. I described the situation in my prompts and Copilot provided a good first draft. As always, I refine and improve the language, and, admittedly, this is easier to do from a strong initial draft.

I also prompted Copilot to generate a graphical abstract based on an actual abstract. Copilot offered several illustrations. Copilot's output served as a source of inspiration for me to create the final graphical abstract.

It is worth mentioning that creating detailed prompts is essential when interacting with Copilot. Initially, Copilot's responses were not specifically tailored to my situation. However, as I honed my skills in formulating more effective prompts, Copilot's performance improved.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

Mario: I understand your recent concerns regarding the confidentiality of Copilot. To generate relevant content, Copilot needs access to sensitive information within a manuscript. I carefully read the Microsoft Copilot Privacy Statement. The main point is that *Copilot for Microsoft 365* adheres to Microsoft's standing commitments to privacy, security, and compliance for its commercial customers. For instance, the prompts, responses, and data accessed by Copilot are not used in the training of foundation large model languages. Essentially, Microsoft does not monitor your use of Copilot.

When you create a prompt, Copilot will only use the data, including emails, chats, and documents, to which you have authorized access. You can also restrict Copilot from conducting internet searches during a query. In these situations, Copilot uses only the data within your specific environment. This functionality can offer additional protection when using sensitive data in a prompt. Microsoft also applies additional restrictions to data inside the European Union boundary.

LICENSING AND COSTS

Noelle: How much does a Copilot license cost?

Mario: Licenses determine the features of Copilot that are available for use. Features and pricing can vary by region and are subject to change.

Noelle: Fair enough. What is the minimum financial commitment required for a medical writer to have access to the version of Copilot that we use?

Mario: The minimum prerequisite license is a Microsoft 365 business or enterprise subscription. There are several options available: *Business Standard*, *Business Premium*, *E3*, and *E5*. Licensing fees range from \$12 to \$57 per user per month. Note that these subscriptions also include, at no additional cost, the Commercial data protection for Copilot, which facilitates private interaction (chat) with Copilot.

The version of Copilot that is compatible with Office tools is *Copilot for Microsoft 365*, which is an add-on priced at \$30 per user per month. Therefore, the minimum expenditure for a medical writer would be \$42 per month.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Mario: Copilot has improved our business operations by helping to draft agreements. It accesses our data and can understand our business context. Copilot assisted me in writing draft terms for a service contract I was preparing for a customer. Thanks to this better prepared draft, our lawyer

was able to review the contract quicker, which helped save money. With Copilot, we can create precise and relevant contracts with our customers, suppliers, and contractors, all while managing legal expenses.

Noelle: Copilot aided me in creating promotional materials, presentations, and sales proposals. Writing promotional documents is not my forte, although with Copilot's assistance, I can quickly create impactful documents... which is a relief.

Mario: I also built applications for automated handling of company emails using Copilot in conjunction with Power Apps. I provided a description of the app's intended functionality and Copilot generated the app. I reviewed and corrected any errors, and I now have a useful app at my disposal. I did not need to write any code... luckily.

LOOKING AHEAD

Mario: We anticipate our next major improvement in productivity to stem from Copilot with Teams, given our extensive use of Teams in our daily work. Also, we plan to create use cases for Copilot with Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, and SharePoint.

Noelle: Given that Copilot can securely access my data (eg, emails, files, chats), it progressively acquires a deeper understanding of my business operations. I anticipate that Copilot will evolve into an even more proficient assistant over time.

I plan to keep exploring and identifying more and better use cases. My hope is that we in the medical writing community will share our experiences and new ways to extract value from AI assistants. The previous 6 weeks have been very exciting while adopting this new tool, and I look forward to continued progress with Copilot in the upcoming 6 months.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Using AI carefully and responsibly is essential. The improvements in efficiency have been so significant for us that we cannot imagine working without Copilot. From our experience, the process of learning about AI and integrating Copilot into our workflow was simpler and less expensive than we anticipated. In summary, we recommend that medical writers consider adding Copilot into their toolkit.

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Author declaration and disclosure: Foremost Medical Communications Inc. is a Microsoft AI Cloud Partner.

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