

AMWA NEWS

2024 AMWA President's Award Recipient Barbara Gastel, MD, MPH, ELS(H)

R. Michelle Sauer, PhD, ELS / 2023-2024 AMWA President

I first met Dr Barbara Gastel in an AMWA workshop and was immediately drawn to her approachable, inclusive, and informative style. At the end of the 3 hours, I felt inspired and ready to tackle the world of medical communication. That was over 15 years ago, and since then, she and I have organized a regional chapter conference. Most recently, we served on a panel regarding the education of future medical communicators. She has continued to devote herself to the organization and her colleagues. In my opinion, no one deserves the AMWA President's award more.

Each year, the AMWA President selects someone who has made distinctive contributions to the association at the chapter and national level, and Dr Gastel has certainly made significant contributions since joining the organization in 1978. Her contributions include leading 9 different AMWA workshops in addition to countless open sessions at the national and chapter meetings. She authored *Elements of Medical Terminology*, a cornerstone of the AMWA Essential Skills Certificate, and has served on the Medical Writer Certification Committee since 2011. Her contributions to AMWA have been honored with a fellowship, the Golden Apple Award, the Harold Swanberg Distinguished Service Award, and the Southwest Chapter of AMWA's John P. McGovern Award for Excellence in the Field of Medical Communication.

Beyond the direct contributions and service, Dr Gastel has empowered countless students and members at all career stages. Early in her academic career, Dr Gastel was an assistant professor of science writing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her skillset as an educator eventually led her to Texas A&M University, my alma mater. For the last 35 years, Dr Gastel has not only taught students at the graduate, professional, and undergraduate levels, but she has created and improved multiple courses and programs focusing on science journalism, biomedical writing, and science editing. She currently serves as a professor of Veterinary Integrative Biosciences and of Humanities in Medicine.

Dr Gastel embodies the AMWA values of professionalism, expertise, continuous learning, and connection. She has cemented her reputation as a leader and professional through her generous service and provision of expert advice on a multitude of areas. Her expertise and wisdom have provided guidance as we navigate the ever-evolving landscape of medical communication. Her workshops and advice have empowered medical communicators to convey complex medical concepts with precision and empathy. Her collaborative spirit and willingness to serve have created and refined countless continuing education opportunities for AMWA members. Her ability to connect and share has made her a role model for so many in the AMWA membership. I am honored to be the one to hand her this much-deserved award.

