

Best of Show

Winners of STC's International Competitions

From relatively humble beginnings in the early 1970s, STC's international competitions have grown into a year-long process that culminates with the announcement at STC's annual conference of the Best of Show winners. To win Best of Show, an entry must impress judges at three levels of competition. (For more information on this process, please see page 28.)

On the following pages, *Intercom* salutes the Best of Show winners of the 2005–2006 competitions, as well as the top winner of STC's student competition.

Congratulations to the winners and to all who worked to support this premier showcase for technical communication!

International Technical Publications Competition

That lawyer called again. He thinks I've got a great case against the trucking company and could win a huge settlement. It's tempting. I certainly need the money. But every time I even think about the accident (like now), I go to pieces....

This isn't the kind of writing you expect to find in a technical book. Yet every chapter of *Post-Traumatic and Acute Stress Disorders*, a handbook of diagnostic and treatment information for mental health practitioners, includes an anecdote describing the effects of post-traumatic stress from a patient's point of view. Set off from the text in a cursive font, the anecdotes put a human face on a condition that has been researched extensively.

But the anecdotes weren't written by patients. They were crafted with the help of medical editor Kathi L. Whitman, whose work on *Post-Traumatic and Acute Stress Disorders* was honored with the Best of Show award at STC's 2006 international technical publications competition (ITPC). Based on case studies, Whitman's fictionalized anecdotes were just one example of innovative technical communication techniques cited by the ITPC judges.

The design of *Post-Traumatic and Acute Stress Disorders* reflects its intended use as a quick but thorough reference for practitioners. A list of questions at the beginning of each chapter prepares readers for the kind of information they will find in that chapter. Sidebars and definitions of key terms appear in the margins, and each chapter ends—in the style of a study guide—with a list of key concepts.

These features are necessary to meet the stringent publication criteria set by Compact Clinicals, the Kansas City-based company for which Whitman has provided medical editing since 1994.

Each book in the Compact Clinicals series—all edited by Whitman—must be no longer than eighty pages (plus appendices) and reflect the most recent research on the topic. The latest edition of *Post-Traumatic and Acute Stress Disorders* required extensive revision to accommodate the tremendous increase in scholarship on these conditions following the attacks of September 11, 2001. "It's challenging to cover all the latest research on diagnostic and treatment strategies, both for psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy of a given disorder," Whitman explains. Sometimes, she adds, "there is a vast amount of new research, yet not much we can take out and still be true to the breadth of proven treatment options."

Additionally, all information in Compact Clinicals books must be based on research, a requirement that Whitman sometimes struggles to enforce upon authors eager to discuss their practice-based findings. She finds that her lack of a medical background—she has a master's degree in history—doesn't hurt her credibility with authors. "They are the experts in their fields, and our relationship is

based on the fact that I am not," Whitman says. "My lack of medical knowledge may force them to use more clarity than they might otherwise."

Whitman has been a technical writer and editor since 1994, when she founded In Credible English, a medical/technical writing and publications company now based in Kansas City, Missouri. Another of her entries in the 2006 ITPC, *Bipolar Disorder*, received an award of Excellence. **i**



WHAT THE JUDGES SAID: *"Innovative techniques make difficult material easy to read, absorb, and retain.... The editing is impeccable.... Fact-checking is an important part of the book, an often under-used and under-appreciated task in technical communication.... Sidebars with definitions and key info are easy to read.... Minimalist but thorough."*