

If Your Exhibits Need Expert Attention, A Medical Illustrator May Help

Hosts of seminars preach that successful cases are the result of good planning. Case preparation takes significant time and consideration. Case exhibits are of extraordinary importance in this planning process—we know this to be true as well. Exhibits help us educate our juries and judges. They enhance the likelihood that our audience will absorb what we are trying to communicate.



By Timothy D. Lange

When it comes to producing case exhibits, however, do we all have the time to become PowerPoint, slide-show, scanner-savvy, pdf-producing, image-enhancing, art-clipping, text-pasting, exhibit masters? How about having the technical expertise to create personalized, case-specific medical exhibits—tools to teach lay jurors complex medical procedures or to realistically convey the medical realities suffered by the client? Surely there are plenty of other practitioners who

have purchased highly touted, flashy software, only to neglect it after realizing it would take months to learn how to effectively use it?

The reality is that many of us do not have enough time to create our own powerful and effective exhibits; lawyers are busy people. This is nothing new. Around 360 B.C., Plato noted “[t]he lawyer is always in a hurry.” Plato’s observation may have as much validity presently as it did when it was recorded in *Theaetetus*. However, I am a lawyer who did not have the time to read *Theaetetus*, so the quote could be out of context. If one does not have the luxury of time sufficient to permit mastering the latest computer software, or the skills or equipment to properly present the

exhibits created, there are experts who can help. Finding someone to assist in the creation of case exhibits can put some time back onto the calendar and reap great results for the client and file.

Perhaps a Medical Illustrator Can Save You Some Stress and Enhance Your Case

Opportunities abound for creativity in the production of exhibits. Pictures can be better communication tools than words. Seeing often is believing, despite the eloquence of those in our membership, with possible exception for a few legal eagles. KATA is blessed with the support of a host of vendors making their services and products available to us at our seminars and meetings. Frequent displays include those of medical illustrators. Their booths are usually hard not to notice, with graphic displays of highly effective, attention-grabbing exhibits.

The Association of Medical Illustrators (the Association) defines a medical illustrator as a professional artist with extensive training in medicine and science who creates visual material to help record and disseminate medical, biological, and related knowledge.¹ These experts work in a host of industries, but many specialize in medical-legal matters. The Association reports that the majority of medical illustrators in the profession have a master’s degree from an accredited graduate program in medical illustration. Five accredited Medical Illustration Programs currently exist in the United States and one is located in Canada.² These are relatively small programs, with each accepting between three and twelve students per year. These graduate students will generally have an undergraduate minor or major in both art and biology. They study multiple media, including drawing, painting, and sculpture. They take medical course work, including gross anatomy, neuroanatomy, histology, and pathology, together with medical and other health-care students.

An additional qualification that you may desire of a medical illustrator under consideration is

Tim Lange, a Contributing Club member, is an attorney with Benson Byrne Risch Siemens & Lange, LLP in Louisville, Ky. He may be reached at (502) 583-8373 or tlange@timlange.com.

whether he or she has obtained certification from the Association of Medical Illustrators. With respect to this credential, this Association advises “[t]he Board of Certification of Medical Illustrators administers a certification program for illustrators who seek a recognizable means of credentialing. The designation of Certified Medical Illustrator (CMI) denotes this voluntarily earned credential and provides a recognizable means of signifying a practitioner’s current competency in the profession of medical illustration. Certified Medical Illustrators have passed examinations dealing with business practices, ethics, biomedical science, drawing skills, and have undergone a rigorous portfolio review.” The Association notes that the CMI credential is not necessary or required for a medical illustrator to be a skilled and successful practitioner.

**With the Creative Process,
Let the Illustrator Be Your Guide**

In engaging the illustrator, one would typically contact the expert and describe the case. Some of these artists will have specialties, and you may wish to ask what work the expert has done with reference to the particular injuries or procedures involved in the case. Once the expert understands the nature and type of the case, a discussion of the scope of the work contemplated

should be undertaken. Understanding the goal of the attorney should permit the expert to provide recommended illustrations or considerations. Once the scope is further defined, a rough cost estimate should be possible.

If the estimate of the cost, and the particular ideas of the expert meet with favor, the matter proceeds further into development. Medical records, photographs, x-rays, CT scans, MRI imagery, and other pertinent materials should be shared with the expert. The expert should be able to help you select the medical records and potential exhibits that will be the best to present. Custom, large-scale, high-definition projects may be undertaken, as may modifications to existing stock drawings that the expert may make available at a lower cost.

**Defining and Developing
the Project: Options Abound**

An illustrator working closely with KATA’s membership advises that because of the broad range of projects that can be commissioned, it is misleading to publish a specific price per illustration or exhibit.³ Medical illustrations may vary from \$200 to \$700. Costs are generally in the middle of this range. The final price will depend upon the specific media desired for the project. Materials produced for settlement packages,

often in 8 1/2 by 11-inch format are at the low end of the cost spectrum, while mediation or larger exhibits for video depositions and trial result in added expense. The images can also be provided in JPEG, PowerPoint, Visual Director, or other software format, saving case expenses in the process, including shipping costs and risks.

In addition to an illustration, many illustrators can also work with you to assist in the preparation of animation, video, medical photography, and even sculpting. Some medical illustrators also perform prosthetic work. One can commission a life-sized replica of a particular client’s injured leg, spine, head, broken arm, etc., or a host of pre- and post-surgery photographs, organized into a photographic or video timeline. The imagination and the budget are essentially the only constraints. You may also find that the illustrator can help with more than medical exhibits. Many are also available to assist with other case exhibits, from enhancing documents and creating dramatic photographic trial exhibits, to preparing entire PowerPoint or other presentations.

As always in your selection of the appropriate expert, be advised to seek references from fellow KATA members or other counsel having previously employed the person or company



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under consideration. Use KATA's ListServ to network and discover helpful information about the expert. Request references and background information on any expert or corporation with whom you are interested in working. Confirm the pertinent schedule of fees and document terms concerning payment and billing before engagement. Establish and clearly communicate your deadlines and expectations as to delivery dates. Last, consider requiring a confidentiality agreement from the expert. Remember, your experts can make or break your case. Choose wisely!

ENDNOTES

1. Visit the Association of Medical Illustrators' web site at www.ami.org for a host of information pertaining to these experts, including a searchable database of its members. You can search for an illustrator working with specific media, or having particular specialization.
2. These programs are located at The Medical College of Georgia, The University of Illinois at Chicago, The Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, The University of Michigan, The University of Texas, and The University of Toronto.
3. Delilah Cohn, MFA, CMI, generously provided assistance for this column. Ms. Cohn is a medical illustrator with more than 32 years of experience. She owns and operates The Medical Illustration Studio, on the Web at www.medicalillustrationstudio.com. She has long supported KATA with her advertisements and participation at our conventions and seminars. Her help with this column was greatly appreciated.

