

Locating a Medical Illustrator

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Good medical illustrations are important, if not essential, in communicating medical information to other orthopedic physicians or to patients. Don't waste your time using an untrained illustrator. It's easy enough to find competent and talented people. You could Google "medical illustrator" and check out whose sites pop up, but you might as well save some time and start with the most comprehensive illustrator source which is on the Association of Medical Illustrators web site, www.ami.org.

Professional AMI Members have their masters degrees from CAAHEP (Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs) accredited schools. The 2-3 year accredited graduate programs are offered at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, Medical College of Georgia, University of Illinois at Chicago, University of Toronto, and the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas. Program curricula usually include: human gross anatomy with dissection; neuroanatomy; histology; physiology; embryology; pathology; illustration techniques; surgical and anatomical illustration; prosthetics and model making; graphic design; exhibit design; computer graphics; medical photography; instructional design; TV and multimedia production; and business practices.

The AMI also administers a certification program for member medical illustrators who seek a recognizable means of credentialing. The designation of Certified Medical Illustrator (CMI), however, isn't required for illustrator to work.

Once you're on the AMI web site go to "Member Directory" and you can do a broad state-by-state search for artists or narrow the search down to a specific city, subject specialty, technical specialty, or business specialty.

Also, since 1982, the AMI has annually published and distributed to art buyers the Medical Illustration Source Book. Illustrators who wish to advertise in this publication purchase page space. The pages can be viewed online by going to the Source Book web site (www.medillsb.com). Here too a search function is available allowing you to search for artists by medical specialty, market, style/technique, and artist/company. Links are available to the artists' web sites and you can even browse through the pages of four past editions of the Source Book.

Another web site, Indexed Visuals, (www.indexedvisuals.com) is a good resource for finding illustrators for custom work, to license stock illustrations, or to purchase medical prints. This site allows for viewing of artists' portfolios by setting parameters like artist location, subject, type of artist, type of image, or style/medium. Or you can use a keyword search function to find stock art which is available from individual artists for reuse licensing. Because of its mere nature, medical stock art is more general in its subject matter. You may find a drawing of the extensor tendons of the dorsum of the hand, but more than likely you won't find a specific procedure on one of those tendons. And remember, you're not buying all rights to the illustration, but licensing its use. The cost for stock art is determined by where it's going to be used (textbook, web, etc.); the reproduction size (quarter page, half page, etc.); the territory covered (North American, worldwide, etc.); duration of use; and so on. The more uses, the higher the price.

Just a note here on why licensing is not the same as owning the work. The federal government passed the copyright laws in an attempt to establish favorable conditions under which creators of intellectual property can flourish and make a living. The original creator of a work owns the copyrights to that work and can sell or license any or all of the reproduction rights to that work. Without this the artist is in grave danger of losing his or her ability to make a decent living.

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