



# Communicating with a lay audience

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# What will we talk about today?

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- What we mean by a 'lay audience'
- Why we should engage with lay audiences
- How we engage with lay audiences



# So what is a lay audience?

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'Lay' is more than just the public.

For example.....

- Participants in research
- Patients and their carers
- Patient interest groups
- MPs and Lords
- Parliamentary researchers
- Policymakers
- Teachers and students
- Partner organisations
- Journalists
- Public audiences
- etc.....



# Why communicate with lay audiences?

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The MRC royal charter and mission enshrine the need for public engagement.

## **CHARTER OF THE MEDICAL RESEARCH COUNCIL**

**ELIZABETH THE SECOND** by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of Our other Realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith:

- (c) in relation to the activities as engaged in by the Council under (a) and (b) above and in such manner as the Council may see fit:
  - (i) to generate public awareness;
  - (ii) to communicate research outcomes;
  - (iii) to encourage public engagement and dialogue;
  - (iv) to disseminate knowledge; and
  - (v) to provide advice.

# Why communicate with lay audiences?

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“Engaging the public in, for example, interpretation of research results can directly improve the depth and quality of that interpretation and feedback into new research questions which has added a new dimension to my research”

*Professor Alan Winfield  
University of the West of England,  
Bristol*



# Why communicate with lay audiences?

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“There are experiments that we wouldn't have done without engagement”

*Professor Dame Nancy Rothwell  
University of Manchester*



# Why communicate with lay audiences?

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“It has brought a lot of interest from academic, policy and civic quarters in the UK and beyond which has extended my range of contacts and led to new collaborative opportunities”

*Prof Sarah Whatmore*  
*University of Oxford*



# Why communicate with lay audiences?

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“My lectures on behalf of the British Council have attracted more overseas students to study at Surrey.

“And some students say they chose to study at Surrey because they have encountered my work on TV or read one of my books”

*Professor Jim Al-Khalili*  
*University of Surrey*



# Why communicate with lay audiences?

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“It developed my skills – I can now talk confidently to a wider range of people”

*Dr Matthew Studley  
University of the West  
of England, Bristol*



# Why communicate with lay audiences?

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*What's in it for me?  
The benefits of public  
engagement for researchers*

*[www.rcuk.ac.uk](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk)*

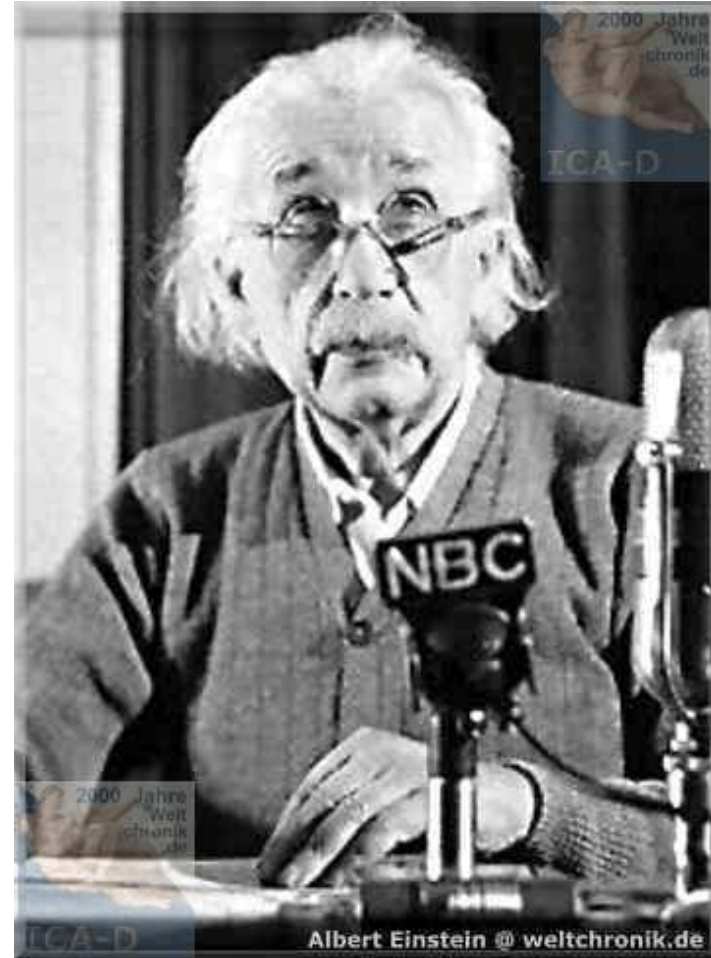


# How do we engage with a lay audience?

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“Things should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler.”

*Albert Einstein*



# George Orwell's golden rules for simplification

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1. Never use a long word when a short one will do
2. If it is possible to cut out a word, cut out a word
3. Never use the passive where you can use the active
4. Never use a scientific word or jargon if you can think of an alternative
5. Break these rules rather than say anything ridiculous



# A grand master of simplification

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“We shall go on to the end.

We shall fight in France.

We shall fight in the seas and  
the oceans.

We shall fight on the beaches, in  
the fields, in the streets, and in  
the hills.

We shall never surrender.”

*Winston Churchill*



# Simplification: your turn

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## Seminal Plasma Promotes the Expression of Tumorigenic and Angiogenic Genes in Cervical Adenocarcinoma Cells via the E-Series Prostanoid 4 Receptor

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E-series prostanoid (EP)4 receptor is up-regulated in numerous cancers, including cervical carcinomas, and has been implicated in mediating the effects of prostaglandin (PG)E<sub>2</sub> in tumorigenesis. In addition to regulation by endogenously biosynthesized PGE<sub>2</sub>, neoplastic cervical epithelial cells in sexually active women may also be regulated by PGs present in seminal plasma. In this study, we investigated the signal transduction pathways mediating the role of seminal plasma and PGE<sub>2</sub> in the regulation of tumorigenic and angiogenic genes via the EP4 receptor in cervical adenocarcinoma (HeLa) cells. HeLa cells were stably transfected with EP4 receptor in the sense orientation. Seminal plasma and PGE<sub>2</sub> signaling via the EP4 receptor induced the activation of cyclooxygenase (COX)-2 and vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) promoters, expression of COX-2 and VEGF mRNA and protein,

and secretion of VEGF protein into the culture medium. Treatment of HeLa cells with seminal plasma or PGE<sub>2</sub> also rapidly induced the phosphorylation of ERK1/2 via the EP4 receptor. Preincubation of cells with a specific EP4 receptor antagonist (ONO-AE2-227) or chemical inhibitors of epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) tyrosine kinase or MAPK kinase or cotransfection of cells with dominant-negative mutant cDNA targeted against the EGFR, serine/threonine kinase Raf, or MAPK kinase abolished the EP4-induced activation of COX-2, VEGF, and ERK1/2. Therefore, we have demonstrated that seminal plasma and PGE<sub>2</sub> can promote the expression of tumorigenic and angiogenic factors, in cervical adenocarcinoma cells via the EP4 receptor, EGFR, and ERK1/2 signaling pathways. (*Endocrinology* 147: 3356-3365, 2006)

# Simplification: key steps

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1. Mark the words or phrases you think a lay person might not recognise or fully understand  
e.g. Seminal plasma promotes the expression of tumorigenic and angiogenic genes in cervical adenocarcinoma cells via the E-series prostanoid 4 receptor
2. Generate a list of alternative words for all the words you've underlined. (See worksheet)
3. Construct your new heading using the alternative words you came up with, but retaining the sense of the original.

# How the science press simplified the message

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Semen may aggravate cervical cancer and uterine cancer  
*Medical News Today*

Semen aggravates cervical cancer  
*Nature*

Semen may hold cervical cancer hormone, warn scientists  
*(Indian medical publication)*

# How the broadsheets simplified the message

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Semen 'may fuel cervical cancer'

*BBC online*

Cervical cancer 'speeded up by semen'

*The Independent*

Semen risk for cancer sufferers

*The Guardian*

Condoms 'help prevent cancer spread'

*ITV News online*

# How the tabloids simplified the message

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Sex causes spread of two cancers

*The Mirror*

Cancer women warned over sex

*Evening Times*

Do condoms prevent cancer?

*Closer magazine*

# How *The Sun* simplified the message



# If you need help or advice...

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## Contact your MRC Regional Communications Manager

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# Any questions?

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Please ask questions now, or contact me later.

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