

Communicating your research to the media

Dr. Caitlin Kight, Senior Academic Developer
Kelly Preece, Researcher Development Manager

Today's session:

- An overview of how the media works
- What makes a good story
- Tips for handling an interview
- Tips for writing a press release

Who we are

Dr. Caitlin Kight



- Author
- Editor
- Radio show host
- Public speaker
- Scicomm event organizer
- @specialagentCK

Kelly Preece

- Journalist
- Blogger
- OER creator
- Public Speaker
- Filmmaker
- Performance maker
- @Preece_Kelly



THE SCIENCE NEWS CYCLE

JORGE CHAM © 2009

Start Here

Your Research

Conclusion: A is correlated with B ($p=0.56$), given C, assuming D and under E conditions.



...is translated by...

UNIVERSITY PR OFFICE (YES, YOU HAVE ONE)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
SCIENTISTS FIND
POTENTIAL LINK
BETWEEN A AND B
(UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS).



...which is then
picked up by...

NEWS WIRE ORGANIZATIONS

A CAUSES B, SAY
SCIENTISTS.



...who are
read by ...

THE INTERNETS

[Scientists out to kill us again.](#)

POSTED BY RANDOM DUDE

Comments (377)

OMG! i kneew ittl!

WTH???????



...then noticed by...

We saw it on a Blog!

A causes B all the time
What will this mean for Obama?

BREAKING NEWS BREAKING NEWS BREA

CNC Cable NEWS

...and caught
on ...



4 LOCAL EYEWITLESS NEWS

WHAT YOU DON'T
KNOW ABOUT "A"...
CAN KILL YOU!
MORE AT 11...



...eventually
making it to...

YOUR GRANDMA



Exercise – 5 mins

Write a paragraph that summarises your research.

- Make sure your language is clear, concise and accessible
- Consider your audience

What the press office does

- Read research articles accepted for publication in a journal
- Decide if it has potential to make the headlines
- Work with researcher and collaborators to write a press release
- Help researcher prepare for interviews
- Distribute press release to local, national and international journalists
- Respond to journalists' questions
- Work with colleagues on film, social media, web, etc.

‘Wondered if you can help?’

1. I'm doing a piece on learning styles and revision for a Guardian Postgrad supplement.

Would you have anyone I could speak to? - best revision tips, how to organise week, what sort of learning style best suits, etc

2. Also, I'm looking for someone on a postgrad course who would be happy to talk about how they learn. Maybe they've discovered they like getting up at dawn, or going for a run between revision sessions, or maybe they learn mind maps? Something that works for them??

Deadline is Monday. ‘

My 8 Top Tips on Studying and Managing Your Time

By Kelly Louise Preece, Researcher Development Manager in the University of Exeter Doctoral College

Independent working is hard. When the lectures are done, and you have essays to write and exams to revise for – how do you work? How do you manage your time? Here are some tips from Kelly Louise Preece, Researcher Development Manager in the University of Exeter Doctoral College, about developing effective work habits.

Use the **Podomo** Technique

The **Podomo Technique** is a time management tool to help you focus, whilst building breaks in to your routine. You work for 25 minutes at a time, separated by short breaks. Breaks help replenish our attention and motivation – the amount of time you spend working is not always equal to being productive!

Write To Do Lists

To do lists, and ticking them off, can be a great way to motivate yourself. When writing your to do lists, split the tasks in to those that require lots of focus and attention – reading or note-taking – and those that are more mundane – like checking your references. We can't be focused and creative 100% of time, and splitting your to do list up in this way means you are always moving forward with your work.

Develop habits and routines

Human beings are creatures of habit. When planning your week, make sure you plan to do similar activities – reading, note-taking, writing - at the same times of day. This will help you to focus and concentrate on the task at hand. Twyla Sharp also argues in her book *The Creative Habit* (2006) that habits and routine help foster creativity!

Find the environment that works for you

We all have different preferences – some people like to work in cafes with white noise, others in libraries with (relative) silence. Know the environment that helps you focus, and build your work and revision routines around it. If you don't know yet – try different places out!

Take a walk

Research shows that walking has a positive effect on our creativity. Why not take a walk with a friend to discuss your essay, or the key topics that will be covered in your exam. With the free flow of ideas, and the benefit of physical activity and fresh air, you might make unexpected connections!

Write things by hand!

In our digital world, it is easy to forget the value of hand written notes to learning. Anthropologist Tim Ingold wrote an essay in *Defence of Handwriting in 2010* arguing that writing by hand is a more active, thinking process than typing at your keyboard. Why not try hand writing your revision notes?

Map information visually

Professor Pat Thomson, an educational researcher at the University of Nottingham, says that mapping information 'ins a helpful 'thinking' strategy' that 'requires you to both evaluate and categorise'. So why not try to create a mind map of what you are writing about or revising?

Observe the 20-20-20 rule

Working for long periods at a computer can give you a headache, combat this by observing the 20-20-20 rule – every 20 minutes, take a break for 20 second and look at something 20 feet (6 metres!) away. This will help prevent digital eye strain!



What do journalists want?

- The truth?
- A good story
- Controversy
- You - human/expert voice



What do researchers want?

- Change public perceptions or behaviour
- Promote your research
- Secure future funding (make research councils aware of your work)
- Impact on government policy
- Raise the profile of your organisation
- Call for study participants
- Promote public understanding of research and reach new audiences

What does the public want in a story?

- Things that affect me
- Things that make me feel something (dear, amusement, sympathy, anger)
- Oh, I didn't know that!
- Good storytelling

Tim Gordon, 'Helping Nemo Find Home' --

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eixMvMdFcg&list=PLe8vyktIR0b00r1WQtm8LGWx1QZZ5pkl6>

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Good news:

You already know how to tell a good story

Bad news:

You may (sometimes) fail to use this skill

Exercise: Which of the following would you say?

Which of the following would you say?

You'll never guess what... blueberries give you superpowers!

Or

You'll never guess what... according to recent research by scientists at the University of Exeter, consuming blueberries can give human males and females abilities which defy scientific explanation.

Language: concise, simple, clear

“This study purports there is higher ambient UV_{vitd} when settlement is situated closer to the coast in Britain”



“People who live near the coast see more sunshine”

Exercise – 2 mins

Review the paragraph you wrote at the beginning.

- Does it tell a story?
- Is the language concise, simple, and clear?

Tips for handling an interview

- Sometimes the detail is the story, and sometimes you need to let go and not be a researcher
- Boil your research down to a few key bullet/talking points
- Memorise them, know them
- Make sure you answer the question, but use segues to redirect your answers back to your talking points
- Anticipate questions in advance, and consider how to bring your answers back to your talking points

Exercise – 3 mins

Take your research summary paragraph and extract the top 3 talking points that you would want to return to in an interview.

Exercise: practice – 6 mins

In pairs, take turns interviewing each other. Practice repeatedly bringing your conversation back to the talking points – see how often you can legitimately repeat the same thing!

Potential interview questions:

- Where and why did you come up with the idea for that?
- How did/will you do that research?
- What does this research project mean for the average person?
- How is this new/different from what's been done before?
- What are the next steps?
- More questions:
 - <http://www.fromthelabbench.com/from-the-lab-bench-science-blog/2015/9/11/help-im-interviewing-a-scientist-what-do-i-ask>
 - https://www.nature.com/scitable/blog/scholarcast/what_makes_a_good_science/

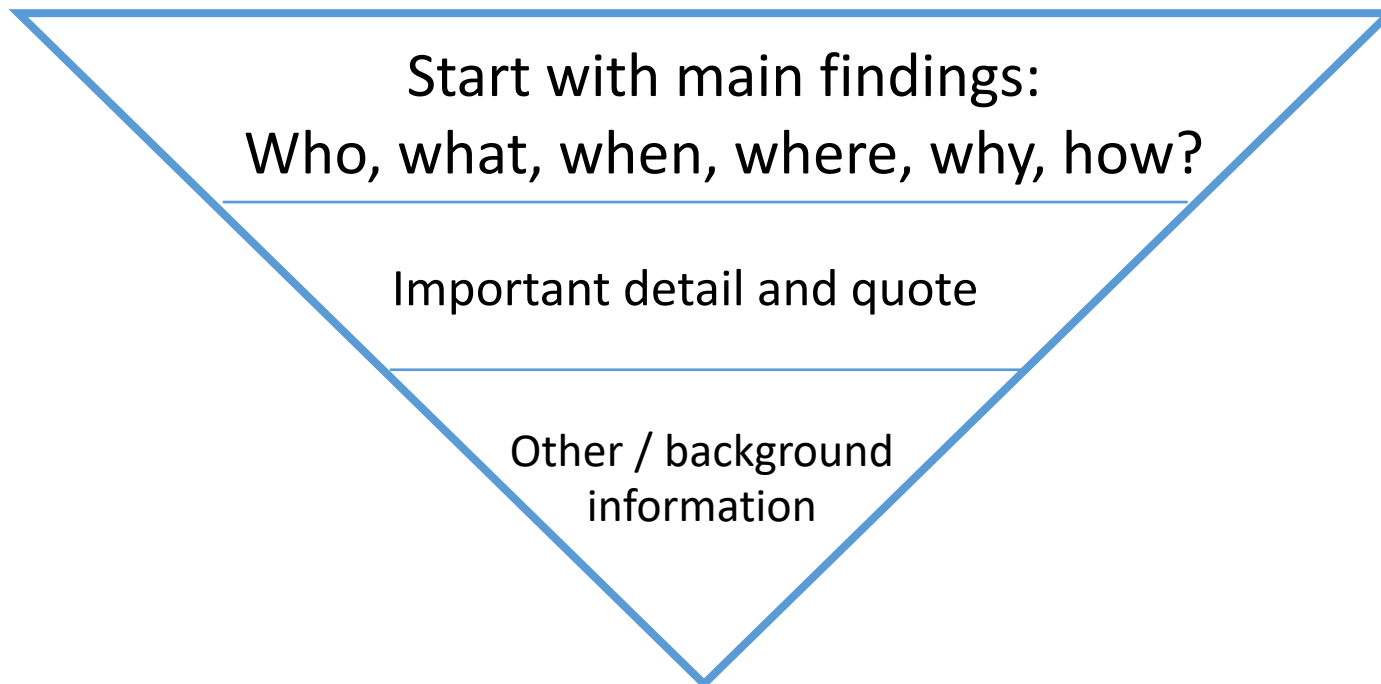
How to write a press release

Not every paper will make the headlines – what works?

- **T**opical (current, popular, what are people talking about)
- **R**elevant (something people can relate to)
- **U**nusual (quirky, curious, different)
- **T**imely (at the same time as related news, weather, holidays)
- **H**uman interest (love, life, death, health, family, work, etc.)

How to write a press release

Inverted triangle of news writing – the opposite of paper or essay writing:



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Pneumoconiosis cases are rising

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Pneumoconiosis cases are rising



Overworking in the UK's mines could be responsible for a rise in cases of an incurable and potentially fatal lung disease.

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Without mining all modern transportation, manufacture and commerce would cease worldwide. Mines can be hazardous environments and the possibility of significant morbidity has the potential to simultaneously affect a large number of people.

Increasingly stringent health, safety and environmental regulations, together with rapid technology advances, have resulted in enormous improvements in pneumoconiosis, however miners remain vulnerable to occupational ill health and injuries including in UK mines.

Pneumoconiosis is a lung disease caused by the inhalation and retention in the lungs of dusts, and has been found to be the largest contributing hazard of work based mortality in the UK.

The disease causes scarring and inflammation of the lung tissue and it is an irreversible condition with no cure. Symptoms include, shortness of breath, persistent cough, fatigue, laboured and rapid breathing, and chest pain. These can seriously affect normal daily activity and lead to various complications which can be fatal.

There is usually a long delay of more than 10 years between first exposure to dust and the onset of symptoms of these diseases, though the disease process itself may start sooner than this if dust exposures are high.

To prevent new cases of pneumoconiosis it will be important to address working hours and shift patterns and individual behaviour of those at risk.

Since the implementation of UK health surveillance in 1959 the incidence of Pneumoconiosis has experienced a substantial decline.

However there is evidence to suggest that Pneumoconiosis is on the increase.

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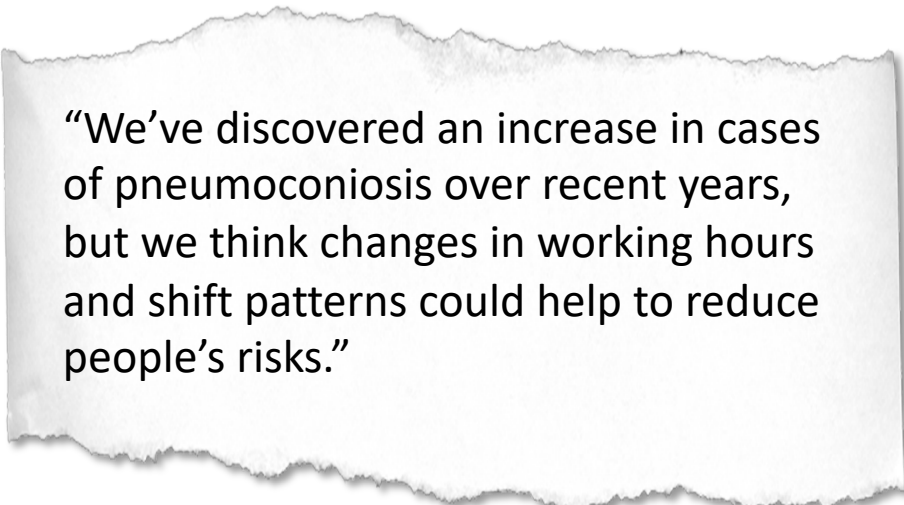
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“We’ve discovered an increase in cases of pneumoconiosis over recent years, but we think changes in working hours and shift patterns could help to reduce people’s risks.”

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Exercise (in your own time)

Look back at your paragraph and your talking points. How should you best arrange the facts so that they are in the appropriate order for a press release? Re-order them and add in any missing details that may be needed to complete the story.

Tweet your research



Any questions?

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