Communicating Science beyond your peers
NIH Oxford-Cambridge Global Doctoral Partnerships Workshop
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Why Bother?
- Often requested by funding bodies
- It can help your career: you will write better, speak more effectively, & it may help your research (new patients, collaborators, ideas etc)
- It enhances your profile
- It can be stimulating, exciting and challenging
- It is both intellectually and emotionally rewarding (although rarely financially rewarding!)
- It inspires the next generation of scientists

Why Bother?
- It is important as public funds pay for your research
- And it may enable you to continue to do research!

Swiss referendum on genetic engineering 1998 – defeated 67% against but 33% were in favour.

Writing a book – things to remember
- It takes a huge amount of time
- You may only get the advance
- Pictures/poems cost money: who pays/sources them?
- Who is doing the index?
- Check all facts again and again
- Does the publisher demand you indemnify them for costs if someone sues them?
- Libel and slander: be careful what you write (or say)

Talking to the Public
- Grab their attention early
- Make it relevant to themselves
- Use stories to explain/illustrate the science and LOTS of colour illustrations
- Its even MORE work and preparation than a scientific talk - but we are all now expected to do it.
- Be enthusiastic
- Never skimp - you don’t know who will turn up

Things I have done
- Popular science books
- Talks to schools
- Interviewed on TV & radio documentaries
- Radio and TV news panels
- Consultant on TV drama
- TV and radio quiz shows
- Judge for science documentary awards, book prizes
- Book reviews, the Brains Trust, etc
- Speaker at many literary and science festivals
- Talks for science museums
- Speaker to patient groups
Talking to the Media

Nothing is ever off the record
The content may be edited - heavily
Live radio and TV may be more scary but has
the advantage that your words can’t be
edited or be taken out of context
Don’t speak for too long
Don’t use technical words
Think about the audience - pitch to them

Talking to the Media

Know the 3 things you want to say and get
them in early (in 5s, 30s sound bites)
It goes by very fast
Mentally rehearse. Interviewers rarely tell
you the questions in advance but you can
often guess and prepare
Sidestep if necessary
If you fluff it, don’t stop - just carry on

Talking to the Media

Be Yourself
Only connect - the aim is to tell the
audience what interests you
Practice, practice! then calm down and relax
Ask them to call back if they call
unexpectedly so you have time to think
Listen/watch what you have done to learn
how to do it better
Learn to say NO

Radio – some tips

Use a lower pitch and speak sloooooowly- it
sounds more authoritative.
Vary your tone
Relax the voice in advance (e.g. by humming)
Speak from the stomach
If you have a script, read it in advance to
make sure it makes sense - and to see where
to breathe

Television – some tips

Keep eye contact with the interviewer ALL
the time
Be prepared to repeat the same thing over
and over
Up your enthusiasm level
Wear solid bright colours (no small patterns)
Don’t fret about what you look like
Filming takes AGES: e.g. 3 days for 3mins
Pitching an idea is VERY difficult

For the Perfect Talk, Book, etc ….

PRACTICE
PRACTICE
PRATCICE
The Power of the Media – they can help your research

Spreading the Message

Publications
Many, many talks to alert clinicians and scientists
Meetings for patients (which we organised)
Newspaper articles
Radio interviews
You-tube videos
Internet articles
Patient blogs

What can you do?

Prepare a 3min brief in non-technical language of what you do.
Never say - 'I’m just a scientist'
Involve yourself in University and Society outreach programs
Offer to talk to your local schools
Speak to your University Press Officer
Say Yes to journalists requests!
Write a short article for your local newspaper

Fame Lab
(International competition)

“FameLab has a very, very serious underlying purpose - we need a new generation of people to explain science if the democratic process is going to work effectively.” Roger Highfield

>5000 young scientists in 23 countries

Contestants have 3 minutes to present a talk on their science

Science in the pub
Soapbox Science
Dance your PhD
Science in the Park
Royal Society Summer Exhibition

Cambridge: The Naked Scientists– radio, blogs and twitter
Oxford: Oxford Sparks

Do it yourself!
Blogs
You-tube videos
Websites
Tweets
Write a book.....