

BLOG GUIDELINES

1. Why blog about research?

- Blogging can support researchers to inform patients and the public about their work,
- It provides an online forum for engagement and discussion around a particular topic,
- A blog post increases the visibility of research by bringing attention to topics which are under-reported in the wider science media,
- Blogs have been found to stimulate social media activity (Twitter), which has been linked to increased impact (Liang *et al*, 2014).

2. Why do we have a department blog?

The department research blog provides an informal platform for early-career researchers and other staff to develop their communication skills, as well as helping to increase the visibility of our research. Sharing blog content will also help drive the number of people who follow us online, enrich external communications and support researchers, clinicians and patient representatives to further engage with our activities.

The target audiences for our blog are:

- Potential and existing research partners across the local and national primary care research community (e.g. GPs, research collaborators, allied health professionals, network staff).
- Social media-active policy makers/thematic programme leads in government health organisations
- Potential students (MSc, DPhil and EBHC), staff and alumni.
- Regular science/health news consumers who source their news through social media.
- Our existing community of research-engaged primary care practitioners.
- Patient representatives/study participants.

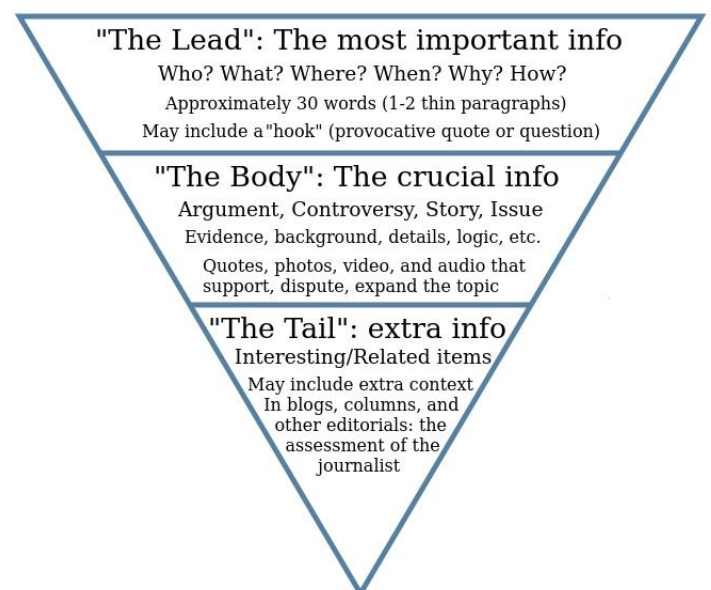
Blog posts are written in a non-technical style, so they are also accessible to interested members of the public and patients.

3. What could you write about?

The department blog will feature opinion pieces and research roundups about ongoing/published pieces of research and wider programmes of work.

Posts could also include researcher profiles, "a day in the life of", conference reports, clinical trial status updates, interview with PPI reps. Occasionally the blog will feature thought-leadership pieces from senior academics on topical issues.

4. How to structure your post:



5. The headline

Your headline is the first piece of information to grab the reader – be creative! Use simple language and always use the active voice (e.g. “Scientists find cancer cure” rather than “Cure for cancer has been found by scientists”). If you are struggling with this, see www.hemingwayapp.com

6. Introduction

Introductions come in many forms, but the most important task they all perform is to engage the reader. The introduction sets the tone for what is to follow, and encourages the reader to stay with you throughout the post. When writing your introduction, think about a list of reasons the science is interesting and:

- Surprise your reader
- Tell them something counterintuitive
- Say something thought provoking
- Say something intriguing.

7. Key components of any story

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Why?
- How?
- So what?!

Where a blog post differs from other writing you may have experience of is that it tells a story, and is about you and your personal experience – so write in your own voice. Think about how you might use a narrative to get your point across, or engage in aspects of popular culture to illustrate your key message. Remember, your reader may be a physician or a primary care researcher – but they also have many interests outside of work that you can tap into.

Consider being controversial. However, be aware that blog posts on the NDPCHS website will be branded University of Oxford, rather than being your own personal blog – so you will need to consider carefully how far you take your controversial views. Feel free to discuss your ideas with others first.

8. Complex issues – consider your reader

If your topic is complex and you have trouble explaining it, think about who your audience are -

build a picture of your reader and imagine you are having a chat with them. You may need to explain some things, but that doesn't mean you need to 'dumb down' a topic – just explain it logically.

Consider:

- How much will they know about the subject matter?
- What are their interests and frames of reference likely to be?
- How capable will they be of understanding complex material?

9. Limitations of research

Don't oversell your research findings, it is always important to include the limitations of your research in your post, and be open about things you may not be sure about. Consider the strength of the evidence base behind your conclusions, and ask yourself whether you would be happy to say this to a journalist from the Daily Mail?

10. Other things to include:

- Bring your blog to life with photos (ensure you have permission), links to other sites or blogs in your post, interesting quotes/analogies.
- Use headers to break up your post
- Reference other papers or previous research you have done.

11. How long should it be?

The ideal blog post is at least 1000 words. Posts which are longer than this may be edited down before publishing. Please keep your post shorter than 2000 words.

12. Before publishing...

Once you have submitted your post, it may be subject to a light edit by the Communications Manager. The post will then be passed back to you and your PI for sign-off before being published.

All blog posts will be open for comment, and you may be invited to respond to comments on your particular post. However, commenting can be fairly rare.

Got a question?

Contact Dan Richards-Doran, Communications Manager dan.richards-doran@phc.ox.ac.uk