



Joining the Science Media Centre expert database

The Science Media Centre would not be able to function if it were not for the 2000+ scientists, engineers and other experts who have agreed to be on our database. Our broader aim is to ensure that news journalists have access to good evidence based science, and great media-friendly experts, when science hits the headlines. We do this in several ways: through being a first port of call for journalists looking for a scientist to interview, proactively promoting reaction from the scientific community when a big science story is in the news, or by running briefings for specialist correspondents on hot topics in science. By being an SMC expert you are helping us to help the news media cover science in the best way possible.

What does being a Science Media Centre expert mean?

We would like to be able to contact you when your area of expertise becomes topical in the media. This could be for a request for an interview with a newspaper or broadcaster, a comment for one of our "round-ups" of scientists' comments, or to speak on the panel of a press briefing. As the SMC deals primarily with topical science stories in the news, there may be long periods of time when we do not get press enquiries in your specialist area and you don't hear from us – but that doesn't mean you have dropped off our list. It's also important to stress that because we are responding to breaking news stories, we could call you at any time of day, including outside normal office hours. However, such occasions are rare, and we would always take no for an answer if you are unable to respond. Whenever we approach you we will ask you to declare any relevant interests; declarations will be made available to journalists for transparency.

How you can help us:

The SMC has had tremendous success in getting the views of scientists represented in the national media. To get these results we provide a quick response to journalists' enquires, and although we know that you are very busy, we would really encourage you make room in your schedule to put your scientific expertise over to the press. We also rely on up to date contact details, so we would be very grateful if you could inform us of any changes of telephone/mobile number or address. Home phone numbers are also useful to have on the database, although we would only use these in an emergency. The SMC aims to provide journalists with cutting edge information on the hot issues in science; to do this it would be great if you could let us know if your area of science is likely to hit the headlines or if you are working on something that is likely to attract media interest, and we are always happy to receive suggestions for press briefings in these areas.

Science in the headlines:

The nature of the SMC means that, in addition to media enquiries from national science correspondents, we routinely deal with science when it becomes front-page news. We feel science in the headlines gives the perfect opportunity for scientists to communicate their views to the public when interest is at its highest. Most of the time a story will only be big for a day, giving only a small window of time for us to react. At these times we would really like it if priority could be given to media work as this is when responding will undoubtedly have the biggest impact.

Confidentiality:

It is important to stress that personal details on the database are confidential and are only available to SMC staff. As part of work we may liaise with the press office in your organisation and in doing so may tell them we are working with you; if this is a problem please let us know. We will never give your number out to the press directly, unless you have specified that this is okay - we will always contact you first to check you are available and we will always take no for an answer. All data held by the SMC are maintained in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and the SMC is registered as a Data Controller under the Act. If you are employed by an institution subject to Freedom of Information requests, which includes all publicly funded academic institutions, funding bodies and government agencies, all correspondence with the SMC can be requested under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
