

Perspectives on *'Communicating evidence in the media'*

A report of a roundtable meeting held by the Academy of Medical Sciences and the Science Media Centre on 8 April 2016 as part of the Academy's wider workstream on *'How can we all best use evidence to judge the potential benefits and harms of medicines?'*

Disclaimer

This report does not represent a formal Academy of Medical Sciences position on how best to communicate evidence in the media. Rather this document is a summary of the wide-ranging discussions that took place at the roundtable meeting and does not necessarily represent the views of all participants. The report of this meeting will feed into the Academy's workstream on '*How can we all best use evidence to judge the potential benefits and harms of medicines?*'.¹

We would welcome feedback on the report. For further information, please contact Rachel Brown, Policy Officer at the Academy of Medical Sciences (rachel.brown@acmedsci.ac.uk, 020 3176 2184).

We are most grateful to Fiona Lethbridge from the Science Media Centre for helping to organise this roundtable meeting, Tom Sheldon from the Science Media Centre for Chairing the meeting, and to all other individuals who contributed to the event.

All web references were accessed in May/June 2016.

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1. Led by Professor Sir John Tooke FMedSci, the workstream also includes workshops on evaluating evidence in health, conflicts of interest, and communicating evidence about medicines. For further information, please see: <http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk/policy/policy-projects/how-can-we-all-best-use-evidence/>

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Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Executive summary | 1 |
| Introduction | 4 |
| Who is responsible for accuracy? | 5 |
| Are there problems or misunderstandings in the current system? | 8 |
| How can improvements be made? | 11 |
| Concluding remarks | 14 |
| Annex I Participant list | 16 |
| Annex II Agenda | 17 |

Executive summary

As part of the Academy of Medical Sciences' wider project exploring *'How can we all best use evidence to judge the potential benefits and harms of medicines?'*, this roundtable on *'Communicating evidence in the media'* brought together journalists and communications professionals to discuss key issues in the communication of health-related information through the mainstream media.

Discussions at the meeting were wide-ranging, although several key themes emerged:

- **Accurate and balanced reporting through the media is a shared responsibility.** It was suggested that all parties involved in the generation and communication of evidence, including scientists, press officers and journalists, have a shared responsibility to ensure that the public receives information that is accessible but also accurate and balanced.
- **All parties can experience pressures to maximise the exposure of research findings, but short-term gains will generally be offset by long-term reputational damage if work is over-hyped.** For example, researchers may come under pressure to seek media exposure to raise the profile of their work, press officers may be incentivised by their institutions to maximise coverage, and journalists often need to compete with their colleagues for space or time and come under pressure from editors. These factors can increase the risk of over-inflated claims or a lack of balance or context. However, the long-term potential for reputational damage was felt to be a strong factor in mitigating these pressures as, under public scrutiny, these shortcomings are likely to be recognised and criticised.
- **Journalists consider caveats and context helpful in press releases.** Several press officers expressed their belief that inclusion of caveats (for example, that a study was conducted on cells or animal models) could reduce the likelihood that such press releases will be picked up. However, several journalists suggested that caveats are in fact welcomed – and often encouraged – as they help them interpret the research and provide confidence that they are being given a complete picture. The inclusion of caveats and clear descriptions of context convey a sense of honesty and balance, and help to build trust between press officers and journalists.
- **Engaging with the media is not just about promoting one's own work.** Several journalists noted that an important, and time consuming, aspect of their work is to prevent dubious or inaccurate (and therefore damaging) stories from being reported. It was considered important for scientists to better recognise this. This role can be particularly difficult when stories are superficially attractive but flawed or have a strong political or consumer dimension. Specialist journalists can seek to influence news editors' decisions to ensure accuracy and decide not to cover an inaccurate story, although weak stories may still be reported if other correspondents are asked, and are willing, to cover a story instead. Expert input from scientists, together with that from research institutions and research charities, can provide important support for specialist journalists attempting to prevent coverage of misleading or poor quality science.
- **Misleading reporting can happen, but poor stories provide opportunities for scientists to set the record straight.** Inevitably, poor-quality science or good science that is misinterpreted or poorly reported is sometimes reported in the mainstream media. However, this does provide an opportunity for experts to communicate why it is misleading or flawed, contributing over time to a more accurate picture. This further emphasises the need for scientific experts to more widely engage with the media on their subject area rather than only as a means to promote their own findings.
- **Appropriate communication of statistical information is critical.** It was suggested that all parties need to carefully consider how to communicate quantitative findings (e.g. absolute risk, relative risk, numbers needed to treat) in ways that are meaningful to non-specialist audiences. Although it can be tempting to use potentially more impactful figures such as relative risk or odds ratios if they look more significant, these can be hard to interpret and can lead to confusion.
- **Giving space to dissenting voices can be justified – within limits.** Given the iterative process of science, it was generally felt that the mainstream media should be free to cover consensus-questioning work, although it was recognised that such stories

should include appropriate context and caveats. However, there is no justification for the coverage of stories lacking a good evidence base simply because they are 'newsworthy', particularly if there is a risk to public health.

- **There are other important communities to engage, such as subeditors/headline writers and editors/other key media decision-makers.** Specialist journalists are, in some cases, able to influence the stories covered in their publications/programmes, although content is ultimately controlled by news editors and programme editors. However, the views of such specialist journalists are important, as senior editorial staff generally do not have a background in science and may not appreciate important nuances of health evidence generation.
- **A proliferation of online sources outside reputable mainstream media is providing abundant opportunities for sensationalised reporting.** Many journalists, reputable publishers, press offices and scientists may commit to 'responsible' reporting, but there is now a diverse landscape of digital communications. In this environment individuals or organisations often look to generate 'click bait' - capturing short-term attention or securing page views rather than genuinely informing the public or contributing to ongoing scientific debate. The workshop was attended by specialist correspondents from mainstream news publishers who highlighted that there is a need to engage more widely and include those generating online content outside of the traditional news gathering process.
- **Despite the challenges, there is a strong case to be made for continued and open communication of new health-related research findings.** It has been suggested that too much information (sometimes contradictory) is being delivered to the public, and that the focus of communication could instead be on aggregated analyses such as systematic reviews. However, participants felt that publicly funded scientists have a duty to communicate, and that the public are more skilled at interpreting information than sometimes assumed. Not communicating new evidence could create space likely to be filled by less credible voices.

Introduction

On 8 April 2016, the Academy of Medical Sciences and the Science Media Centre co-organised a roundtable meeting for journalists and communications professionals as part of the Academy's wider workstream on '*How can we all best use evidence to judge the potential benefits and harms of medicines?*'²

Mainstream media outlets are an important source of information for the public, and are widely considered to be influential in shaping attitudes and behaviours. However, questions have been raised about whether the public is being well served by current communication practices, and whether or not they are receiving accurate and balanced information that can enable them to make informed choices about medicines and wider healthcare practices.

The wide-ranging discussions at the roundtable touched on key issues in the communication of scientific evidence through the media, particularly: who is responsible for accuracy; what are the sources of problems and misunderstandings; and what steps might be taken to improve reporting and ensure accuracy.

2. Academy of Medical Sciences. *How can we all best use evidence to judge the potential benefits and harms of medicines?* <http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk/policy/policy-projects/how-can-we-all-best-use-evidence/>

Who is responsible for accuracy?

Information that is disseminated through the mainstream media passes through a communication pathway, which encompasses scientists, communications professionals such as press officers, and journalists. Through this chain, information must be made accessible to non-specialist audiences, but this inevitable simplification should not be at the expense of accuracy or balance.

It was widely felt by participants at the meeting that ensuring accuracy is maintained is critical at all steps of the communication pathway, and hence all parties have a responsibility to promote accuracy and balance.

For example, it was suggested that journalists have a considerable responsibility to ensure accuracy, and their professional reputation will suffer if they report inaccurately. However, after recognising their own responsibilities, several delegates stated that scientists also have a crucial role in squaring accessibility and accuracy, calling for an increased commitment on their part to improve their understanding of how information is communicated through the mainstream media and to participate fully in these processes.

It was also noted that press officers – in academic institutions, funding agencies, charities, and journal publishers amongst others – have a pivotal role as the link between those responsible for evidence generation (i.e. scientists) and those involved in evidence dissemination (i.e. journalists). While researchers are experts in their scientific field, press officers are experts in communication and have important insight into how journalists may report the science as presented to them by researchers. Their role is therefore also vital for ensuring accurate reporting.

Given the importance of a shared commitment across communities to accurate and responsible reporting, it was also acknowledged that laying blame on one group when things go wrong is not always helpful. Instead, more effort should be put into encouraging different parties to work together to achieve this shared responsibility and ensure high-quality reporting. For example, the Science Media Centre have produced '*Ten best practice guidelines for reporting health and science stories*' which are intended for use in newsrooms.³ Specialist science journalists cautioned that their news editors may not have time to read written guidelines.

Additional points from the discussion included the following:

- Press officers are highly reliant on scientists to ensure the accuracy and balance of press releases, but concern was raised that scientists may not necessarily give press releases the attention they deserve. Researchers, as the source of information, have an important responsibility to check press releases for accuracy and to ensure that they have not overstated their findings; some participants suggested that not all scientists fully appreciate their responsibilities in this area.
- It was suggested that journals and peer-reviewers, as part of the scientific process, might also have a role to play in ensuring that potentially complicated and specific scientific information, for example risk and effect sizes, is communicated clearly and in ways that can be understood by the general public.
- There is a crucial need for all parties to take responsibility for ensuring statistical information is accurate and relevant when reporting evidence about medicines. In particular, both journalists and press officers recognised that, where available, absolute risks should be given as well as relative risks.
- It was noted that many papers include 'odds ratios' which are often mistakenly taken as shorthand for relative risk; odds ratios are difficult concepts to communicate to non-specialist audiences and care needs to be taken not to use them incorrectly as relative risk figures as it is misleading.
- It may be helpful to consider completeness as well as accuracy in press releases. Figures given may be accurate, but if absolute risk figures are not provided, or if important context or balance is absent, a press release may not provide a balanced perspective or the full picture.
- It was also suggested that confusion between correlation and causation is a particular issue, especially in the reporting of epidemiological studies. Several journalists commented that press releases are not always clear about whether a reported finding is correlation or causation.
- It was suggested however that journalists also have a responsibility to identify such missing, or unclear, information in press releases and to ensure they are providing a fair and responsible representation of work; ultimately, their journalistic credibility depends on the quality of their published articles.

3. <http://www.sciencemediacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/10-best-practice-guidelines-for-science-and-health-reporting.pdf>

- Press officers are in a position to encourage best practice in their institutions, but the degree to which they can exert influence on academics – often senior figures – varies widely; often they are simply expected to support academics' communication and it can be difficult for press officers to challenge academics, especially if they do not know the field of science well.
- Communications staff in medical research charities may have an advantage in this respect, as they are often specialists in a specific field and can therefore play a particularly useful role as a source of expertise and sounding board for journalists (as they often do for patients). Conversely, press officers in universities may be generalists dealing with multiple areas of science and may not have sufficient technical knowledge to critically analyse draft content.
- It was suggested that some scientists may be so convinced of the importance of their work that they subconsciously exaggerate its significance. Some may also consciously seek to maximise coverage, for example by using more striking relative risk rather than absolute risk figures, by omitting important caveats, by giving public health advice that their work does not merit, or by circumventing the press office and thereby avoiding an important source of fact-checking.
- Journalists pointed out that much of their time is also dedicated to preventing dubious or inaccurate (and therefore damaging) stories from being reported. This role is another way in which specialist correspondents work to maintain accuracy.
- Although discussions focused on the mainstream media, it was also raised that the landscape of scientific communication is now highly diverse, and not all outlets are committed to responsible reporting. Social media, blogs, and a multitude of other online news outlets also write-up science and health news, sometimes (although not always) without the expertise and rigour of specialist correspondents that work in the mainstream press. In doing so, there is a concern that they may act as channels for the dissemination of inaccurate, sensationalised or unbalanced material. The attention generated by these stories can convey the impression that over-selling findings is a way to ensure high levels of media coverage.

Are there problems or misunderstandings in the current system?

While participants at the meeting agreed that accuracy and balance should be critical, it was also recognised that all parties may be tempted into trade-offs, for example over-selling the significance of findings to improve the likelihood of coverage.

While all parties should be responsible for accurate reporting, tensions may arise if scientists and communications teams are under pressure to achieve coverage, while journalists are typically competing for space and time with their colleagues.

Yet while these tensions were acknowledged, it was felt that potential damage to professional or institutional reputations was an important check. It was felt that the short-term benefits of coverage are likely to be outweighed by the long-term reputational harms of being seen as a source of unreliable information.

In this context, much of the discussion centred on the inclusion of caveats and context in press releases as a means to allow the complete and accurate reporting of scientific findings.

Some participants commented that it might be assumed that the inclusion of research 'caveats' in press releases – for example, that it was carried out in animal models or on cultured cells – might make them less likely to be used by journalists, as the science may be perceived to be less interesting since it is at an early stage and requires more work before it is directly relevant to humans. This in turn could discourage press officers from including potentially noteworthy caveats in the first place.

However, contrary to the expectations of some press officers, several journalists suggested that caveats are seen as helpful – and are welcomed – as they help them to accurately interpret and report scientific findings. Several journalists also noted that even if caveats are not reported in the resulting news stories, that does not mean that they have had no impact. For example, they may be responsible for subtle changes in the wording or focus of stories. Nevertheless, some participants felt that it would be helpful if caveats appeared more often, and more explicitly, in both press releases and news articles.

The inclusion of caveats also provides confidence that a press release is honest and balanced. Several journalists suggested that not being upfront about possible caveats can therefore be counterproductive; if such facts emerge after journalists have committed time and resources to researching a story, they may become wary about following up future stories from the same source as they are more likely to work with individuals they trust to provide balanced information. Over the long term, journalists aim to establish relationships with communications teams based on mutual trust. Hence, although there may be a temptation to ignore caveats in the hope of securing coverage, this short-term strategy can have negative long-term consequences.

An overabundance of information was also raised as a potential issue with the current system. To stimulate further discussion, one participant queried whether too much science is being communicated to the public, and whether such a high volume of information may be problematic by leading to a confusing and contradictory picture. One possibility is that public communication should instead focus on aggregated analyses such as meta-analyses and systematic reviews, where there is less uncertainty and hence less communication of conflicting findings.

However, many participants argued against this suggestion and agreed that reducing the amount of evidence that is communicated is unlikely to be helpful. It was argued that publicly funded scientists have a responsibility to explain the process and outcomes of their research, that communication of such research could genuinely inform the public and contribute to ongoing debates, and, importantly, that a failure to communicate would create more space for less credible voices. Journalists also argued that it could also be surprising what stories chime with readers, making it hard to predict which are the most newsworthy stories.

Additional points from the discussion included the following:

- One delegate said that the majority of scientific studies reported in the mass media are not randomised controlled trials (RCTs) but observational studies. This may be because RCTs are more difficult, more time-consuming, and more costly to run making them less common. The decision whether to publish a story, regardless of the type of study, will always come down to how newsworthy the story is, but it is important that it is made clear to journalists (in press releases) and the public (in the news article) the type of study in question, and its strength and limitations, for example whether or not it can make conclusions about correlation or causation.
- It was widely suggested that the publication of conflicting evidence and opinions pose challenges for health reporting. Contradictory or inconsistent reporting, which is common in some areas of science, can be unhelpful and confusing to the public who are trying to

reach their own informed opinions. Some areas of science and medicine are characterised by genuine uncertainty, and therefore communicating new evidence that may question the current consensus position is important. Disagreement should not prevent a story being published – and in fact disagreement could be the story itself. However, the difference between opinion and evidence is key; having a differing opinion does not provide a justification for covering views that lack scientific evidence to support them. Several delegates added it would be useful if it was made clearer in press releases whether something is new peer-reviewed evidence or opinion. Others also suggested that it would be of benefit if press releases were better developed with the target audience in mind.

- Journalists pointed out that news coverage is governed by a newsworthy event, or 'hook', such as publication of a new research paper. When an area is known to be controversial, a reputable journalist would typically aim to include a third-party view in the interests of balance.
- A different type of article, such as a feature, could be a way of assimilating multiple outputs over time in order to give an overview of a field as it reaches a greater stage of maturity. In areas where evidence of both potential benefits and harms are reasonably well established, longer form features might be better suited to more in depth analysis of different forms of evidence.
- The dangers of 'false balance' were also recognised; for scientific areas of strong consensus, contrarian views have on occasion been given undue emphasis or a platform to challenge consensus positions, in an attempt to create more engaging reporting.
- It was also suggested that the intelligence of readers/listeners should not be underestimated; they are not 'empty vessels' but bring their own knowledge and preconceptions and are not incapable of distinguishing fact from opinion. Scientists or policy-makers may be over-sensitive about the potential harm caused by dissenting voices (although it was raised that the impact of the debate around the measles, mumps, and rubella vaccination (MMR) and autism on rates of vaccination is a salient reminder of the power that continued media reporting of discredited science can have in influencing public health-related behaviours in damaging ways).
- It was suggested that graphics might be a useful tool for communicating quantitative information to lay audiences, and press offices could devote more time to developing such resources. However, it was also pointed out that some information was hard to communicate graphically, that graphics can be potentially misleading if oversimplified, and that they are also open to misuse.

How can improvements be made?

Following discussions about the process of communication, and the responsibilities of journalists and press officers, delegates at the roundtable were encouraged to identify where, and how, improvements can be made to ensure the appropriate communication of evidence about medicines.

In this context it was reiterated that all parties – scientists, press officers, and journalists – have roles to play in accurately communicating science to the public, and that each should offer support to other key players.

For example, scientists are typically not experts in public communication, and so may benefit from support to ensure that they can make a greater contribution to the communication of research findings to public audiences. It was also suggested that some researchers might not make themselves available to speak to journalists because they may be concerned that journalists may misquote or undermine them. However, journalists stated that there is a need for them to be able to talk with scientists around the time of the publication of their research in order to have any questions answered and to ensure the accuracy of the media article.

It was suggested that improvements could be seen if scientists continue to be encouraged to view public engagement as an important aspect of their job from early in their careers, but also if they are provided greater support from press officers (including the Science Media Centre), greater access to media training, and given greater insights into how the media process works. It was again noted that as part of their responsibility for accurate reporting, researchers should more rigorously ensure the quality of press releases and the resulting media report. This could be aided by having a better understanding of the processes involved and the obligations they are under during drafting and after the publication of press releases. For example, it was felt important that researchers are available at convenient times for interview or consultation by journalists. Press officers, as experts in public communication and media relations, should also ensure press releases are accurate, and in some cases this may require challenging scientists. It should also be better recognised that press officers should be available as an important source of support and advice to scientists when they are engaging with the media.

Specialist science and health journalists are important due to their understanding of the scientific process and expert contacts, meaning they play an important role in mainstream news outlets. However, it was also recognised that other groups, particularly news editors or other senior editorial staff with decision-making authority, have a key role in deciding what is covered and how. Such individuals may not be as familiar with the kind of issues being discussed as specialist reporters, and may be driven more by the allure of potentially high-profile stories of questionable validity, particularly when there is a strong political or consumer dimension. Further, although specialist journalists may take it upon themselves to explain to senior editorial staff some of the rationale for story selection, but it can be difficult to get across some of the nuances of scientifically related reporting.

In the long term, it may therefore be beneficial if newsrooms include more staff with a greater understanding of the scientific process and greater scientific literacy. For example, it would be of benefit to have news editors who better recognise the various merits and limitations of different types of scientific studies, the differences between commonly used statistical measures, and the differences between, for example, association and causation. With this in mind, one journalist suggested that running short events on specific science and health topics with editors might be helpful.

Journalists also identified a range of additional, practical measures that they felt would enhance their reporting. In terms of what journalists are looking for from press offices, accessibility, speed of response, honesty about the potential limitations of the research, and a good understanding of individual journalists' needs were seen as crucial. Access to full papers was also seen as helpful. However, several press officers explained that some factors were outside their control; publication schedules were often set by journals and not always communicated to press teams, and journals might also be reluctant to release final versions of papers for inclusion with the press release. Some potential practical next steps, identified through these discussions, are summarised in Box 1.

Box 1: Potential practical next steps

One focus of the roundtable was to identify methods to improve or ensure responsible reporting. It was largely recognised that formal mechanisms such as written 'best practice' guidelines would only have limited impact. However, a number of other potential, practical next steps were discussed during the roundtable. These are discussed in more detail throughout the main text but are also summarised below:

- Scientists should consider it their responsibility to be available to speak to press officers and journalists when press releases are being developed, and at the time of publication. This is important to ensure accuracy, completeness, and balance.
- Press officers could help scientists in this regard by better explaining the process and timescales under which journalists work, by explaining that journalists will not intentionally misquote or undermine them, and by providing wider media training.
- Press officers, where possible, should provide access to the complete research paper alongside press releases, allowing journalists to access an additional source from which to seek clarifications and context.
- Press releases should include the 'caveats' of the research, for example whether it was performed in cell lines or animals, in order to provide the complete picture and wider context.
- Press officers should consider the target audience, and develop the press release with this in mind to ensure relevance.
- Steps should be taken to increase levels of science literacy in newsrooms.
- Where senior newsroom staff or editors are lacking in scientific understanding, it would be beneficial if specialist journalists took time to explain the rationale behind story selection, and also the rationale for refusing to report on a particular story.

It was also noted that such improvements would be most readily reached if discussions to ensure accuracy in reporting span across all sectors, including scientists, press officers, and journalists. Other stakeholders such as peer reviewers, journals, and news editors should also be included in the conversation.

Concluding remarks

There was a strong consensus at the workshop that all parties involved in the communication of scientific evidence to non-specialist audiences have a shared responsibility to ensure that stories are accurate and balanced.

However, all parties may be subject to pressures to over-interpret or over-emphasise the importance of research findings, although it was also recognised by various participants that any short-term benefits are likely to be counter-balanced in the long term by a loss of credibility.

Nonetheless, all parties need to be given support, and work closely together, to ensure that they can fulfil their obligations. Journalists are heavily reliant on the quality of information provided by press offices and the access they can provide to scientific experts; press officers are reliant on scientists but also on the wider support of their institutions to be able to challenge scientists and not to be pressured into inappropriate publicity-seeking activities in a bid to boost the public profile of their organisations and staff; and scientists may benefit from further training and support to be able to contribute to processes that may take them outside their academic comfort zone. Closer working across these communities, with the shared aim of accuracy, would help to ensure that the public has regular access to high-quality health-related information through the mainstream media.

As well as communicating their own work, scientists have a potentially important role to play by providing expert commentary on other work. Experienced communications professionals in medical research charities are also an important source of information and advice for journalists and can act as 'sounding boards'.

News reporting of scientific developments can be challenging. As well as the potential for technically difficult material, progress in science is often incremental so can be marked by uncertainty and disagreement until clarity gradually emerges. Airing this uncertainty and disagreement in public may at times be uncomfortable, and at times confusing. However, avoiding public discourse is unlikely to be a practical option. If the public is to be able to navigate this difficult territory, all parties need to commit to responsible reporting and to work collectively to establish mechanisms by which this can be achieved.

Annex I Participant list

Participants:

- **Daisy Barton**, Communications & Engagement Officer, National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) Maudsley Biomedical Research Centre & Dementia Biomedical Research Unit
- **Karen Bidewell**, Senior Media Relations Manager, Faculty of Medical Sciences, Newcastle University
- **Michael Blastland***, Freelance journalist
- **Naomi Boal**, Research Manager, Ipsos MORI
- **Seil Collins**, Media Relations Manager, The Lancet
- **Tom Feilden**, Science & Environment Editor, Today Programme, BBC Radio 4
- **Henry French**, Media Manager, Institute for Cancer Research
- **James Gallagher**, Health Editor, BBC News
- **Brian Gornall**, Media Officer, Society for Radiological Protection
- **Andrew Gould**, Public Relations specialist, Plymouth University Peninsula Schools of Medicine and Dentistry
- **Emily Jesper**, Head of Partnerships and Governance, Sense About Science
- **Kate Kelland**, Europe, Middle East and Africa Health and Science Correspondent, Reuters
- **Ben Kolb**, Communications Manager, British Heart Foundation
- **Theresa Marteau FMedSci***, Director of the Behaviour and Health Research Unit, University of Cambridge (Chair of '*Communicating evidence about medicines*' workshop)
- **Nick McDermott**, Health Editor, The Sun
- **Lawrence McGinty**, former Science and Medical Editor, ITV News
- **Kerry Noble**, News Editor, Imperial College London
- **Laura Phipps**, Science Communications Manager, Alzheimer's Research UK
- **Tom Sheldon** (Chair), Senior Press Manager, Science Media Centre
- **David Spiegelhalter OBE FRS***, Winton Professor of the Public Understanding of Risk, University of Cambridge
- **Jay Stone**, Media Relations Executive, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
- **Andrea Ttofa**, Head of Media and Public Relations, NHS Blood & Transplant
- **Renee Watson**, Freelance communications professional
- **Tom Whipple**, Science Editor, The Times
- **Caroline White**, Freelance journalist; Press officer, *The BMJ*

Secretariat:

- **Rachel Brown**, Policy Officer, Academy of Medical Sciences
- **Claire Cope**, Senior Policy Officer, Academy of Medical Sciences
- **Giorgio De Faveri**, Senior Press Officer, Academy of Medical Sciences
- **Nick Hillier**, Director of Communications, Academy of Medical Sciences
- **Ian Jones**, Science writer, Jinja Publishing Ltd
- **Fiona Lethbridge**, Senior Press Officer, Science Media Centre
- **Holly Rogers**, Communications Officer, Academy of Medical Sciences

* Member of the '*How can we all best use evidence to judge the potential benefits and harms of medicines?*' Oversight Group.

Annex II Agenda

Friday 8 April 2016, 14.30 – 17.00
Wellcome Trust, 215 Euston Road, NW1 2BE

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| 14.30 - 15.00 | Arrival and refreshments |
| 15.00 - 15.05 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction to the Academy's workstream on 'How can we all best use evidence to judge the potential benefits and harms of medicines?' <i>Professor Theresa Marteau FMedSci, Director of Behaviour and Health Research Unit, University of Cambridge</i> |
| Topics for discussion <i>Chair: Tom Sheldon, Senior Press Manager, Science Media Centre</i> | |
| 15.05 - 15.25 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who is responsible for accuracy? |
| 15.25 - 16.15 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are there problems or misunderstandings? |
| 16.15 - 17.00 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does anything need fixing, and if so what can we do? |
| 17.00 - 18.00 | Close and drinks reception |



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