

## Fellows Communications Survey

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**'The Academy of Medical Sciences has a positive and proactive policy towards communicating with the media, stakeholders and members of the public.'**

**Communications play an important part in enabling us to meet all of our objectives. It is immensely satisfying to see such a large proportion of our Fellows actively engaged in so many communication that enable them to share the value and excitement of their research with the wider society.'**

Professor Sir John Bell, President, Academy of Medical Sciences

## Summary

In Summer 2007 the Academy's Communications Committee, chaired by Professor Frances Balkwill FMedSci, requested an audit of communication skills and experience amongst the Fellowship.

In Autumn 2007 Fellows of the Academy were invited to complete a short communications survey. Responses were received from 25% of the Fellowship (215 responses). The results, detailed below, indicate a strong trend amongst Academy Fellows of engaging with the media, policy makers, patient groups and members of the public.

The information provides a new understanding of the communication resources available within the Fellowship and will allow the Academy to link appropriate spokespeople with journalists to provide comment and advice on breaking news. The results also form a resource that will enable the Academy to promote and profile biomedical research carried out by Academy Fellows and reach new audiences, particularly members of the public.

## Key findings

**98%** of Fellows who responded have had some experience with the media.

**71%** rate this experience as positive.

**88%** of Fellows are prepared to comment in the media on behalf of the Academy

**'I believe it is very important for all scientists, but particularly clinical scientists, to engage in public debate at every opportunity. This is good for science, good for medicine, and most importantly, good for the public and our patients.'**

Professor Ashley Grossman FMedSci

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## Media engagement

**'The public is usually very interested and they deserve the best.'**

Professor Freda Stevenson FMedSci

### Academy Fellows experience with the media

<b>85%</b>	Had been interviewed by a news journalist
<b>83%</b>	Had been interviewed by a features journalist
<b>83%</b>	Had been interviewed for pre-recorded radio
<b>82%</b>	Had been interviewed for live radio
<b>81%</b>	Had been interviewed for pre-recorded TV
<b>66%</b>	Had written an article for the general public
<b>63%</b>	Had spoken at a press conference
<b>57%</b>	Had been interviewed for live TV
<b>55%</b>	Had been involved in the making of a documentary or science programme
<b>2%</b>	Had never engaged with the media

### How Fellows rated their media experience:

<b>71%</b>	Positive
<b>19%</b>	Negative
<b>10%</b>	Neither positive or negative

There is clearly a strong culture amongst the Academy Fellowship of engaging with the media, with a huge proportion of Fellows actively commenting in the press, on radio and TV. Their expertise and experience is of much value to journalists.

**'I have, on the whole, found interacting with science journalists to be a rewarding experience.'**

Dr Tim Bliss FRS FMedSci

**Actions by the Academy:** We will continue to work proactively with journalists and organisations such as the Science Media Centre to ensure Academy Fellows are provided with opportunities to comment in the media. Data from the survey will be used to ensure appropriate spokespeople are sourced and approached.

## Public engagement

**'I think it is important that everyone involved in science or medicine should be prepared to do some sort of public engagement activity.'**

Sir Walter Bodmer FRS HonFRSE FMedSci

### Fellows public engagement experience

<b>83%</b>	Have given a public lecture
<b>63%</b>	Have participated in an institution open day
<b>62%</b>	Have participated in a panel debate
<b>55%</b>	Have worked with teachers/schools
<b>36%</b>	Have spoken at a science festival
<b>35%</b>	Have taken part in a public dialogue event
<b>25%</b>	Have worked with a science centre/museum

### Public lectures

83% of responding Fellows have given a public lecture and half of those would be happy to give a lecture on behalf of the Academy. The responses have been stored in a database, which will provide a valuable resource to the Academy in promoting the work of its Fellows.

**Actions by the Academy:** We will use the results of this survey to work proactively with science communication organisations to provide opportunities for Fellows to engage the public in discussions about their research and medical science in general.

The Academy aims to include a public engagement element in all policy projects. We will build on recent success to provide further opportunities for Fellows to engage in deliberative discussions with members of the public on emerging biomedical issues. We will use the data to link appropriate Fellows to these new engagement programmes. This will allow the Academy to ensure its advice is shaped by the expert opinions of our Fellowship and the hopes and concerns of the wider society.

## Communications training

**'Being trained to talk with the media is probably essential if we do not want to be misrepresented.'**

Professor Steve Hunt FRS FRSE FMedSci

### Fellows who have received communications training

<b>57%</b>	General media training
<b>57%</b>	Training on being interviewed for TV/radio
<b>12%</b>	Training on speaking to a non-specialist/public audience
<b>10%</b>	Training on writing for a non-specialist/public audience
<b>4%</b>	Training in risk communication
<b>3%</b>	Training in speaking to school children
<b>32%</b>	None

Fellows found communications training valuable and highlighted the necessity of learning through practical experience. Many stressed the importance of receiving training early in their careers and indicated how this had served them well throughout their professional life.

**'The importance of communicating with the press, public and patients is often underestimated.'**

Professor Phillip Poole-Wilson FMedSci

**Actions by the Academy:** There are a large number of organisations providing media training for scientists. We will not attempt to recreate these, however we will include information on communications training for biomedical scientists on our website to act as a portal for those interested in finding out more.

The Academy is planning a series of mentoring and outreach events for clinical academics, including Clinician Scientists, Clinical Lecturers, Academic Clinical Fellows, Clinical Training Fellows, MB PhD students and Academic Foundation Doctors. These events include a programme of discussions and debates aimed at individuals interested in developing their career in academic medicine. We will explore opportunities to work with our mentees to provide opportunities for media training and encourage them to think about how they communicate their work.

## The Academy Communications Group

The Communications Group advise on and ensure effective and appropriate communications, help formulate strategy and promote a positive communications culture throughout Academy activities.

### Membership

Professor Frances Balkwill FMedSci (Chair)  
Dr Richard Horton FMedSci  
Dr Robin Lovell-Badge FRS FMedSci  
Professor Raymond Tallis FMedSci  
Dr Geoff Watts FMedSci  
Professor Simon Wessley FMedSci

### External Representative

Mr Clive Cookson, Science Correspondent, The Financial Times

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