

Who are we?

The SMC is an independent press office working to improve the public understanding of science by encouraging scientists to engage more often and more effectively with journalists. Our primary areas of focus are:

- Big, breaking science stories that are the headline news of the day
- Controversial, messy, or politicised scientific issues
- New scientific studies that may be sensationalised, overplayed or misrepresented
- Issues where the scientific community wants to speak out as one

The SMC acts as a bridge between the scientists and press officers involved in these kinds of stories and the national news journalists who report them to the wider public. The SMC is committed to reflecting the weight of scientific evidence and opinion, and one of our main aims is that the news media should better represent mainstream science.

Values: The SMC is media savvy, fast, accurate, independent, proactive, pro-science, bold.

Philosophy: “The media will ‘do’ science better when scientists ‘do’ the media better”.

What is our remit?

The SMC was set up in 2002 after media frenzies over MMR, GM crops and animal research. The SMC is:

- primarily focused on the national news media reaching the wider public
- independent of any one institution, without a brand or institutional messages to promote
- focused on the complex, contested science stories that hit the headlines
- dedicated to ensuring that the reporting of new research is measured and accurate

What do we do?

The SMC helps journalists gain access to accurate, evidence-based information by the following means:

- **Rapid reactions:** responding to breaking stories by sending out expert comment and information
- **Round-ups:** putting new research into context by sourcing third-party reaction from scientists
- **Press briefings:** bringing scientists face-to-face with journalists to set the agenda
- **Science information:** producing robust, evidence-based facts sheets, briefing notes and ‘Before the Headlines’ statistical analyses

We work with institutional science press officers to encourage and support scientists and engineers to engage with the media through the following activities:

- **Advice and support** in times of crisis, on tricky stories and when communicating new science
- **Brainstorms** on long-running hot topics in the news
- **Co-ordinating media relations** efforts on behalf of the scientific community
- **Events and publications** for scientists to encourage and advise on doing media work

On our database, we have more than **2700** experts and more than **1200** press officers.

On our mailing lists, we have more than **300** journalists representing every major UK news outlet.

How are we run?

The SMC is a registered charity regulated by a board of trustees, and has an advisory committee to help shape its work. It has a chief executive and a small permanent staff based at Wellcome Collection in London. The SMC was set up by the scientific community and is funded by more than 100 different organisations with an interest in the accurate reporting of science. Donors include scientific institutions, science-based companies, charities, media organisations and government. SMC funders do not receive anything in return, and the SMC’s strategy and editorial decisions are decided by staff in consultation with trustees and advisers where needed. In order to ensure its independence and avoid a perception of undue influence, most donations are capped at 5% of SMC annual income.

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Most SMC material can be found on the website: <http://www.sciencemediacentre.org/>