



Policy on which journalists can attend SMC press conferences

[SMC press conferences](#) are open to all the main UK national news outlets, and we have a very large number of journalists on our media lists. It is SMC policy that these press conferences are primarily aimed at specialist science, health, environment, and tech reporters who are registered on SMC's press lists. These press conferences are not open to non-journalists.

There are several reasons we restrict access to accredited specialist science reporters:

1. Specialist journalists cover science stories well and we want to give scientists the best chance of good, measured, accurate reporting.
2. We are very lucky that the UK media has retained so many specialist science reporters (which span science, health, environment, agriculture, climate and tech) and the SMC is committed to supporting these reporters and privileging them wherever we can.
3. Many of our press conferences are on embargoed journal papers, so prioritising science journalists who are registered with these journals and respect embargoes is critical.
4. We have some formal arrangements with scientific journals that require us to restrict access to reporters who have signed an embargo agreement with the SMC.
5. Many of the science journalists we work with value our policy of briefings being primarily for specialist science reporters.
6. There have been occasions in the past where editors put political or general news reporters on science stories (e.g. MMR, GM) in ways which reduced the overall quality of the reporting compared with stories reported by specialists.
7. The SMC has a focus on controversial issues that often become messy and politicised. It's challenging to persuade scientists and their press officers to take part in press conferences on these subjects. Opening our briefings to non-science journalists is likely to mean fewer scientists and comms professionals willing to take part. This could reduce media and public access to important scientists and would not be in the public interest.

For these reasons invitations to SMC Press Conferences are shared with named specialists on each news outlet, and we ask that you do not transfer these invitations without first checking with SMC staff.

If you want a non-specialist journalist to be accredited to an SMC press conference because a specialist is unavailable, please let us know and we'll assess on a case-by-case basis.

Science reporters are welcome to inform colleagues on newsdesks, planning etc about SMC press conferences.

The SMC reserves the right to decline non accredited journalists.

Journalists starting at a news outlet as a specialist reporter simply need to contact the SMC to request to be added our lists (smc@sciencemediacentre.org). We will assess the request and ask the reporter to sign and return an embargo agreement.