



## FAQs:

- **How do I get a scientist onto your database?** We are always on the lookout for top experts, but it's important that each scientist knows us before we call them. So we generally don't add scientists before we've worked with them at least once – but we are happy for you to put them in touch with us for a quote or interview. If that goes well we can add them for future contact.
- **Can you contact me when there's a breaking news story?** When a story breaks we will usually email a large group to request quotes. But we can't guarantee we'll reach everyone! So the best advice is, don't wait to hear from us; if you have an expert who can contribute usefully to the story, let us know! We're always very grateful for your help, and it's an effective way of getting your experts into the news.
- **Can you tell me when you use one of our scientists?** We do our best to alert you every time we work with your experts, and we ask your scientists to let you know too.
- **Can you approach me instead of going directly to my scientist?** Most press officers are happy for their experts to be approached by us, and in all cases the scientist him/herself has agreed to be contacted directly. We prefer it this way because we usually need to respond fast – we're not trying to undermine you. If you're not happy with that arrangement, please talk to us. But please remember that when time is limited every minute counts and delaying access to scientists can make all the difference over how accurately a story is covered.
- **How do I get one of our scientists involved with a briefing?** Many of the press briefings that we run are brought to us by press officers or scientists alerting us to upcoming research or to an issue needing media attention. Please do contact us if you think you have a story we could work together on, providing it falls into one of the following categories:
  - 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

- **Why don't we know about your briefings in advance?** There's just no way we can alert all press officers to every briefing they might find interesting and we often only have a few days' notice. But when it's something that concerns your institution or academics we'll always try to keep you informed.
- **The briefings in your monthly report always have speakers already arranged – we don't get a look in!** That's often true – usually because it's a news briefing with the authors of a paper presenting their work or another press officer has brought us the briefing fully formed. But for background briefings we like to have speakers from a variety of institutions, so if you have an expert working in a particularly important or controversial area, please let us know – those conversations often lead to briefings.
- **We have a particularly controversial story; can we work with you?** Yes, always. We specialise in controversial areas and we're always keen to work on them. We are especially grateful for the tip-offs – e.g. work in publication that you expect to receive media attention of a particular type. We can often help with the response: whether it's dealing with a breaking story, placing an opinion piece, briefing the press on a sensitive piece of research, putting the spotlight on an important issue, or issuing quotes from 3<sup>rd</sup> party experts alongside your press release. Feel free to give us a call even if it's for background, advice or just catharsis.
- **Do you do any science communication training?** We don't provide traditional media training, mainly because most universities and research councils already do. We run our [Introduction to the News Media events](#), which are free and introduce inexperienced scientists to news values.
- **Do you run training for press officers?** We don't offer any training for press officers but we would strongly recommend that you join [Stempra](#), an informal network set up to bring together people working in science communication. They run events, training and an online forum to share questions and concerns.
- **We have a PhD student doing some really interesting work – could we run a press briefing?** Probably not! It might be interesting work with media appeal, but that's not our remit. The most controversial headline subjects – climate change, GM, vaccines, animal research – generally demand more experienced experts from at least postdoc level.

- **Can we send you a comment from our spokesperson / manager / head of policy / head of comms?** Usually not. But it's occasionally ok, under certain circumstances – for example if we're seeking quotes on a much broader story where there is room for lots of voices from the scientific community. But in general it is only scientists we want for quotes on research papers and breaking news – so best to check with us first.
- **Can you send out a press release for us, or share your journalist lists with us?** No, we don't send out press releases as we can't do other organisations' PR. We also do not share our journalist lists, but we do notify you about specialist journalists moving jobs etc. in our monthly report. If you don't already receive this, please let us know.
- **Please can you use a particular title/affiliation for our experts?** We don't want to get this wrong and we know how important it is for your organisations to have names reported correctly. But many experts represent multiple institutions, so we ask the expert how he/she wants to be billed. If you want someone's affiliation changed in this way, please copy in the expert when you let us know so we can get their direct permission.