How to talk to the media?

SUZANNE ELVIDGE, MSC
BIOPHARMA AND MEDICAL WRITER, UK

30 April- 1 May
2019
Ricoh Arena, Coventry, UK
Making Pharmaceuticals
EXHIBITION & CONFERENCE

Introduction

- I am a freelance writer with a background in biochemistry and pharmacology
- I have been working in life sciences publishing and communications, and writing news, features and blogs on pharma and biotech for over 25 years
- I write for a variety of print and online media on both science and business

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C&I Chemistry&Industry

Current Issue
20th June 2011

Bioprospecting at the poles

Suzanne Elvidge, 20/06/2011

Tromsø in Norway is a long way from pretty much everywhere. However, its northerly position, 300 km inside the Arctic Circle, was a perfect location for hosting BIOPROSP, an international biennial conference on bioprospecting – the search for new biologically active compounds from cold marine environments, including the Arctic and Antarctic.

To survive the extreme temperatures, pressures and salinity levels in the polar regions, organisms – from bacteria, fungi, archaea and algae to crustaceans and fish – have had to adapt. One way of doing this is by producing unique proteins, peptides and metabolites, which differ from those produced by organisms found in more temperate terrestrial regions and could have potential in the biopharma, biotechnology and food industries.

Speaking at BIOPROSP, Paul Wender of Stanford University, US, explained: '3.8bn years of evolution have produced a very rich library of natural products, and scientists have really only started exploring and natural products, seeing them as

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#WomenInScience at BIOPROSP

2/13/2017

This year, BIOPROSP opens on 8 March 2017, which is International Women's Da
we are celebrating some of the amazing women speakers and scientists who will
conference.

BIOPROSP_17
The 8th International Conference on Marine Biotechnology

Anne Husbekk: The university city of Tromsø
The ocean holds many secrets. At UiT The Arctic University of Norway, the hu
secrets of biologically active and usable molecules has been underway ever
university was founded. The focus on bioprospecting in the Arctic Ocean has the
to lead to new therapeutics that are beneficial to patients.

Anne Husbekk is rector and professor of clinical immunology at UiT The Arctic
of Norway, and plays an international role in transfusion medicine and research po

Jeanette Hammer Andersen: Success stories involving marine bioactive compo
Between 1981 and 2014, 62% of the new chemical entities introduced into
tural products, and ocean could be the n

Tromsø: Hotspot For Cold Biotech

Bioprosp Fri, 2017-02-10 08:05

Suzanne Elvidge, biopharma and medical writer from the UK, has written a piece on Tromsø and its importance in the world of biotechnology. It features BIOPROSP, Biotech North, UiT Norges arktiske universitet, Nofima, and a variety of other northern companies and support structures. Suzanne has written for publications such as The Pharmaceutical Journal, Nature Biotechnology and Nature BioPharma Dealmakers, FierceMarkets, Life Science Leader Magazine, Start Up, and New Scientist. Come meet her at BIOPROSP_17!

0 Comment

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the PHARMACEUTICAL JOURNAL

Researchers modify peptides from cone snails in quest for neuropathic pain therapy

Researchers in Australia have modified peptides from cone snails, which have the potential to provide relief to patients with hard-to-treat neuropathic pain.

The Pharmaceutical Journal | 12 MAR 2015 | By Suzanne Elvidge

Alaska airlines flies on synthbio jet fuel

Magazine Article | July 1, 2013

Norwegian Biotech Faces The Funding Gap

Source: Life Science Leader

Contact The Supplier

By Suzanne Elvidge, contributing editor

Norway is known worldwide for its offshore industries, including oil, gas, and fishing, as well as minin

Diagnostics

Baltic enzyme to track stress

Ria Novosti/Science Photo L

cterium found in the chilly
sed to create a fluorescent
rkinson's disease and monitor
esearch presented at the
e in Tromsø, Norway, in

hydrolase, from the microbe
converts the indole derivative
dione) to isatinic acid

'Our ultimate goal is to create an assay in plate reader format, allowing many samples to be tested quickly and easily,' says Sommer. 'As people with Parkinson's disease currently only get symptomatic treatment, the assay could be used for early and hopefully more reliable diagnosis, so that treatment can start as soon as possible.

It could also help to elucidate the role of isatin in humans. If a cure for the disease is obtained some day, a fast diagnostic tool will be invaluable,' he continued.

Outline

- How to talk to the media
  - Media for the general population, scientists and the industry
  - Looking at and learning from examples
  - Understanding the communications challenges and meeting them
  - Speaking to the press

Drivers for growth of research

- Needs in healthcare
  - Increase in the aging population
  - Growth in cancer and chronic disease, including diabetes and obesity

Communicating science

- The growth in research is driving a need to communicate science
- This must start by understanding the three key audiences
  - The general population
  - Bench scientists and researchers
  - Business development and leadership teams

Why publish for the general population?

- The media may be the only source for the general population to access information about science
- What they read/see:
  - The internet, papers, magazines and television
    - Older people are most likely to read newspapers
    - Younger people access most of their content online, and have shorter attention spans

The media's role in informing and educating the general population

- Increasing the public understanding of science
- Understanding how research really works
- Ensuring a more realistic perception of the pharma and biotech industry
- The media may be the only way that people find out about science – because of this, it's vitally important that the coverage they read is good

The popular media's perception of research

- Popular press coverage can be sensationalist [1]
  - 'Researchers were shocked by results'
  - 'Miracle drug'
  - 'Results are astonishing'

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Could this 'miracle drug' extend your life? First results of anti-ageing medical trial on dogs are 'astonishing', says scientist

- Rapamycin is a bacterial by-product discovered in soil at Easter Island
- It is already used in transplant patients to prevent organ rejection
- After finding it increases life of mice, anti-aging drug now tested on dogs
- Study found dogs receiving the drug showed improved heart functionality

By CHEYENNE MACDONALD FOR DAILYMAIL.COM
PUBLISHED: 23:26, 6 May 2016 | **UPDATED:** 23:51, 6 May 2016

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A 'miracle drug' found in the soil at Easter Island is believed to have qualities that could one day help humans live longer – and it may already be working for dogs.

Scientists from the University of Washington are testing the effects of a drug called rapamycin on dogs to see if it will slow down the aging process.

1. Macdonald C. **Could this 'miracle drug' extend your life? First results of anti-ageing medical trial on dogs are 'astonishing', says scientist. Daily Mail, 6 May 2016. Available from:** http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-3577923/Could-miracle-drug-extend-life-results-anti-ageing-medical-trial-dogs-astonishing-says-scientist.html

Looking at science coverage in the popular press

- The focus is on the immediate impact not the science
- The press tends to cover dramatic topics, and report on immediate solutions and quick fixes
- Responses include “Why isn’t this available now?”
  - Hard to explain the time that product development takes

Why publish for scientists and researchers?

- By reading about current research, scientists can gain insights that may impact their studies
- Find collaborators
- What they read
  - Scientific and medical press and journals
  - Trade publications

Why publish for business development audiences?

- Companies can find areas of unmet need, find solutions
- Funders can see who needs funding and who could provide a return on investment
- What they read
  - Scientific and medical press and journals
  - Trade and business publications

The original paper

- Padeliporfin vascular-targeted photodynamic therapy is a safe, effective treatment for low-risk, localised prostate cancer [1]
- This might allow more men to consider a tissue-preserving approach and defer/avoid radical therapy

THE LANCET Oncology

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Articles

Padeliporfin vascular-targeted photodynamic therapy versus active surveillance in men with low-risk prostate cancer (CLIN1001 PCM301): an open-label, phase 3, randomised controlled trial

Prof Abdel-Rahmène Azzouzi, MD, Prof Sébastien Vincendeau, MD, Prof Eric Barret, MD, Prof Antony Cicco, MD, François Kleinclauss, MD, Henk G van der Poel, MD, Prof Christian G Stief, MD, Prof Jens Rassweiler, MD, Georg Salomon, MD, Prof Eduardo Solsona, MD, Prof Antonio Alcaraz, MD, Prof Teuvo T Tammela, MD, Derek J Rosario, MD, Francisco Gomez-Veiga, MD, Göran Ahlgren, MD, Fawzi Benzaghou, MD, Bertrand Gaillac, MD, Billy Amzal, PhD, Frans M J Debruyne, MD, Gaëlle Fromont, MD, Prof Christian Gratzke, MD, Prof Mark Emberton, FMedSci on behalf of the PCM301 Study Group

Published: 19 December 2016

Altmetric 1,357

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S1470-2045(16)30661-1 | CrossMark

Article Info

Summary | Full Text | Tables and Figures | References | Supplementary Material

Summary

Background

Vascular-targeted photodynamic therapy, a novel tissue-preserving treatment for low-risk prostate cancer, has shown favourable safety and efficacy results in single-arm phase 1 and 2 studies. We compared this treatment with the standard of care, active surveillance, in men with low-risk prostate cancer in a phase 3 trial.

Methods

This randomised controlled trial was done in 47 European university centres and community hospitals. Men with low-risk, localised prostate cancer (Gleason pattern 3) who had received no

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Vol. 18, No. 1

1. Azzouzi, Abdel-Rahmène et al. *Padeliporfin vascular-targeted photodynamic therapy versus active surveillance in men with low-risk prostate cancer (CLIN1001 PCM301): an open-label, phase 3, randomised controlled trial*. The Lancet Oncology , Volume 18 , Issue 2 , 181 - 191

The original paper

- The conclusion includes some caution, and the paper suggests that more research is needed
- The paper is company-sponsored

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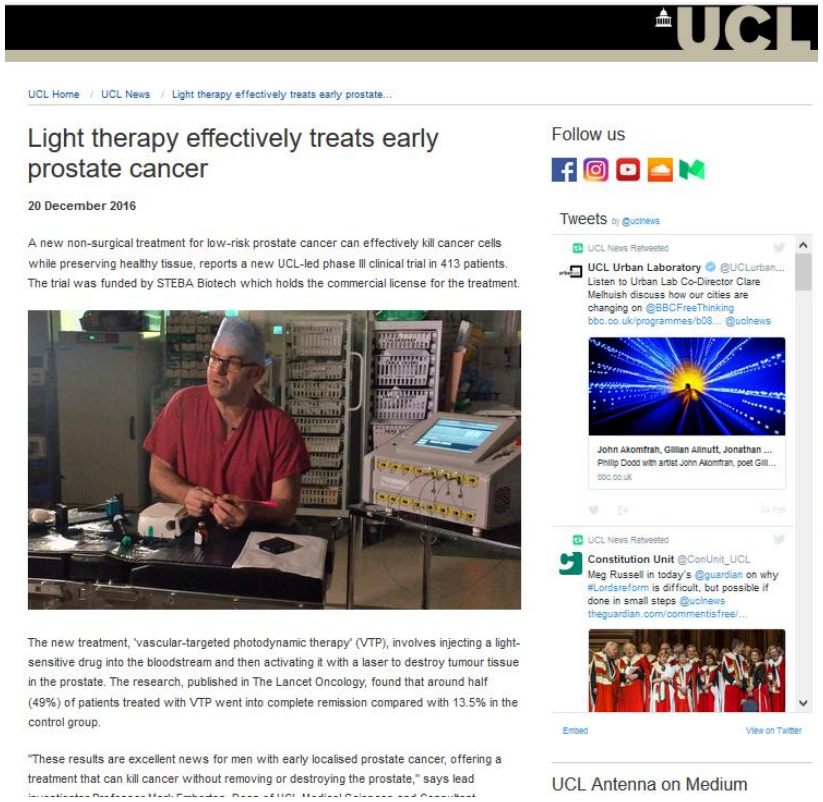
Vol. 18, No. 1

1. Azzouzi, Abdel-Rahmène et al. *Padeliporfin vascular-targeted photodynamic therapy versus active surveillance in men with low-risk prostate cancer (CLIN1001 PCM301): an open-label, phase 3, randomised controlled trial*. The Lancet Oncology , Volume 18 , Issue 2 , 181 - 191

The press release

- The press release [1] uses much more ‘user friendly’ language than the paper
- It drives the ‘shape’ of the story in the press
- Statements are more ‘definite’
- It provides quotes and soundbites



UCL

UCL Home / UCL News / Light therapy effectively treats early prostate...

Light therapy effectively treats early prostate cancer

20 December 2016

A new non-surgical treatment for low-risk prostate cancer can effectively kill cancer cells while preserving healthy tissue, reports a new UCL-led phase II clinical trial in 413 patients. The trial was funded by STEBA Biotech which holds the commercial license for the treatment.

The new treatment, 'vascular-targeted photodynamic therapy' (VTP), involves injecting a light-sensitive drug into the bloodstream and then activating it with a laser to destroy tumour tissue in the prostate. The research, published in The Lancet Oncology, found that around half (49%) of patients treated with VTP went into complete remission compared with 13.5% in the control group.

"These results are excellent news for men with early localised prostate cancer, offering a treatment that can kill cancer without removing or destroying the prostate," says lead

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1. Dayantis, H. *Light therapy effectively treats early prostate cancer*.2- December 2016. University College London.

Urology Times and Prostate Cancer Advisor

- Both publications target physicians; both pieces are written by science journalists
- The Urology Times feature [1] uses the press release as a source, including quotes
- It includes the perspective of a physician not part of the study

Urology Times
The Leading News Source for Urologists

Laser-activated PCa therapy promising in phase III study

January 23, 2017 | By Cheryl Guttman Krader

Results from a new late-stage trial
prostate cancer, as researchers sa
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PROSTATE CANCER ADVISOR

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Jonathan Goodman, MPhil, Oncology Editor

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December 20, 2016

Vascular-targeted Photodynamic Therapy in Prostate Cancer: A New Standard of Care?

Share this content:

Padeliporfin vascular-targeted photodynamic therapy may be preferable to active surveillance for patients with low-risk, localized prostate cancer, according to a study published in *The Lancet Oncology*.[1]

Padeliporfin vascular-targeted photodynamic therapy may be preferable to active surveillance for patients with low-risk, localized prostate cancer.

In many cases of low-risk prostate cancer, active surveillance is appropriate: patients may have favorable outcomes, though it is not uncommon that a treatment intervention is required. For this phase 3 trial (ClinicalTrials.gov Identifier: NCT01310894), researchers evaluated whether this experimental focal therapy would reduce the risk of disease progression or need for

1. Guttman Krader C. *Laser-activated PCa therapy promising in phase III study*, 23 January 2017.
2. *Goodman J. Vascular-targeted Photodynamic Therapy in Prostate Cancer: A New Standard of Care?* 20 December 2016.

Urology Times and Prostate Cancer Advisor

- Prostate Cancer Advisor [2] uses the paper as the source
- The language in both is non-sensational
- The conclusions are cautious and use a science and medical perspective

Urology Times
The Leading News Source for Urologists

Laser-activated PCa therapy promising in phase III study

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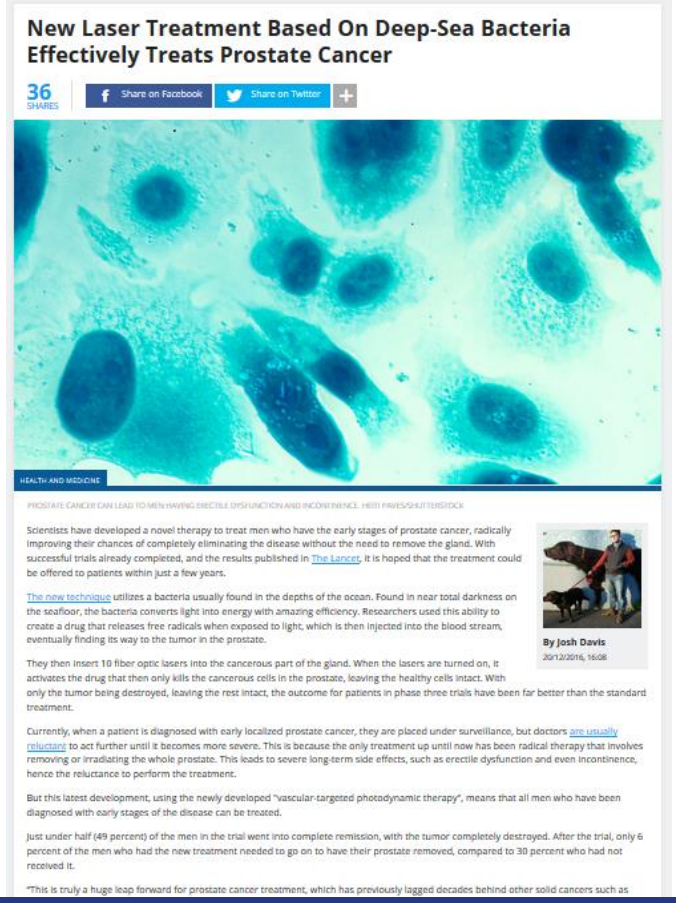
2. *Goodman J. Vascular-targeted Photodynamic Therapy in Prostate Cancer: A New Standard of Care?* 20 December 2016.

IFLScience

- IFLScience is a popular science site read by scientists and non-scientists, and uses lay language
- The piece [1] uses some information from the press release, including quotes, but also background information



New Laser Treatment Based On Deep-Sea Bacteria Effectively Treats Prostate Cancer

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HEALTH AND MEDICINE

PROSTATE CANCER CAN LEAD TO MEN HAVING ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION AND INCONTINENCE. HEITI PAVES/SHUTTERSTOCK

Scientists have developed a novel therapy to treat men who have the early stages of prostate cancer, radically improving their chances of completely eliminating the disease without the need to remove the gland. With successful trials already completed, and the results published in The Lancet, it is hoped that the treatment could be offered to patients within just a few years.

By Josh Davis
20/12/2016, 16:08

The new technique utilizes a bacteria usually found in the depths of the ocean. Found in near total darkness on the seafloor, the bacteria converts light into energy with amazing efficiency. Researchers used this ability to create a drug that releases free radicals when exposed to light, which is then injected into the blood stream, eventually finding its way to the tumor in the prostate.

They then insert 10 fiber optic lasers into the cancerous part of the gland. When the lasers are turned on, it activates the drug that then only kills the cancerous cells in the prostate, leaving the healthy cells intact. With only the tumor being destroyed, leaving the rest intact, the outcome for patients in phase three trials have been far better than the standard treatment.

Currently, when a patient is diagnosed with early localized prostate cancer, they are placed under surveillance, but doctors are usually reluctant to act further until it becomes more severe. This is because the only treatment up until now has been radical therapy that involves removing or irradiating the whole prostate. This leads to severe long-term side effects, such as erectile dysfunction and even incontinence, hence the reluctance to perform the treatment.

But this latest development, using the newly developed "vascular-targeted photodynamic therapy", means that all men who have been diagnosed with early stages of the disease can be treated.

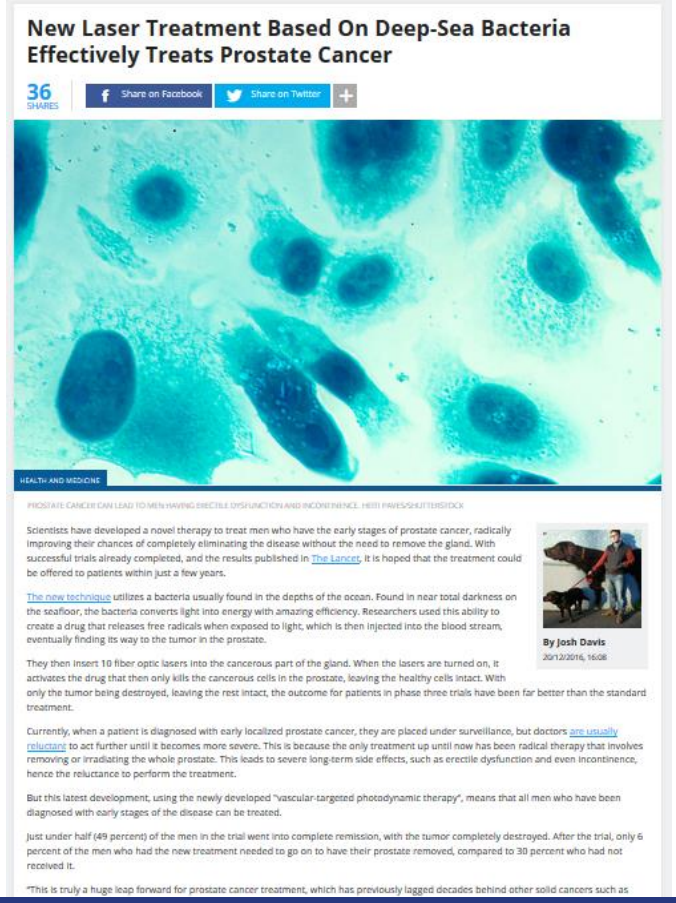
Just under half (49 percent) of the men in the trial went into complete remission, with the tumor completely destroyed. After the trial, only 6 percent of the men who had the new treatment needed to go on to have their prostate removed, compared to 30 percent who had not received it.

"This is truly a huge leap forward for prostate cancer treatment, which has previously lagged decades behind other solid cancers such as

1. Davies J. *New Laser Treatment Based On Deep-Sea Bacteria Effectively Treats Prostate Cancer*. IFLScience, 2016.

IFLScience

- The piece says that the drug is not yet approved – this is from the press release and is important in managing expectations
- The conclusion is positive but the language remains measured



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The Telegraph

- The Telegraph is a UK broadsheet newspaper
- The piece [1] is based on the press release, including quotes
- It is written by the science editor

The Telegraph HOME NEWS SP

Science

Science

Prostate cancer drug based on sea-bed bacteria brings complete remission for half of patients

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By Sarah Knapton, SCIENCE EDITOR

20 DECEMBER 2016 • 8:11AM

A treatment for prostate cancer based on bacteria which live on the ocean floor brings complete remission for half of patients, a new trial has shown.

The therapy, involves injecting a light sensitive drug into the bloodstream and activating it with a drug to destroy tumour tissue, while leaving healthy tissue unharmed.

The research, published in *The Lancet Oncology*, found that around half (49 per cent) of 413 patients with low-risk prostate cancer treated went into complete remission compared with 13.5 per cent in the control group who were given no treatment.

"These results are excellent news for men with early localised prostate cancer, offering a treatment that can kill cancer without removing or destroying the prostate," says lead investigator Professor Mark Emberton, Dean of UCL Medical Sciences and Consultant Urologist at UCLH.

"This is truly a huge leap forward for prostate cancer treatment, which has previously lagged decades behind other solid cancers such as breast cancer.

1. Knapton S. *Prostate cancer drug based on sea-bed bacteria brings complete remission for half of patients*

The Telegraph

- It includes background from Cancer Research UK, providing a level of validation
- It mentions that the treatment has not yet been approved in Europe
- It adds that NICE approval is needed before use in the NHS

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Science

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1. Knapton S. *Prostate cancer drug based on sea-bed bacteria brings complete remission for half of patients*

The Daily Mail

- The UK tabloid Daily Mail has a strong female readership; this is the Australian version
- The piece [1] is written by a non-specialist and is based on the press release, including quotes
- The headline and style is dramatic

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Bacteria extracted from the ocean floor will kill prostate cancer in HALF of all patients, study finds

- Bacteria from bottom of the ocean injected into bottoms of cancer sufferers
- Non-surgical injection of light sensitive drug made from ocean bacteria works
- Injection of this drug treated 413 patients, with 49 per cent going into remission
- Positive finding could spare future prostate cancer suffers from invasive surgery

By STEPHEN JOHNSON FOR DAILY MAIL AUSTRALIA
PUBLISHED: 00:37, 22 December 2016 | **UPDATED:** 03:10, 22 December 2016

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Bacteria that live on the ocean floor has been found to cure half of all male prostate cancer sufferers in an experiment and could replace invasive surgery.

A non-surgical treatment involved injecting a light-sensitive drug into the bloodsteam, which was then activated with a laser to destroy tumour tissue in the prostate.

The drug, derived from bacteria at the bottom of the ocean, was used to treat 413 patients with low-risk prostate cancer, with 49 per cent of them going into remission.

1. Johnson F. *Bacteria extracted from the ocean floor will kill prostate cancer in HALF of all patients, study finds*.

The Daily Mail

- It includes images of Australian men who had prostate cancer
- It doesn't mention that the therapy isn't approved in EU or Australia
- It includes a video from Prostate Cancer UK; both a degree of validation & an information source

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Bacteria extracted from the ocean floor will kill prostate cancer in HALF of all patients, study finds

- **Bacteria from bottom of the ocean injected into bottoms of cancer sufferers**
- **Non-surgical injection of light sensitive drug made from ocean bacteria works**
- **Injection of this drug treated 413 patients, with 49 per cent going into remission**
- **Positive finding could spare future prostate cancer suffers from invasive surgery**

By STEPHEN JOHNSON FOR DAILY MAIL AUSTRALIA
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Bacteria that live on the ocean floor has been found to cure half of all male prostate cancer sufferers in an experiment and could replace invasive surgery.

A non-surgical treatment involved injecting a light-sensitive drug into the bloodsteam, which was then activated with a laser to destroy tumour tissue in the prostate.

The drug, derived from bacteria at the bottom of the ocean, was used to treat 413 patients with low-risk prostate cancer, with 49 per cent of them going into remission.

1. Johnson F. *Bacteria extracted from the ocean floor will kill prostate cancer in HALF of all patients, study finds*.

The Sun

- The UK tabloid The Sun has many male readers [1]
- It is by a journalist who focuses on health & is based on the release
- It includes quotes & a case study
- The headline is jokey; the article has more pictures than text

THE Sun — THE SUN, A NEWS UK COMPANY

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d being "switched on" by laser

nd "excellent news" for men in the

BEAM ME UP New laser therapy is 'four times more effective at treating prostate cancer – and doesn't leave men impotent'

In the early stages of the disease, the non-surgical procedure can kill tumour cells in men suffering from prostate cancer

BY SHAUN WOOLLER | 20th December 2016, 1:15 am

COMMENT NOW

A NEW treatment for prostate cancer has been developed that is four times more effective and does not leave men impotent.

The non-surgical procedure kills tumour cells in men found with the disease in its early stages.

GETTY IMAGES 3

The procedure involved laser beams being fired through fibres inserted into the prostate to kill tumour cells

Trials saw 49 per cent of patients go into full remission. This compared with 13.5 per cent in a group on current methods — where those at low risk are monitored and treated only when the cancer becomes more severe.

The Sun

In high-risk cases, the whole prostate is removed or zapped with radiation.

Side-effects can include life-long erectile problems, but the new treatment — vascular-targeted photodynamic therapy — saw urinary and erectile problems go within three months. No significant side-effects remained after two years.

1. Wooller S. *BEAM ME UP New laser therapy is 'four times more effective at treating prostate cancer – and doesn't leave men impotent'.*

The Sun

- It adds that the treatment is not approved in Europe, and won't be available for a number of years
- It includes a video from Prostate Cancer UK; both a degree of validation & an information source

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What do we learn from these?

- The press release often drives the shape of the story
- For science and technical reporters, access to the paper is important
- For more mainstream reporting, the press release is the key source
- For products, giving timelines can help to manage expectations, especially for early stage science

What else can we add?

- Pictures add impact, and case studies provide a human face
- Background information is helpful – the company, the technology, the disease, the drug, independent information sources
- Quotes are important – but keep them realistic and snappy

The challenges

- Media coverage of research does depend on how the science is communicated by the scientists [1]
- This means the interaction between the scientist and the journalist is very important
- Remembering a few key things can make the whole interaction much more successful…

1. Helmuth L, Ageing research in the media. How the demands of newspaper and magazine publishing influence what people read about aging. *EMBO Rep* 2005. **6 Spec No**: p. S81-3. 10.1038/sj.embor.7400434.

Know the audience

- Be aware who you are talking to
  - Not all journalists and science writers are scientists
- Be aware who will be reading the piece
  - The general population
  - Bench scientists and researchers
  - Business development teams

Journalists are busy people

- Journalism is an increasingly pressured business, and fewer news outlets have specialist science writers
- A press release is one of the key ways to communicate a story
- A good press release will increase the chance of getting your story noticed and published

Watch your language

- Keep it simple and clear but don’t dumb it down
- Avoid scientific jargon and hyperbole

It's important for scientists to speak on a level that people can understand - using jargon or high science terms can make the conversation complex and isn't worthwhile for the reporter or their audience – Lisa LaMotta, BioPharma Dive

Structuring a press release

- The structure: an inverted triangle
  - Summary points
  - Lead paragraph
  - Body of the press release, including quotes
  - Supporting information
  - Contact details

Writing a press release

- Make sure it’s not advertising, and don’t overstate things
- State facts; don’t be vague
- Keep it brief
- Keep in mind what you would want to read in a news story
- If you include contacts, check their availability

Checklist of things to include

- Who
- What
- Why
- Where
- When
- How

And most of all…

- Don’t forget the ‘so what’
  - Just because you find it fascinating, doesn’t necessarily mean anyone else will!
  - Think – is the press release really necessary?
  - Why should the journalist read it/write about it?
- If the journalist doesn’t think it’s interesting, then the audience won’t either

Send it out to the right people

- Avoid the scattergun approach
  - Understand the journalist's beat or the news source's focus
- Think about timing
  - Local holidays
  - Deadlines for daily/weekly/monthly publications
  - Look at publication calendars

Talking to the press

- Prepare well
- Listen carefully to questions
- Know what you can and can’t say
- Remember your audience and use the right language

Thank you for listening

If you cannot - in the long run - tell everyone what you have been doing, your doing has been worthless.
Erwin Schrodinger (Nobel Prize winner in physics)

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1. Dias DA, Urban S, Roessner U. A Historical Overview of Natural Products in Drug Discovery. Metabolites. 2012;2(2):303-336. doi:10.3390/metabo2020303.