Do-It-Yourself Dissemination: Efficiently and effectively disseminating your research findings

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Who should disseminate your findings?

It is your responsibility as a researcher to disseminate your findings to your stakeholders.

Most stakeholders cannot access peer-reviewed publications.

We can help you disseminate findings after publication efficiently and effectively.
Steps

Step 1: Check-in with your JHU media office if you think your findings are newsworthy

- Media attention is one of the most efficient ways to broadly disseminate findings, and the communications team can help
- Also check-in with the journal’s media office to see if they have interest in promoting the findings

Step 2: If the communications team decides not to issue a research news release, follow the next steps

2a. Write your Executive Summary
2b. Send the Executive Summary to contacts in your “rolodex”
2c. Leverage social media to quickly disseminate findings to stakeholders
   - Twitter is well-suited for this type of communication
Step 1: Contact your media office

Upon acceptance (or near acceptance) of the paper, contact your media office by e-mail and share your findings

For a complete list of JHU media contacts, please go to https://hub.jhu.edu/media/contact/ and e-mail the contact affiliated with your school/division

If your media office is interested in working with you, no need to go to Step 2

Otherwise, go to Step 2
Step 2: Do-It-Yourself Dissemination

a. Write your Executive Summary

b. Send the Executive Summary to contacts in your “rolodex”

c. Leverage social media to quickly disseminate findings to stakeholders
   • Twitter is well-suited for this type of communication
2a. Executive Summary needed?

- Is your paper freely accessible (i.e. not behind a pay wall) and understandable to a general audience?
  - No ➔ An Executive Summary may be needed

- Do your stakeholders have the technical knowledge to read your paper and translate it into meaningful change?
  - No ➔ An Executive Summary may be needed

- Do you think your stakeholders will have time to read your entire paper?
  - No ➔ An Executive Summary may be needed

*If you answer “no” to any of these questions, an Executive Summary may be needed*
2a. Executive Summary description

This one-page document should:
- Summarize the “take-home message” of your findings
- Clearly lay the most convincing evidence for the message from your paper
- Provide a quote from you
- Acknowledge funders and any conflicts of interest
- Provide contact information
- Provide reference of the full paper
- Maybe provide a visual that is NOT in the paper (e.g. an infographic)
  - Using a table or figure from the paper in your executive summary may violate the copy right agreement you have with the publisher of your paper
2a. Executive summary template
(template provided as a Word doc, example Executive Summary also provided)

- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
- Whitespace between short paragraphs
- Quotes around your quotation
- Bolding the main message & quote
- Italicize the article’s reference at the bottom and provide link

Anything and everything you write in your executive summary could be used by the media
2a. Sending your Executive Summary

Send your Executive Summary in the body of the e-mail

Send to your “rolodex” of contacts (see Step 2b)

*Subject* of your e-mail should be short and concise
2a. Sending your Executive Summary to elected officials

- The sentence “The views expressed here are my own…” is required when sending to elected officials.
  - Do not include this sentence when reaching out to media; it is only needed for outreach to elected officials
- Contact the Office of Government and Community Affairs [GCA] (gca@jhu.edu or 443-287-9900) for the following:
  - E-mail addresses for health policy advisors in the offices of elected representatives
  - To notify them about your outreach to an elected official. Anything you send to an elected official could be considered lobbying activity, so GCA must be notified.
- Copy and paste your Executive Summary (and results visualization) in the body of the e-mail below your signature
- Template and example for the e-mail is provided

E-mail to elected official stakeholder with the Executive Summary

- Remember you must contact the JHU Office of Government and Community Affairs before reaching out to elected officials (gca@jhu.edu or 443-287-9900)

Subject: Insert a short, concise subject that declares your main finding

Dear [insert names],

Below (and attached) is an Executive Summary of a recent study that demonstrates [insert main message of the findings].

These findings are an important contribution because [complete].

This study is an example of [insert your school/lead study that was funded by [insert funder] and impacts the lives of [insert stakeholder].

The views expressed here are my own and do not necessarily reflect the policies or positions of [Johns Hopkins University/Johns Hopkins Health System].

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Insert the text of the Executive Summary and the visualization of findings in the e-mail body (below signature)
2b. Your “rolodex”

Your “rolodex” is an e-mail listserv of stakeholder contacts to whom you wish to send your Executive Summary, including:

- Elected representatives (local, state, national)
- Funders
  - e.g. National Institutes of Health
- Policy and program decision makers
  - e.g. Guideline committee members
- Advocacy groups
  - e.g. American Cancer Society
  - e.g. professional societies
  - e.g. advocacy groups composed of people living with the disease of interest
- Writers for the media and “trade” publications – e.g. those specific to your disease or population of interest
  - e.g. Writers for IDNews for infectious diseases
2b. Growing your “rolodex”

When you read news coverage of science, who is writing it?
  • Put them in your rolodex (but first reach out to your communications team if you need more help becoming “media ready”)

When you correspond with advocates, who are you corresponding with?
  • Put them in your rolodex

When you are e-mailing with your funders, who are you e-mailing with?
  • Put them in your rolodex

Who are the health policy people for your elected representatives?
  • Put them in your rolodex

Whenever you interact with a stakeholder, consider putting them in your rolodex
2c. Dissemination on Twitter

**Why Twitter?** So far, it is one of the more effective social media platforms for communicating science.

Most of your stakeholders are likely on Twitter:
- Elected representatives (local, state, national)
- Funders
- Policy and program decision makers
- Advocacy groups
- Writers for the media
Twitter for academic dialogue: The Basics

• # organizes content
  • You can add a “#” to any word/phrase
    • e.g. #ThisIsOurLane
    • e.g. #scicomm to reach an audience interested in scientific communication on Twitter
  • Adding a “#” specific to your findings will make your message go further
  • Most conferences now have “#”

• @ organizes people
  • e.g. @kerinalthoff

New to Twitter? Check out YouTube for videos on how to get started.
2c. Create a Twitter thread

- Start with a question to hook your reader
- Main message (don’t bury the lead)
- Be sure you tag the journal
  - e.g. @TheLancetHIV
- Be sure you link to the full article
  - even if there is a paywall
- Be sure to acknowledge those who made your research possible (funders, participants, etc.)
  - e.g. @NIAIDNews
- Draft each tweet before you post
- Proof read!
  - Twitter does not let you edit your tweet once posted

Example: https://twitter.com/kerinalthoff/status/1087888837228015618
Reach stakeholders ≥2 ways

1. Executive Summary sent via e-mail
   • Link to the first tweet in the Twitter thread is included in the Executive Summary

2. Twitter thread
Outcomes

After sending the example Executive Summary and posting the example Twitter thread, the following happened:

- **NEJM JWatch** reviewed the findings and created a blog post
- **The Body** wrote about the findings and tagged me on Twitter
- **Healio** wrote about the findings and tagged me on Twitter
- **POZ** (a magazine for people with HIV) wrote about the findings and tagged me on Twitter
- **Infectious Disease Advisory** wrote about the findings and tagged me on Twitter
- **IDNews** wrote about the findings and tagged me on Twitter

**HIV clinicians and people with HIV were key stakeholders of my findings**
Do It Yourself Dissemination: Summary of tool kit contents
1. Contents: JHU Media contacts

Link to JHU media contacts: https://hub.jhu.edu/media/contact/
2a. Contents: Executive summary

Executive Summary to e-mail to stakeholders

• Template
• Example

Additional e-mail text to accompany Executive Summary when sending to elected officials

• Template
• Example
2b. Contents: Rolodex

Be sure you include

• Elected representatives (local, state, national)
• Funders
  • e.g. National Institutes of Health
• Policy and program decision makers
  • e.g. Guideline committee members
• Advocacy groups
  • e.g. American Cancer Society
  • e.g. professional societies
  • e.g. advocacy groups composed of people living with the disease of interest
• Writers for the media and “trade” publications – e.g. those specific to your
disease or population of interest
2c. Twitter thread guidance

- Start with a question to hook your reader
- Main message (don’t bury the lead)
- Be sure you tag the journal
- Be sure you link to the full article
- Be sure to acknowledge those who made your research possible (funders, participants, etc.)
- Draft each tweet before you post and proof read!

Example: https://twitter.com/kerinalalthoff/status/1087888837228015618
Feedback welcome!
kalthoff@jhu.edu