

Developing a Science Communication course for medical students

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INTRODUCTION

Science communication is an exercise in translation. In what has been described as a “post-truth era” there is a need for doctors to communicate medical science effectively with patients and the public. The principles of science communication are highly applicable to doctors and dedicated training could enhance current communication skills teaching for medical students.

At Hull York Medical School (HYMS), an appropriate avenue is the Scholarship and Special Interest Programme (SSIP).

OBJECTIVE: To develop a Phase 1 SSIP in Science Communication for HYMS medical students

METHODS

- A modified version of six step approach to curriculum development^[1] was used to design this course.
- Market research and literature review. AA audited MSc Science Communication at University of Hull.
- Focus group of stakeholders (box 1) to guide course content and garner support. Thematic analysis of data. Ethical approval for the project was received from the HYMS Ethics Committee on 12/02/18.

Box 1. Stakeholders in focus group

- ✓ Medical students
- ✓ Medical educators
- ✓ Science communicators
- ✓ Communication specialist

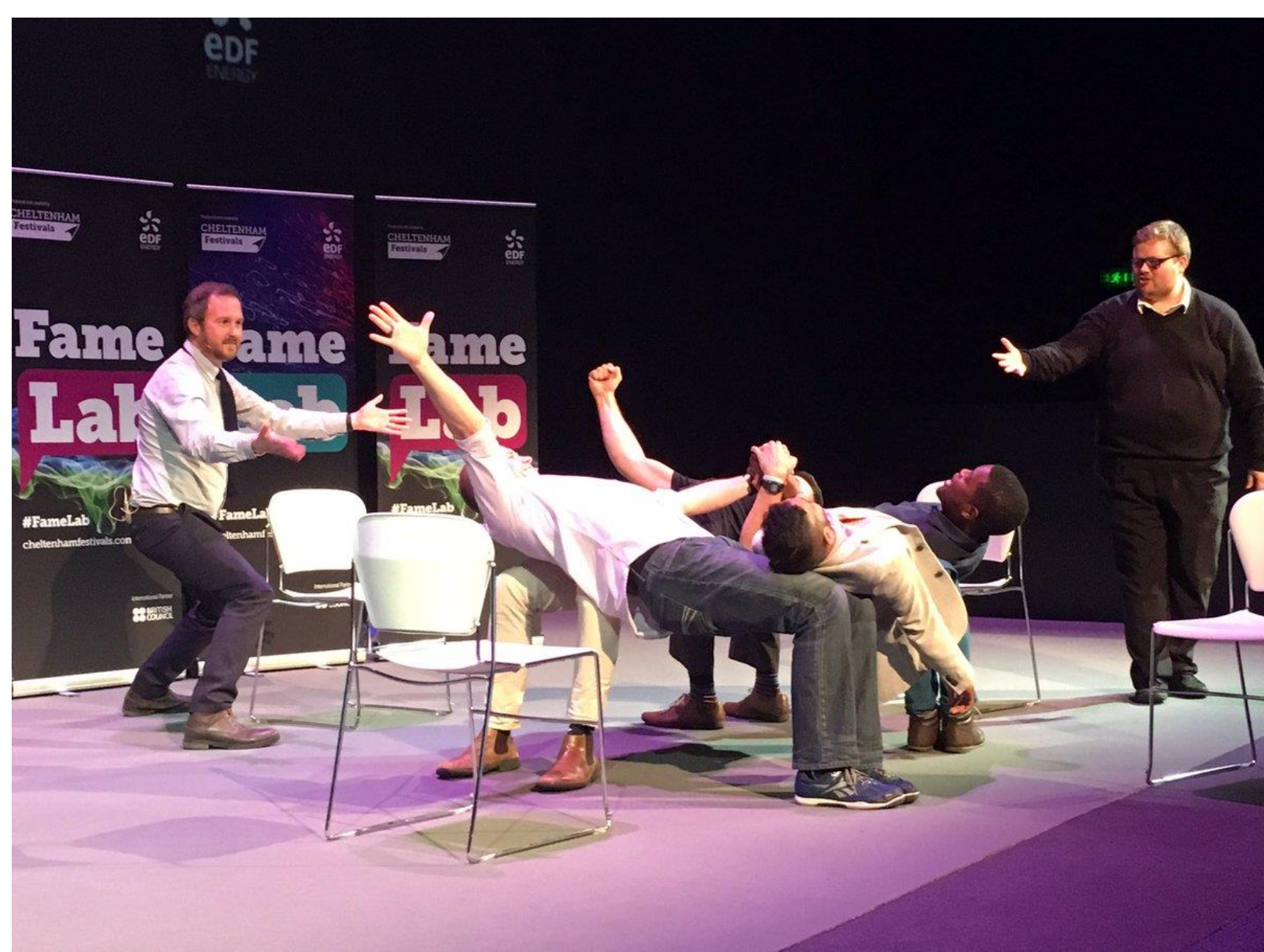


Figure 1. Fame Lab competition in full flow

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

An SSIP in Science Communication (table 1) will be a unique offering to UK medical students.

Benefits of participation:

- Improve clinical communication skills in ‘information giving’ in a clear jargon-free way
- Develop transferrable skills, i.e. teaching others
- Boost confidence in public speaking and writing
- Motivate science learning
- Explore issues important to the public and society

Cross-institutional support obtained and local ventures to support learning identified, i.e. Hull Open Campus, Beverley Science Café, Fame Lab (figure 1)

Table 1. Phase 1 SSIP Science Communication

Affiliation	Institute for Clinical and Applied Health Research (ICAHR), 15 students per term
Assessment	Term 1 Written work Term 2 Oral presentation
Provisional learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicate a complex medical scientific principle and its relevance to society to non-specialist audience• Reflect on strengths and weaknesses in performing science communication• Demonstrate knowledge of relevant communication models and apply them
Developed from focus group data and transferrable MSc outcomes	
Maps to GMC Outcomes for graduates ^[2]	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicate effectively with patients and colleagues (doctor as practitioner)• Reflect, learn, and teach others (doctor as professional)• Apply social science principles, method, and knowledge to medical practice (doctor as scholar/scientist)

CONCLUSION

This new course will improve communication skills in the public and patient domains. The impact of the course will be evaluated during the year of implementation (2018/2019).

This course is the first SSIP designed by a medical student. We hope the introduction of this course will encourage students to propose and design SSIPs they feel could benefit their peers.

References

1. Thomas PA, Kern DE, Hughes MT et al. Curriculum Development for Medical Education – A Six-Step Approach. Third Edition. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2016
2. General Medical Council Outcomes for Graduates (Tomorrow’s doctors). July 2015

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Further information: If you would like further information about the course, please contact Alexandra.Abel@hyms.ac.uk