

“Meet the Scientists”: A Public Engagement Initiative

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Introduction

- EULAR Advocacy highlights public engagement as a key priority.
- The National Institute for Health Research defines public engagement as “where information and knowledge about research is provided and disseminated”.
- “Meet the Scientists” is an event run by University of Liverpool at a local museum, to educate and engage children and adults on medical research (Figure 1).
- It is an opportunity for scientists to directly interact with the public, raising awareness of their work and conditions including arthritis.

Aim

- To educate children and adults on hand anatomy and arthritis through craft activities.
- Through this, enable discussions about research and clinical work in inflammatory arthritis.

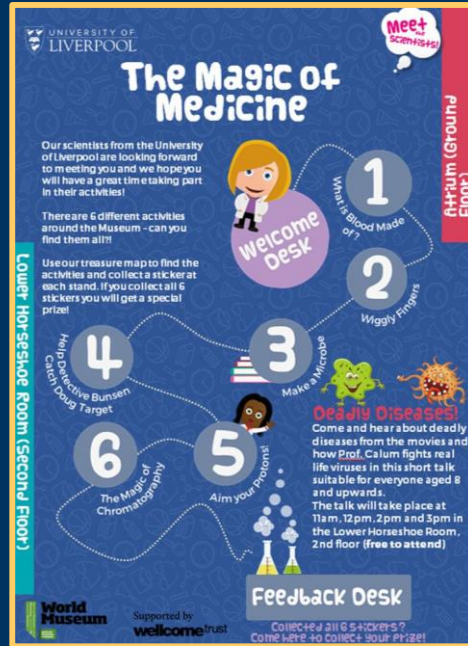


Fig. 1: An example of the “Meet the Scientists” programme. Image courtesy of University of Liverpool, Health and Life Sciences Public Engagement.



Fig. 2: An example of a craft activity to demonstrate anatomy of bones and joints; also a useful tool to teach both children and adults about arthritis.



Methods

- Children created moveable hand using cardboard, string and straws (Figure 2).
- Participants and accompanying adults learned about hand anatomy and joints.
- Following this, they engaged with an academic rheumatologist (myself) on joint pathology, types of arthritis and local research being done in this field, including how to participate in research.

Outcome

- Before COVID-19, these events attracted ~800 visitors (events yet to be restarted).
- For many, this was their first exposure to a scientific event or exhibition.
- Children and adults alike were keen to learn about arthritis research, and share their own/family experiences of arthritis.

Conclusion

- Public engagement is vital to increase awareness and participation in research.
- Craft activities are effective in engaging children in scientific and medical research.

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