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Sensory Science Report

"Sensory Science" was a unique event, training early career researchers in the art of the public communication of pathology, and creating a multi-sensory exhibit accessible to the blind and low vision community.

Sensory Science built on the work of Dr Erica Tandori, a low vision artist, based in the Rossjohn laboratory at Monash University, Australia. Dr Tandori was diagnosed with Stargardt's Disease, a juvenile form of macular dystrophy, at the age of 23, and trained up in creative arts and scientific communication. Dr Tandori saw the need for science communication to reach out to the blind and low vision community, and the power of multi-sensory approaches to enhance communication to all.

The Cambridge event was coordinated by Prof Adrian Liston, at the University of Cambridge. Four teams of scientists working at the Department of Pathology paired up with local artists from Anglia Ruskin University and were mentored to create multi-sensory art that communicates their science in the fields of neuroimmunology, intracellular bacteria, cervical cancer and coeliac disease. The art works were created to be accessible to the blind and low vision community, but multisensory communication was used to enhance the message to the broader community.

The event was supported by the Biochemical Society, the British Society for Immunology, St Catharine's College, and the John Lucas Walker Fund.

An image package from the event is attached to this report

Sensory Science Evaluation

Training

24 early career researchers and 4 artists took part in the event. The experience involved:

- Interdisciplinary working groups combining the experience scientists and artists
- Multiple mentoring sessions in converting scientific messages into art works, and in making these art works accessible to the blind and low vision community (Dr Erica Tandori, Dr Stuart Favilla, Dr Julia Johnson)
- Training and experience in appropriate interactions with the blind and low vision community (Dr Erica Tandori)
- Training and feedback in public presentation of science (Dr Erica Tandori, Dr Stuart Favilla, Prof Adrian Liston)
- Training and experience in media skills (Prof Adrian Liston)

Representative feedback from participants:

“Thank you so much for the opportunity to take part in this project; it was a truly special experience for me and a great way to practice science communication!”

“It was such an inspiration to be part of the project.”

Event turnout and response

149 pre-booked visits were registered, with additional walk-in visitors uncounted. The feedback counter registered 100 responses from the event:



0

0

100

Representative feedback from visitors, based on qualitative interviews performed by Dr Julia Johnson during the event and spontaneous feedback after the event:

“He was overwhelmed with the amount of effort that people put in creating this show, he has never experienced anything like this before and is still talking about it.”

“For me it was the first time that I’ve seen all these concepts I learn in school and all these sort of 2D A4 diagrams really come to life and I felt it in 3D like and like these super-cool really large models and 3D diagrams and I’ve seen the concepts that I that I’ve spent countless lessons learning about and revising and talking about in text and 2D really come to life... for me it’s really cool to have all these different 3D models and sort of diagrams that can come out from the page a lot so I found that really really exciting”

Wider visibility

17 charities and community groups were directly contacted for distribution of event information to the blind and low vision communities:

- CamSight
- RNIB
- VICTA
- Look UK
- RSBC
- Sensory Support Cambridgeshire County Council
- Vision Foundation
- The Partially Sighted Society
- NFBUK
- RNC
- Suffolk Sight
- Essex Sight
- Vision Norfolk
- Huntingdonshire Society for the Blind
- Peterborough Association for the Blind
- Isle of Ely Society for the Blind
- Peterborough Sight

The event was also incorporated into the Cambridge Festival, and directly advertised via the Cambridge Festival Team.

The project coordinator also directly advertised on social media, from example:

<https://twitter.com/LabListon/status/1764307583140069692#>

<https://twitter.com/LabListon/status/1769695207212101887>

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/adrian-liston-0157a983_sensory-science-activity-7170078385623281664--zKb

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7175821045264699392/>

The community reach via the NGO/community group and Cambridge Festival approaches cannot be directly quantified. The combined views/impressions from the four social media posts above is 17,325 individuals.

In addition, a film crew from BBC Look East visited the exhibit, and spent four hours interviewing various team members and guests. The resulting segment on the nightly news had an estimated viewership of 500,000:

<https://youtu.be/7swLWvqf6ck>

An accompanying article was also published by BBC News:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-68598912>

Follow-on impact

Several requests have already come in for the team to present the exhibits at new science communication events, and were incorporated into the Family Day event at the Department of Pathology.

Two pieces, one on cervical cancer and one on celiac disease, have now been incorporated into the medical student laboratories at the University of Cambridge, to aid medical teaching.

Six scientific articles have been commissioned on the event, four articles commissioned by Immunology & Cell Biology, from the early career researchers involved, and two articles by Nature Reviews Immunology, from the coordinators/mentors of the event.



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