

Eyes on Diabetes: Research and Innovation
17 November 2016
Evaluation Report for The Biochemical Society



Image credit: Christopher Wood

On Friday 17 November 2016 we hosted 'Eyes on Diabetes: Research and Innovation' at the Oxford Centre for Diabetes, Endocrinology and Metabolism (OCDEM). This public event was part of a week of activities in Oxford framed around World Diabetes Day (13 November). The open afternoon was a huge success, with around 200 visitors and a lot of positive feedback.

Many research groups across the research Centre took part in the event, bringing a real buzz of excitement. In addition to stalls on metabolism and genetics in type 2 diabetes, we had activities about type 1 diabetes, tours of our islet transplantation facility and activities about insulin signalling, amongst others. Prof. Fredrik Karpe, Head of OCDEM, also gave a public lecture as part of the afternoon, focusing on obesity, metabolism and different types of fat.

The event received funding from the Biochemical Society, the British Society for Immunology and the Oxford Biomedical Research Centre. Astra Zeneca provided funding for catering. In addition, we had displays from Diabetes UK, Junior Diabetes Research Foundation and Novo Nordisk.

Besides our open afternoon, we worked with Magdalen College, Oxford, to light their iconic tower blue, to mark World Diabetes Day. This attracted a lot of media attention ahead of our event on the 17 November, helping to attract visitors and raise awareness of diabetes research. As our research Centre is integrated into Oxford University Hospitals, we also worked closely with the diabetes nursing team who were launching a new patient service to coincide with the week. They hosted stalls at various hospitals in the trust, helping to raise awareness and boosting advertising for our event.

You can view a snapshot of the day in [this video](#).



Nursing team launching new diabetes patient service. Image credit: Christopher Wood



T-shirts to encourage questions. Image Credit: Christopher Wood



Learning about the pancreas. Image Credit: Christopher Wood



DNA extraction from strawberries. Image Credit: Christopher Wood



Discussing non-alcoholic fatty liver disease. Image Credit: Christopher Wood

Did we achieve our aims?

We had four key aims for the event:

Aim 1: Provide the general public with an insight into where metabolism goes wrong in diabetes and how breakthroughs in research are providing new understanding about how disease occurs and with it new ways of treating disease

Aim 2: To encourage school children interested in science to come to interact with scientists and learn more about what a career in science is really like

Aim 3: To highlight that members of the public can get involved in research

Aim 4: Give scientists and clinicians within OCDEM the opportunity to work together to engage with the public and learn how to share their enthusiasm and knowledge for diabetes outside of traditional scientific meetings and publications

In order to evaluate whether we met our aims, we used a questionnaire of visitors. We had overwhelmingly positive feedback - 97% (32/33) found the event interesting and 97% found the information easy or relatively easy to understand. 100% of those who completed the feedback form would recommend the event to friends and family.

Aim 1:

We had an objective to reach a wide audience with our research. The majority of our visitors had diabetes, many of whom will be patients at our Centre. However, 30% of visitors did not have diabetes, suggesting that we reached new audiences with the work of OCDEM. 36% of our visitors did not know that research took place in OCDEM until the event.

41% of our visitors heard about the event on TV, through the publicity we raised by lighting Magdalen College Tower blue, again suggesting that we reached new audiences with our event.

From our feedback forms we know that people enjoyed the hands-on activities and the opportunity to talk to researchers one to one. Some feedback in response to the question, 'What did you enjoy most about the event?', included:

“What sugars/calories are in food”

“Being able to talk to experts on diabetes”

“Everything”

“Range of stalls, amount of information, friendliness of personnel involved, atmosphere”

“Talking to people and support”

In response to the question, 'What did you find most surprising about the event?', feedback included:

“The amount of research going on”

“The range of research undertaken”

“Amount of sugar and calories in different foods and drinks”

“How encouraging everyone was”

This snapshot of feedback, along with observations on the day, illustrate that people were engaging with the stands and that we raised awareness of diabetes research. The activity to guess the sugar in different food and drinks really struck a chord with people and we hope that people go on to use this information to inform dietary choices in the future. We are looking into evaluation methods for future events to investigate whether public engagement events like this can influence behaviour.

Aim 2: To encourage school children interested in science to come to interact with scientists and learn more about what a career in science is really like

The majority of our visitors were over the age of 65, although we did have some school aged visitors. To provide information on different research career paths available we set up a display stand containing “Career Stories” from people working in different areas in the research Centre, as well as “A Day in the Life” display of two of our scientists, to inspire young people to contemplate a biomedical career. We also printed booklets from the Biochemical Society about research careers (printed 10 booklets and all were taken). Volunteers were briefed to engage students with careers in science and we received some lovely feedback to this end:

“Everyone was very helpful especially by encouraging my daughter to take an interest in a science career”

For future events we will look at how we can better work with local schools to increase attendance from these groups.

Aim 3: To highlight that members of the public can get involved in research

Our biobank was recruiting people to take part and had a sign-up sheet for people to register their interest. From our feedback forms, we also know that people enjoyed learning about opportunities:

“Having questions and concerns answered leaving with a lot of info to read and signed up for education research studies”

Aim 4: Give scientists and clinicians within OCDEM the opportunity to work together to engage with the public and learn how to share their enthusiasm and knowledge for diabetes outside of traditional scientific meetings and publications

The day was a real team effort, with over 30 researchers taking part for the afternoon. The event provided a valuable opportunity for scientists within the Centre to take a step back from the everyday complexities of the laboratory and devise new and exciting ways to present their research that were accessible to the visitors. Those taking part in the event commented on the level of genuine interest shown by visitors to understand what they do and why. It was particularly rewarding to be able to engage with the public and raise awareness of some of the cutting-edge science going on within the Centre.

Media Coverage

Print and online

- Oxford Mail ([online](#)) with focus on Magdalen Tower, featuring interview with Prof. Katharine Owen
- Oxford Mail ([online](#)) with focus on case study, Peter Smith and quote from Dr Garry Tan
- Oxford Mail (print on 14/11/16 and 16/11/16)
- Oxford BRC ([online](#))
- Oxford University Hospitals ([online](#))

Radio

BBC Oxford Dr Garry Tan was interviewed on BBC Oxford on 14 November (link expired)

TV

BBC South Today 14/11/2016 Dr Gary Tan (pre-record) and Dr Rea Rustam (live) were interviewed alongside a case study to discuss diabetes research and care (link expired). This featured on the 6.30pm news and was included in the 10pm news bulletin.

That's Oxfordshire 21/11/2016 Dr Alastair Lumb featured:

Part 1 [Current Affairs: Niki Breslin with Joe Coyle & Dr Alistair Lumb 21/11/16 Part 1 That's Oxfordshire](#)

Part 2 [Current Affairs: Niki Breslin with Joe Coyle & Dr Alistair Lumb 21/11/16 Part 2 That's Oxfordshire](#)

Social Media

There was a lot of interest on social media about the day. Analysis of the @RDMOxford account indicates that:

Tweets in the month leading up to 18 November and on the day itself led to 22,240 'impressions'.

395 people clicked through from a tweet to details about the event.

The event was also promoted online by OUH, Oxford BRC, the Medical Sciences Division, the University of Oxford and Oxford Sparks.

Next steps

The event was a real success and we are now looking into ways we can take 'OCDEM on wheels' to ensure that we are reaching the widest possible audiences – not just those who select to come to our venue. We are also looking into evaluation methods to better understand whether events such as these can influence behaviour of visitors around lifestyle choices and to get involved in research in future.