Research blog guidelines

This document provides guidelines and tips on writing a blog for the [National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Manchester Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) website](#). The aim of the blog is to provide relevant, useful information to our website's audience. By doing so, we aim to engage our website community in the work we do and the impact it has.

Objective

The objective of this research blog is in line with the NIHR Manchester Biomedical Research Centre's vision of driving health improvements and lasting change for all through creative, inclusive, and proactive research that identifies and bridges gaps between new discoveries and individualised care.

Audiences

The blog will have a number of key audiences, including:

- Life sciences industry
- Academic and clinical research delivery and operational staff
- Public and patients
- Colleagues from partner Trusts and other organisations
- Government departments (NIHR, Department of Health and Social Care)
- Healthcare charities

As our website is accessed by a variety of people, please consider your audience when drafting a blog. We want our website to be accessible to as many people as possible so please try and use lay language and descriptions where possible.

Examples of previous BRC blogs include:

- [Why alopecia research matters](#)
- [Hearing loss and dementia – correlation not cause](#)
- [From Manchester to Toronto – Improving lupus 'brain fog'](#)
- [Public involvement and engagement in the COVID-19 crisis](#)

Content objectives

We will publish content that covers all aspect of research from governance to patient stories, and research careers to rapid translation of findings, with the ultimate aim of bringing the story of our research to a wider audience.

Content should be:

- Unique
- Engaging
- Relatable

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Word count

To keep the audience engaged please aim to write no more than 800 words.

Content pointers

Although our blog posts will be an opportunity for different staff across Manchester BRC to pen posts, we want to maintain a consistent tone of voice.

This is the same writing style that is used throughout our website, which enables us to develop a strong brand for our research and work.

Referring to the NIHR Manchester Biomedical Research Centre:
"NIHR" and "Manchester BRC" can be abbreviated in text, however, any abbreviations should first have been defined and the abbreviation given in brackets.

Key message up front:
We want to get the reader hooked. Use the first paragraph of your blog to get across the key message of post.

Consider starting your blog with a question:
This engages the audience right away, and helps you to stay on track and write short, focused content. You could also end the blog with a question, add a link to the Manchester BRC Twitter account ([@ManchesterBRC](#)) and ask readers to engage via Twitter.

To the point:
Use active verbs to encourage connections, empathy and dialogue. Avoid jargon terms and unnecessary detail and try to ensure your content is concise and straightforward. Please take care when using acronyms or abbreviations – do not assume the reader will know what they stand for. Spell out the references in full in the first instance and avoid over-using them.

Be specific:
Include facts and figures and explain the benefits. You've had your research published in a journal, but what do the findings mean to patients? How will it improve healthcare? Or you've finished a research fellowship, what have you learnt or accomplished? How would you sum it up?

What's next / what's the call to action:
The backbone of medical research is all about innovation, supported by a drive to deliver continuous improvement in healthcare. Where possible, you should always share your future plans and next steps. Signpost to where people can get involved or take part in research.

Formatting

Formatting is important when writing a blog, as people read website content differently to printed documents. The following points should be considered:

- Use headings and subheadings to break up text. This helps a reader scan through content easily.

- Use sentence case for headings and subheadings.

- Include bullet points of key points. The reader's eye will be drawn to lists when scanning content.

- Keep sentences short (25 words or less).

- Make paragraphs shorter than you would with any other writing piece. This provides more white space on the screen, which is good for the eyes of your readers.

Accessibility

Our blog posts should be as accessible and inclusive as possible.

Making website content accessible goes beyond just the words on the page. It also includes things like images, videos, charts, tables or banners, and even the links and buttons people use to take action on the page.

- If you are including charts, graphics and diagrams in your blog, provide written explanations of the information they contain. This will be used for alt text, which is a short, written description that helps explain images or other visual components to users of assistive technologies, like screen readers.

- Use self-explanatory link text which tells the reader where they're going and why, avoiding 'click here' or 'read more'. The reader should be able to understand any links without the context of surrounding content, such as the rest of the sentence in which the link appears. (Good example: [Read the blog about alopecia by Dr Matthew Harries](#) for more information on this type of research.)

Remember that good blog content **educates, engages, and entertains** readers.