**Information Sheet for Academic Authors**

**Outline protocol**

The aim of this study (funded by the ESRC transformative scheme) is to run a randomised controlled trial to see whether and how wording of press releases influences news coverage for health-related research. The study is targeting only press releases based on peer-reviewed research of relevance to human health. Press officers and academics will write press releases, in the usual way, until the press release is ready for final approval by the academics and interested partners (i.e. collaborators and funding bodies). At this stage, the eligible press releases will be sent to the InSciOut team and randomly assigned to have suggested modifications or not. The suggested modifications will be sent back by email to the press office within pre-agreed timelines. Suggested modifications will depend on the type of study as described in the journal article itself. The press office and academic retain final say on all press release text as usual.

**Press Office**

**InSciOut team**

Press release written until ready for final sign-off as usual

Press release allocated to condition and suggested changes made

Press release sent to academic for final approval

Press release issued

News uptake monitored

Press release submitted to InSciOut team

**Frequently asked questions**

**What can be gained from the trial?**

This trial will be the first of its kind, investigating the causal relationship between wording of the press release and news coverage. We will end up with a rich database that can inform evidence-based practice. As well as looking at how wording affects accurate news coverage, we can also investigate how other factors of interest affect news uptake e.g. day of release, embargo period. There may also be benefit for the sector working together to improve practice, if improvement is possible (or else we'll produce evidence that practice is already optimal).

**What are the risks of the trial?**

Although our previous research found no association between subtle exaggerations and news uptake, there is always the possibility that the changes we suggest could reduce news uptake. We will examine evidence for this possibility as we go; if evidence builds that a condition is harmful to uptake (according to criteria pre-agreed with the press officers), we will stop using it.

**What will be the suggested changes to the press release?**

The suggested changes will be based on the associated journal article and will be small changes to the wording and phrasing. For the integrity of the trial is it important that academic authors remain blind to the experimental conditions, however, academics and press officers will always have final approval for the press release. Suggested changes will be presented as ‘tracked changes’ and can easily be accepted or rejected.

**How long is the trial for and how big will it be?**

The trial will run for approximately 12 months. We are aiming for 500-1000 press releases across many press offices. The greater the number of press releases, the more powerful will be the trial.