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BS, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, June 2021
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Science Communication for Our Times

Dr. Sandhya Koushika, PhD
Associate Professor, Department of Biological Sciences, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research

Dr. Kunal Gupta, PhD, MS
Outreach Manager, ACS Membership, American Chemical Society

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Audience Survey Question

**Question?**

- Answer 1
- Answer 2
- Answer 3
- Answer 4
- Other (Let us more in the questions window)

* If your answer differs greatly from the choices above tell us in the chat!
Science Communication for Our Times

What is science communication

• Informing & sharing

• Education

• Outreach: various mediums

• For the community: scholarly publications, archives, talks
Why do we need science communication

- Professional scientists
- Science funding
- Policy
- Mis & dis information
- For the public

Professional science communication

- Writing and presenting
- Taught by mentorship during training period
- Emphasis on accuracy
- Many available resources for skill building
- Comfort with uncertainty & the messy frontier
Science communication important for complex scientific problems

• Inter-disciplinary collaborations needs good ‘jargon-free’ communication

• Ignite curiosity about the problem

• What is the problem, why does it matter

Communicating science to a general audience

• It is a service but often one-sided

• Simplifying should not mean dumbing down

• It is not advertisement for papers/institutions

• Not entertainment

• Be scientific about science communication
Communicating science to a general audience is complex

• Professional scientists rarely have any training

• Journalists multi-task as science communicators

• Multiple media outlets with different needs

• Clarity of thought is essential

• Good word choice is necessary

If scientists do not tell their stories others will
Critical thinking and the scientific method

• Hypotheses based on prior knowledge
• Observe, measure, analyse
• Replicate
• Everyone thinks critically

Public engagement with science

• The scientific process
• Long term engagement with the public
• Developing an ecosystem
• Improve public awareness of science
Audience matters

- Respect the audience
- Respect ignorance
- Ignite curiosity
- Anticipate questions
- Know your & others biases & assumptions
- LISTEN

Decision making in a complex world benefits from the scientific method

- Question
- Information (sources)
- Assumptions
- Logically sound interpretations
- Open to other points of view
Current problems with science communication

- Portrayal of scientists in the media
- Scientific literacy of the communicator
- Communicating at the messy frontier
- Balanced reporting is not shopping for alternative POV

What does science communication in India need

- Consistent support
- Anchoring to scientific institutions
- Trained people especially in many languages
- Collaboration with non-scientists
- Jobs
Science communication is as important as science itself
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