Science Journalism
Which of these story is worth telling?

◆ And why?

◆ Current topics on Eurekalert

How about this one?

◆ http://jco.ascopubs.org/cgi/content/abstract/JCO.2009.24.2495v1
Population-Based Study of the Risk of Second Primary Contralateral Breast Cancer Associated With Carrying a Mutation in BRCA1 or BRCA2


Purpose: Women with breast cancer diagnosed early in life comprise a substantial portion of those tested for BRCA1/BRCA2 mutations; however, little information is available on the subsequent risks of contralateral breast cancer in mutation carriers. This study assessed the risk of subsequent contralateral breast cancer associated with carrying a BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutation.

Patients and Methods: In this nested case-control study, patients with contralateral breast cancer diagnosed 1 year or more after a first primary breast cancer (n = 705) and controls with unilateral breast cancer (n = 1,398) were ascertained from an underlying population-based cohort of 52,536 women diagnosed with a first invasive breast cancer before age 55 years. Interviews and medical record reviews were used to collect risk factor and treatment histories. All women were tested for BRCA1/BRCA2 mutations. Relative (rate ratios) and absolute (5- and 10-year cumulative) risks of developing contralateral breast cancer following a first invasive breast cancer were computed.

Results: Compared with noncarriers, BRCA1 and BRCA2 mutation carriers had 4.5-fold (95% CI, 2.8- to 7.1-fold) and 3.4-fold (95% CI, 2.0- to 5.8-fold) increased risks of contralateral breast cancer, respectively. The relative risk of contralateral breast cancer for BRCA1 mutation carriers increased as age of first diagnosis decreased. Age-specific cumulative risks are provided for clinical guidance.

Conclusion: The risks of subsequent contralateral breast cancer are substantial for women who carry a BRCA1/BRCA2 mutation. These findings have important clinical relevance regarding the assessment of BRCA1/BRCA2 status in patients with breast cancer and the counseling and clinical management of patients found to carry a mutation.

Your turn

◆ Use the handout to identify the news and select the first five sentences of your story.
Your turn

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◆ Here’s how the press release read:
  

◆ And here’s one story that ran:
  

What is science journalism?

◆ www.nytimes.com
◆ http://news.yahoo.com/
◆ “Science” on Google News

Are press-releases “journalism”?

◆ www.sciencedaily.com
◆ www.eurekalert.org
What is science journalism?

- News about new discoveries, findings, events
- Background on the news
- Features about ongoing issues
- “How-to,” practical stories
- Human interest stories

Basic news (practice — theory)

- Who? ——— Prominence
- What? ——— Conflict, human interest
- Where? ——— Proximity
- When? ——— Timeliness
- Why? ——— Significance, impact, importance
- How?
Basic news definition (theory)

- Timeliness
- Importance/impact/significance
- Proximity
  - Physical
  - Psychological
- Prominence (celebrity)
- Conflict

Now, can you do it with your work?

- Take the text you prepared in advance
- Write the lede for
  - Cornell Daily Sun
  - New York Times
  - Yahoo! News
Is this science journalism?

◆ Talk show example

Journalism 101 (and +, ++):
Quick guide for science writers

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The writing process

- Identify the audience
- Identify the news
- Gather information
- Organize information
- Write the story
- Revise

"Do I need to remind you that I have a huge Internet following?"
**Basic ledes**

- Basic 5W&H/pyramid/summary
- Multiple Element
- Story-telling
  - Narrative
  - Scene-setting
  - Anecdote

**Unusual ledes**

- Contrast
- Direct Address
- Quote
- Punch
- None of the above
  - Implications
  - Cutesy
  - Other
Bad ledes

◆ Buried lede

Let’s write some ledes

◆ Go to EurekAlert!
◆ Let’s pick some ledes to write and share
Basic types of stories

- News
- News feature
- Color
- Profile
- Human interest
- Seasonal
- How-to-do-it
- Information/education
- Backgrounders

Journalism 101+: Features

- Have a theme
- Think about structure
- Deep information
- Writing style
Theme

- More than “topic”
- Point of view
- Argument
- Goal

Structure

- Engaging lede
- Clear theme (“nut” graph)
- Story chunks
- Conclusion
Depth of information

- Plan search (hunt for theme)
- Documents
- Interviews
- Observations

Interviewing

- Open-ended vs. close-ended questions
- Funnel vs. inverted funnel interviews
- Build rapport vs. hit-’em-hard
Writing

- Word choice
- Rhythm
- Transitions
- Detail/show-don’t-tell

Journalism 101+: Quotations

- Why use quotations?
  - Authority/credibility
  - Perspective
  - Color
When using quotes . . .

◆ Accuracy!
  – Get the words right
  – Get the person right
◆ Have something to say
◆ Mechanics
  – Place attribution at *end* of sentence or quote
  – Use “said”
  – Punctuate properly