

Writing an excellent lay summary

A good lay summary is clear and accessible to people who don't have a scientific background. You should explain your research in clear, plain English, offer context and explain the relevance to people affected by MS.

Your lay summary is important because it'll be reviewed by a number of our Research Network members. They're not asked to comment on the quality of science. But they'll comment and score your project based on:

- it's relevance to people affected by MS and the potential impact it may have
- how well you've involved people with MS in the planning and design of your study
- if people with MS will be participants, how well you've taken into account their needs, and how feasible the study is for them
- the clarity and quality of your writing

Please note: lay reviewers will complete their review based on your lay summary and your public involvement plan only. You should make sure these sections have enough information for them to understand the purpose and methods of your project.

Tips on language and layout

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Try to explain your research in 25 words, and then use this as your first sentence• Consider including a glossary of key terms• Use bullet points and headings to break up long blocks of text• Use simple diagrams and non-scientific analogies to explain complex concepts• Ask a non-scientist to review your summary before you submit• Speak directly to your reader	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use overly complicated or uncommon words• Use jargon, abbreviations, acronyms or technical terms without explanation• Forget to check spelling and grammar• Use overly long sentences (25 words or less is a good guide)• Introduce new ideas late in the text

Your language should be person-centred rather than focusing on the circumstance, symptom or disability. For example, 'people with MS' is preferable to 'MS sufferers'. A person 'has MS' rather than 'is a victim of MS'.

Completing the lay summary and public involvement sections of your application form

The lay summary (section 5) and public involvement (section 6) sections of the application form are broken up into several questions. You must answer all these questions clearly. This will help the lay reviewers understand your project.

The lay summary

What is the aim of the project? How will it benefit people affected by MS?

You should set out the aims of the project, and focus on why they are important and relevant to people affected by MS. Be as specific as you can about the potential benefits of your work. What will we know at the end of your project that we don't know now?

What is the reason for this study?

Here you should set out the rationale for the project. What do we know from past research? How is your project original?

How will this project be carried out?

You should describe the methods that you will use, and explain why you have chosen them. If people with MS will be participants, you must explain how you will recruit them, and what will be asked of them (and any control group).

Where could your research findings lead next?

You should briefly explain where your research project could lead once complete. For example, how will it advance our understanding of MS? Will there be implications for clinical practice? Would you be likely to apply for a larger study? This should help people affected by MS to understand the possible impact of your research and how this project fits in the wider picture.

How will you share your results?

You should explain how you plan to share your findings with the MS community, and your public engagement activities.

Patient and public involvement (PPI)

In section 6 of the application form, you'll need to discuss patient and public involvement (PPI) in your project.

Involvement in research is when people with personal experience of health conditions work in active partnership with researchers. Involvement isn't the same as recruiting participants to your study or sharing information with people through public engagement events. Involvement is about working in partnership with people affected by MS to shape, design and oversee a project.

You'll need to explain how people affected by MS have been involved in the planning of the project so far, and how you intend to involve them throughout the project.

We can help you with PPI. There is guidance in section 2 of our Applicant Guidance document. If you would like further support, please contact researchnetwork@mssociety.org.uk

Helpful resources

- INVOLVE 'Make it Clear' campaign - <http://www.invo.org.uk/makeitclear/>
- Plain English campaign - <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/free-guides.html>
- Access to Understanding 'Writing about biomedical and health research in plain English' - http://www.access2understanding.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Access-to-Understanding-writing-guidance_v1.pdf

We're the MS Society.

Our community is here for you through the highs, lows and everything in between.

We understand what life's like with MS.

Together, we are strong enough to stop MS.

mssociety.org.uk



Contact us

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Multiple Sclerosis Society.
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 **Let's stop MS together**