

ECR blog competition brief



We're inviting PhD students and post-docs to enter our annual ECR blog competition. Tell us why your research matters to someone affected by MS in any way you choose.

Submit your entry by 12 noon on Friday 7 February 2025.

The winner's blog will be published in our quarterly MS Matters magazine. We'll feature the runners up on our website. Everyone who enters will get personalised feedback on their writing from our Research Communications team.

In this briefing document we outline:

- Who can enter the competition
- What we're looking for
- How to write in the style of an MS Matters article
- How blogs will be judged, including scoring criteria

Who can enter?

You can enter if you're:

- A PhD student or postdoctoral researcher funded by the MS Society
- An undergraduate, Masters or PhD student, or postdoctoral researcher working in MS research in the UK, regardless of your source of funding

MS Matters is read mainly by people affected by MS in the UK. So we're looking to showcase UK-based ECRs working in MS research through this competition.

If you've entered our blog competition before, you can submit another entry. But,

- You must have changed your blog based on the feedback you were given by our Research Communications team.
- If you were one of our shortlisted entries, you'll need to write your blog on a different topic.

You can only submit one entry for the competition, even if you're working on multiple research projects.

What are we looking for?

You can create your own title, but your blog should answer the question “Why does my research matter to someone affected by MS?”

Your blog should:

- be 500-600 words
- explain why this research matters to people affected by MS
- be in the style of MS Matters magazine
- be more than just a lay summary of the project

Please **don't** include any figures or diagrams in your submission.

How do I write in the style of the MS Matters magazine?

Planning

- Choose a main theme or topic. Try to focus on a defined issue.
- Make it personal, as pieces with real-life events resonate best with our community.
- Consider what scientific knowledge or information your readers will have

Style

- Use the active voice and personal pronouns (I, we, you)
- Write as if you're talking to someone. Let your personality come through.
- We follow the plain English guide for accessible writing. This can help people with MS symptoms like optic neuritis and cognitive fog.
- Use short words instead of long words where possible: 'endeavour' > 'try'.
- Use short sentences, of no more than 15-20 words.
- Use short paragraphs, ideally one or two ideas in each paragraph.

[You can read more about our writing style on our website.](#)

Structure and editing

- Think about your opening sentence. What can you say that will grab your reader's attention and get them interested straight away?
- Use subheadings to structure and break up your text.
- Try to read through as if you were one of your readers. Or ask a friend to do it.

How do I submit my entry?

You should [download our blog competition entry template from the ECR Hub](#). And complete all sections of the template. You can email your completed template to ECRNetwork@mssociety.org.uk.

How will my blog be judged?

Our Research Communications team will read all submissions to check their eligibility. They'll look to make sure blogs have been submitted by ECRs and are talking about MS research. They'll also check to make sure they're within the word count.

They'll then shortlist entries based on the following criteria:

- Does the article explain the research in a way that is accessible to a non-scientific reader?
 - Amount of jargon and scientific terms
- Does it explain “Why does my research matter to someone with MS?”
 - Relevance to MS and why someone affected by MS should be interested now
- Does it tell a story and is it well laid out?
 - Engaging and interesting to read, creativity and structure.

To compare between entries, each of these aspects will be scored from 1 – 5, giving an overall score out of 15. The entries with the highest scores will be shortlisted.

The shortlisted blogs will then be read by a group of people affected by MS. They'll choose their favourite to be published in MS Matters. The runners up will be published on our online Research Blog.

If you have any questions about the competition, email our ECR Network Lead on ECRNetwork@mssociety.org.uk.

Good luck!