

Dr Hannah Family

Lecturer, Department of Pharmacy & Pharmacology



The Research

Hannah is one of only two psychologists nationally working full-time in pharmacy research and teaching. She has two areas of research. The first looks at patient safety in a pharmacy context specifically, how the mental pressures that pharmacists are under (their mental workload) might contribute to errors in the preparation and dispensing of medicines. The second explores how pharmacists can help people to engage with healthy behaviours. Across her research, Hannah explores dynamics and tensions between healthcare provision and pharmacies' business models.

The Engagement:

The key publics: Pharmacists, superintendent pharmacists (those owning the business), healthcare commissioners, patients.

The type of engagement: Receiving from these specialist 'publics' views, skills, knowledge and experiences that can be used to shape research and data collection, and to maximise impact.

When Hannah was scoping out her research on the mental workload that community pharmacists face, she looked to gain buy-in from superintendent pharmacists from the outset. This was a tactical move both to secure access to pharmacists for her research and also, to maximise the likelihood that the superintendent pharmacists would be open to, and interested in, her research findings:

"From the beginning of the project, we thought about our stakeholders and how we would get them to buy-in to the project as I think that makes it easier when you come to disseminate your research."

Hannah produced a leaflet for the superintendent pharmacists that highlighted the benefits to them of engaging in her research, namely identifying how current practice for medicine accuracy checking could be made more efficient and safer, and how newly qualified pharmacists could be supported in carrying out this procedure.

When it came to engaging actual pharmacists in her research, Hannah used a unique tool to instigate conversations and interest in her research:

"I'd done a cartoon doodle of a community pharmacist's brain and populated it with what I thought their mental workload looked like. I then ran a competition for pharmacists to complete their own brain with the mental pressures that they thought they were under."

This competition provided a great kick-start to her research, drawing pharmacists in and opening up varied networks from which she could source research participants. The brain maps have since proved a useful promotional tool – recently, an Australian pharmacist saw the maps on Hannah's blog and used them in a seminar at a conference. They have also been used for a CPD course in London.

To promote her research further, Hannah entered the University's **Images of Research** competition in 2012. This annual competition challenges researchers to capture their research in an image and associated 150 word plain English narrative. Hannah's brain map entry won the 'Best Image' category and her involvement in the competition brought other benefits:

"Images of Research gave me the space to talk to other researchers outside of my discipline and to find out about similar research going on in other departments."

The Motivation:

Hannah is motivated to engage in order to ensure the relevance of her research:

"When I came to academia, I really wanted my research to be useful, so it all tends to the applied. If you're going to do such research and want it to be used and useful, you have to tell people about it."

Aside from ensuring the relevance of her research, engagement has helped Hannah develop lots of ideas for future research. And focusing on the potential applications of her research has kept her motivated and satisfied:

"When people engage with my research and think about its applications to them, it makes me feel that I'm doing something worthwhile."

The Professional Development:

Taking part in the likes of the Images of Research competition has raised Hannah's profile across the University:

"Through Images of Research, I ended up having conversations with senior members of my own department and from across the University. It made me think of a quick 'sell' for my research, why it might be of interest to them."

Engagement has also informed her and others' teaching for courses such as pharmacy safety and dispensing:

"We're lucky as researchers within a clinical department that we have many opportunities to use our research to inform practice through teaching provision."

Finally, an engagement role off-campus – as South West Chair of the British Psychological Society – has allowed Hannah to maintain networks and knowledge of the psychological research field and also, to be active in the region through 'Psychology in the Pub' sessions and CPD events.

Top tip:

"Engaging for the first time can be scary but just give it a go! I think Twitter is a really good place to start as it helps you to see what other people are doing. I'd also recommend that every PhD student should have their own blog; it acts as a CV and you'll never know who might stumble across it!"



An example of a brain map produced by a community pharmacist

"Sometimes I feel in academia that you sit in a bit of a bubble; it doesn't feel like real-life sometimes! So it's nice when you branch out and see that what you're doing is of use to the real world."

The Learning:

For her engagement, Hannah has drawn on existing skills and interests. As an aspiring artist, the brain maps idea drew on her creative skills and kept her engaged in her research.

When approaching potential stakeholders, Hannah is careful to think about what's in it for them, about how she might facilitate their engagement despite their busy lives:

"A major barrier for pharmacists in engaging with research is that they just don't have the time. So we used some of our research funding to provide locum cover and travel expenses, freeing up pharmacists to take part."

She has also found that word-of-mouth is an important means to generate engagement in research and so looks to ensure that all those involved have a positive experience in the hope that they then go and tell their friends!

A challenge that Hannah faces as an early career researcher is having the time herself to engage, what with juggling teaching and research loads alongside other competing demands. However, she feels that it's worth making the time and is glad that there's now an expectation from Research Councils for researchers to address engagement through Pathways to Impact statements:

"The fact that Research Councils now ask how you're going to engage in Je-S application forms gives you permission as a researcher to take the time to think through these important issues."