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Working with the media

What is the media?

- The press – newspapers, magazines
- Press agencies – AFP, Reuters, AP
- Broadcast media – TV, radio
- Online

Talking to the media – why?

- Share your results
- Inspire and enthuse

- Raise your profile
- Attract funding

Some basic truths (1)

- The media will talk about science projects.
- We do not control how we are covered.
- We don't have the right to see material before publication.
- It is in our best interest to welcome the media, and to be as open as possible.

Some basic truths (2)

- We can influence how we are covered.
- Science is popular; CERN and the LHC have received extensive and positive global coverage.
- Interest is still growing



**We can't put your science
on the front page if we
don't know about it.**

Talk to a press officer

- CERN Press Office
- University or institute
- Funding agency
- Professional body e.g. Institute of Physics

The role of a press officer

- To pass information to the media
- To respond to media enquiries
- To be as open as possible about our work.
- To maximise coverage

A press office does not control what is published in the media

We like:

- World firsts
- Superlatives - biggest, smallest etc
- Outstanding papers
- New facilities
- Impact stories - practical applications
- Topical research
- Anniversaries
- Weird and wacky

We don't like:

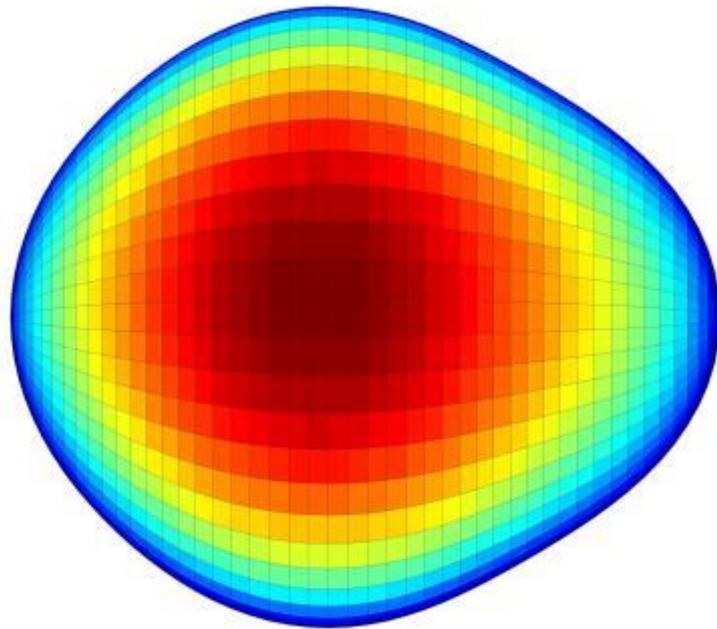
- Impenetrable abstracts
- Being told about a paper the day before it's published
- Lots of jargon and acronyms
- Uncontactable scientists
- Having our work completely re-written

Studies of pear-shaped nuclei using accelerated radioactive beams

Nature: Volume 497, Pages 99–204 09 May 2013

There is strong circumstantial evidence that certain heavy, unstable atomic nuclei are ‘octupole deformed’, that is, distorted into a pear shape. This contrasts with the more prevalent rugby-ball shape of nuclei with reflection-symmetric, quadrupole deformations. The elusive octupole deformed nuclei are of importance for nuclear structure theory, and also in searches for physics beyond the standard model; any measurable electric-dipole moment (a signature of the latter) is expected to be amplified in such nuclei. Here we determine electric octupole transition strengths (a direct measure of octupole correlations) for short-lived isotopes of radon and radium. Coulomb excitation experiments were performed using accelerated beams of heavy, radioactive ions. Our data on ^{220}Rn and ^{224}Ra show clear evidence for stronger octupole deformation in the latter. The results enable discrimination between differing theoretical approaches to octupole correlations, and help to constrain suitable candidates for experimental studies of atomic electric-dipole moments that might reveal extensions to the standard model.

Do you have a good picture?



Images

- “A picture is worth a thousand words”
- Eye-catching - a red patch somewhere
- Interesting images (event displays etc)

- People like looking at other people
- People give scale to a picture

Talking to a journalist

Ideally:

- Interview \Rightarrow article written by journalist \Rightarrow sub editor \Rightarrow headline writer \Rightarrow layout \Rightarrow publication \Rightarrow everyone happy

But:

- Changes are introduced during sub-editing.
- Headlines can be misleading.
- Transition to on-line, or other formats.
- Something else happens in the world

The planned interview

Prepare yourself

- WOW factor
- Three key points about your research:
 - This is the first time anyone has been able to do this (what)
 - We have been able to do it because (how)
 - This new result is important because.... (why should people care?)
- Use analogies that will be widely understood
 - 100 microns = the width of a human hair

The interview

An interview should be a pleasure, not an ordeal.

Some rules:

- You are talking to a lay-audience.
- No jargon - use simple, clear language.
- The media knows what it wants
- You can always say 'no', or ask for clarification.

TV/radio interviews:

- Is it live, 'as live' or being recorded for editing later?
- Ask the journalist what their first question will be – this gives you thinking time
- You can ask for a recorded question be re-done
- Give short, simple answers
- Stick to your key messages
- Don't wave your hands about on TV
- Be yourself – smile (even on the radio!)

The *unplanned* interview

If a journalist contacts you (1):

- Don't panic!
- What do they want to know?
- Are you the best person for them to speak to? If not, tell them.
- What is their deadline?

If a journalist contacts you (2):

- Buy thinking time – say you are in a meeting - can you phone them back?
- Ask them to email you their questions
- **Anything you say to a journalist can appear in print – NEVER speak off the record!**

**If you don't know the answer,
don't pretend that you do!**

**“I'm sorry that is not my area of
expertise.”**



Your press office is there to help you!



www.cern.ch