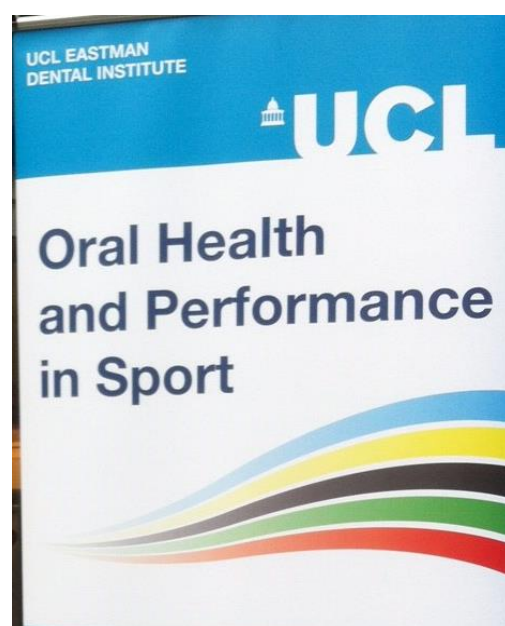


Oral Health and Performance in Sport – Learning from London 2012

Overview and Context

This case study outlines the learning from the design and running of the symposium 'Oral Health and Performance in Sport – Learning from London 2012' which was held at UCL on 4th April 2014. The symposium builds upon research by the UCL Eastman Dental Institute and their public engagement experience and expertise. Public engagement was integrated in the design and running of the symposium, to enhance further the research. 'Oral Health and Performance in Sport – Learning from London 2012' is an example of how public engagement was used to increase the impact of research on oral health and sport on elite athletes, sports and exercise physicians, nutritionist, physiotherapists, coaches and representatives from policy and funding bodies. This case study identifies key findings from the project and makes recommendations for any future projects of this nature.



The project need:

The symposium was originally conceived on the back of interest in a research study run by the UCL Eastman Dental Institute at the London 2012 Olympics. The research revealed substantial oral health problems linked to sport, which a surprising number of athletes reported had affected their performance. The team, led by Professor Ian Needleman, felt that the interest generated at London 2012 highlighted an opportunity to take the field of research further and to a wider audience.

Based on this need, three aims were developed for the symposium:

1. Create a forum to bring together key groups, interested in oral health and sport, who would otherwise not meet;
2. Create an opportunity for people to tell their stories, share their experiences and encourage reactions to these stories;
3. To generate a consensus view of where we are (on this topic) and a plan for future development with buy-in of key stakeholders.

What happened?

- On 4th April 2014, the symposium took place and was attended by 100 people.
- The groups brought together represented: elite athletes (including an Olympic gold medalist and a Premiership rugby player), sports and exercise physicians, scientists, nutritionist, physiotherapists, coaches, oral health researchers, clinical dentists and representatives from policy and funding bodies including the English Institute of Sport and Faculty of Sport and Exercise Medicine.
- The programme comprised of short presentations and time for discussion between speakers and the audience. Speakers included: Dr Glenn Hunter, English Institute of Sport & Dr Ken van Someren, Human Performance Lab, GSK, dentist to GB rowing team, and a Premiership rugby player. The last session focused on debating and agreeing upon a consensus statement.

Facts and Figures

The symposium was attended by:
100 people
10 speakers
15 panellists
3 partners

The project was led by Professor Ian Needleman

2 academic publications produced

The symposium was funded by GSK and the British Dental Journal

Emerging themes from the evaluation

'Oral Health and Performance in Sport – Learning from London 2012' provides an excellent example of how the UCL Eastman Dental Institute have embedded public engagement as part of their research, on sport and oral health, as well as a pathway to increase the research's impact on society. The symposium was grounded in and informed by a UCL research project, which was highlighted in the course of the symposium. In the early stages of event planning it became clear that was value in engaging all groups on this topic – thus an engagement approach was taken in the development of the symposium.

The symposium provided an opportunity to bring together and listen to these diverse ideas and opinions – most of which would not normally meet. The day was programmed and structured to ensure a chance for people to have their say with evaluation guidance from the UCL Public Engagement Unit (PEU). Feedback collected from the attendees was positive, indicating that the team had achieved their initial aims. There was an overwhelming consensus that oral health in sport is an important issue that needs development. There was also a strong agreement from the majority of attendees that the symposium had enabled them to have their say; that they were clear how the outcomes of the symposium were going to be used; and that feedback from the event would be influential to improving oral health in sport.

The project lead felt that public engagement, in the form of engaging a variety of stakeholders made a substantial difference to the success and impact of the symposium and the potential to improve oral health in sport.

Some impacts, to date, include:

- The Faculty of Sport and Exercise Medicine (the body that oversees training of sport and exercise physicians in the UK) have invited the team at UCL Eastman Dental Institute to write a position statement for oral health.
- The consensus statement has been published with a press release by the British Journal of Sports Medicine and UCL media generating substantial media interest
- Negotiated simultaneous joint publication in British Dental Journal for greater engagement between sport and exercise medicine and oral health communities
- There was agreement at the symposium to set up a forum of those with an interest in oral health in sport to facilitate further networking and information exchange.

This project has inspired the team at the UCL Eastman Dental Institute to embed engagement in their ongoing programme on the topic of sport and oral health. The event has created and enhanced networks between UCL staff, practitioners, funders, external agencies others on this topic

Further information about the event is available at:
www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-26885343

Learning from the Process

What worked well?

- the variety and diversity of speakers and contributors meant that different, and sometimes personal stories, could be shared
- the structure and programming of the day to ensure time for discussion
- having a clear outcome, i.e the focus on producing a consensus statement meant that all could contribute to the final draft
- inviting funders and policy bodies to the event. It was striking how the interest and willingness to collaborate of some external organisations was strengthened following attending the event
- concepts and ideas from UCL PEU including evaluation

What could be done differently?

- there were a limited number of sports and exercise physicians who attended the event. This could be due to how the event was publicised or due to a lack of interest in topic
- feedback from attendees revealed that there were some topics we should have covered in more depth such as nutrition

Contact: Professor Ian Needleman,
 UCL Eastman Dental Institute

Email: i.needleman@ucl.ac.uk

