

ARC WM CO-PRODUCTION CASE STUDY

Name of Researcher	Professor Sophie Staniszewska
ARC WM Theme	Research Methodology, Informatics and Rapid Response
Project Name	Research Involvement and Engagement BMC Springer Nature
Case Study Details	The case study demonstrates how this journal, which has a focus of involving and engaging the public, embeds principles and features of co-production in academic publishing.
Further information	Research Involvement and Engagement https://researchinvolvement.biomedcentral.com

WHAT DOES THIS CASE STUDY SHOWCASE?

This case study describes the strengthening of patient, public and community voice in the world of academic publishing, through the implementation of a model of co-production in the development of a new journal, Research Involvement and Engagement (RIE). RIE is a BMC Springer Nature Journal dedicated to the development of the evidence base of patient and public involvement. This case study describes the evolution of RIE during the Collaborations for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRC) and the APPLIED Research Collaboration (ARC) from 2015-2021.

WHAT IS THE PROJECT ABOUT?

Traditional academic publishing focuses on disseminating the results of studies to mostly academic readers. Before 2015, there were relatively few opportunities to publish studies that built the evidence base of public involvement. In response to this need, Sophie Staniszewska submitted a proposal to BMC Springer Nature for a new journal that addressed this gap. Subsequently [Research Involvement and Engagement](#) (RIE) was launched in 2015 as the only academic journal dedicated to developing the evidence base of patient and public involvement and engagement with a co-production model (Stephens & Staniszewska, 2015).

Research Involvement and Engagement is an interdisciplinary health and social care journal, focussing on patient and public involvement and engagement in research at all stages, including its production, dissemination and implementation. We publish empirical papers and analyses of patient and public involvement and public engagement with research in health and social care, opinion pieces and methodology articles. We encourage critical reflection, which enhances our understanding of involvement and engagement.

The ethos and ways of working that underpin *Research Involvement and Engagement* are driven by our commitment to co-production. The journal is online and open-access, to ensure that it is available to patients, to the public and to researchers alike, anywhere in the world. Open-access publishing offers the opportunity for widening access to papers, to a deliberative discussion internationally, helping nurture the partnership between the public and researchers. The journal is co-produced by all key stakeholders, including patients, policymakers, academics and funders. All papers have a plain language abstract to help the reader access key knowledge. *RIE* has a unique governance structure, which includes patients on the editorial board and a patient as one of the two editors in chief. The journal is co-edited by patient advocate Richard Stephens, who is a survivor of two cancers and a heart emergency and has participated in four clinical trials. Our researcher-patient co-production model also applies to the associate editor team. We have developed a pool of 289 international patient peer reviewers. *RIE* has grown from 26,902 article accesses in its first year to over 170,025 in 2020. The journal has achieved 'Patient Included' status and indexing in Scopus.

We have worked with the British Medical Journal to understand the experiences of our patient peer reviewers by conducting a joint survey, which we published (Price, *et al.*, 2018) and then implemented the findings from this survey within the editorial processes (Staniszewska, Stephens, Flemyng, 2018).

HOW DO THE PRINCIPLES OF CO-PRODUCTION FIND EXPRESSION IN THIS PROJECT?

Sharing of power – We have implemented a model of co-production where power is shared in the editorial process by having an academic and a patient co-editor in chief who share key decisions in the publishing process. All papers are sent to four academic and four patient reviewers and authors are expected to respond to all reviews. We have a mandatory requirement for a plain language abstract and encourage patient co-authorship.

Including all perspectives and skills – We value all perspectives and skills, recognising the different but often complementary perspectives academics and patients bring to the publication process.

Respecting and valuing the knowledge of all those working together on the research – RIE is predicated on valuing and respecting the different forms of knowledge that patients and publics bring to the research process. RIE expresses this by placing co-production at the heart of our editorial processes.

Reciprocity – As our core value is co-production, reciprocity forms a key element of our approach. This can take many forms. For example, encouraging and supporting patients to publish viewpoint pieces when they have supported RIE. We have listened to patients experiences of publication and tried to make adjustments to improve the process. Reciprocity in terms of exchange of ideas underpins our ways of working.

Building and maintaining relationships – High quality relationships are at the core of the editorial teams and the relationships we have with our academics and our patient reviewers. Our relationship with our publisher, BMC Springer Nature is vital to our development and their support throughout our journey has been vital to our success.

HOW DO THE FEATURES OF CO-PRODUCTION FIND EXPRESSION IN THIS PROJECT?

Establishing ground rules – We have very clear ground rules for our editorial and publication process that can be found on our journal website. Our ground rules embody our commitment to co-production in the ways we publish. <https://researchinvolvement.biomedcentral.com>

Ongoing dialogue – Ongoing dialogue is a feature of our co-production publishing model because the open peer-review process means everyone can access the peer review in addition to the final published paper. Because we publish a wide range of paper types, we can accommodate different forms of dialogue, including patients publishing on issues of importance to them.

Joint ownership of key decisions - Key decisions about papers at all stages of the publication process are made by the two editors, one an academic and one a patient. This is a unique model in publishing. No other academic journal operates in this way.

A commitment to relationship building – We have an ongoing commitment to build relationships with everyone who contributes to RIE. We recognise that high quality relationships are important in the co-production of the papers in RIE.

Opportunities for personal growth and development – RIE supports authors in the publication process as it recognises that each paper provides an opportunity for personal growth and development.

Flexibility – We maintain a flexible approach to how we work with patient authors and reviewers. Our joint survey with the BMJ has enabled us to identify how we build flexibility and responsiveness into our publishing systems (Price, *et al.*, 2018; Staniszewska, Stephens & Flemyng, 2018).

Continuous reflection – As editors we continuously reflect on our approach to co-production and work closely with the Publisher to enhance our approach to co-production (Stephens & Staniszewska, 2017; Price, *et al.*, 2018; Staniszewska, Stephens & Flemyng, 2018).

Valuing and evaluating the impact of co-producing research – As co-production is the central ethos of RIE, our ambition is to publish papers that build the evidence base to guide co-production practice and maximise the impact it can make.

WHAT HELPED YOU ON YOUR CO-PRODUCTION JOURNEY?

The support of our publisher, BMC Springer Nature has been critical in implementing a co-production model into traditional academic publishing systems for the first time internationally. We recognise the commitment of all individuals who have been involved with the Journal, including authors and reviewers.

WHAT CHALLENGES DID YOU FACE IN YOUR CO-PRODUCTION JOURNEY? HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THESE?

Our key challenge has been trying to adapt pre-existing academic publishing systems to accommodate a co-production model.

WHAT LEARNINGS ARE YOU TAKING FORWARD?

As a journal, RIE is constantly learning and adapting our approaches. We are supporting other journals in the BMC Springer Nature family to consider how they may incorporate elements of co-production.

REFERENCES

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