Easy Steps for Creating a Press Release about your Research Publication



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Why bother with a press release?

Moral obligation to disseminate

- Public university
- CLSA is publicly funded

Small fish in a big pond

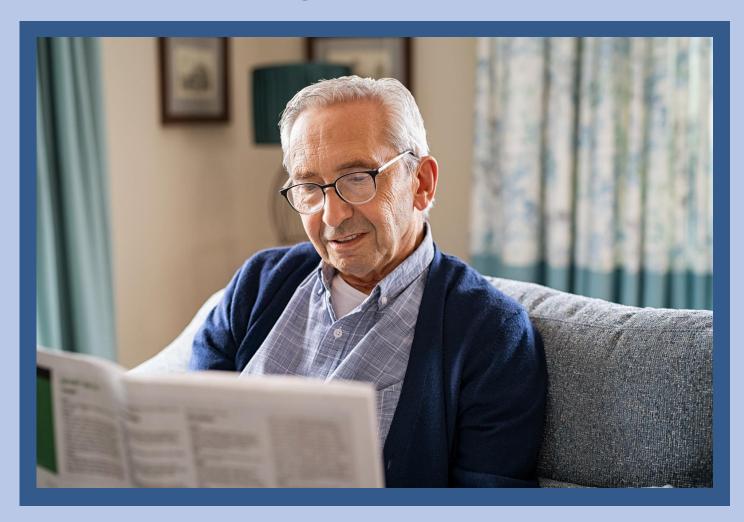
- 1.8 million published articles each year
- How can your findings move the field forward if no one reads them?



Is Media Coverage Helpful for Academic Impact?

- # of citations strongly correlated with number of media mentions
- But could this be due to quality/importance of the publication?
- My little experiment for open-access articles (n=2 articles)
 - Depression trajectories delayed press release 9 days-
 - from 0 media articles to 62 articles (MacNeil et al, 2022)
 - Successful Aging paper delayed press release 2 months
 - From 0 media articles to 51 articles (Ho et al, 2022)

We are lucky in gerontology because almost everything we do is relevant and interesting to the general public.



The CLSA provides the best longitudinal data ever available in Canada!



Analyze your Data with Dissemination in Mind

Social Support

- 2 points on a social support scale does not mean anything to most people
- However, being without a confidant is something people understand

Income

 Analyze in \$10,000 increments, not \$1 because the odds ratios are not infinitesimal

Depression/PTSD

-Using dichotomized depression or PTSD scores makes them much easier to understand than when treated continously

You want to make sure the journal <u>does not</u> publish the 'accepted pre-proof' article online (Note this is now the default in Elsevier journals).



You need the final edited and approved proof to be the first one published online

Upon article acceptance (or in Elsevier when you send in the revise and resubmit) I add the following in my response email:

"We will be working with media services at University of Toronto to create a Eurekalert! and press release on this article. Please do not publish the paper online until we have finalized the corrected proofs. Media relations also requests that they are informed about the embargo date at least 3 days in advance of publication in order to maximize media pick-up."



Your University's Media Relations Office will be Happy to Help but They Prefer a Drafted Press Release



All press releases have a standard formula.

Once you know the formula you can draft a release in 2 or 3 hours

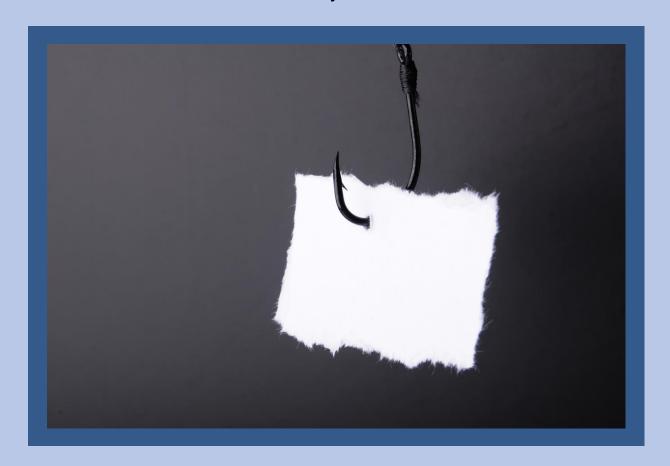


Scan Eurekalert! to see examples of press releases and keep up in your field - https://www.eurekalert.org/



Oxford Journals states...

"The most important aspect is to remember that the research should contain a 'hook' or main point of interest for the reader and the journalist. This hook should provide an identifiable audience, main point of focus for the release, and headline for the article. **If you cannot identify the hook then it is unlikely that we can.**"



Press releases are designed...

a.	To be read by nonexperts - so keep it simple
b.	To entice reporters to cover your research -so be clear why your findings are important and who might be interested
c.	 To be used as 'filler' for newspapers and news blogs around the world-therefore they need to be clear, well-written, and fine to "stand alone" as an article with engaging quotes from experts (i.e., you & co-authors) 99% of your coverage will come from 'filler' coverage, but they can easily get picked up in dozens of outlets including Times of India, NBC blogs, etc.



Draft the press release when you are editing the proofs

- It is more time efficient when the complete article is fresh in your mind
- You also will be ready in case the journal moves up the publication date



Choose an embargo date that is a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday at 5:00 am EST



It is easier to generate media attention if the publication coincides with a date of interest

- a. September 13st is Grandparents day
- b. September 21st is World Alzheimer's Day
- c. February is American Heart Month
- d. For a full list see https://www.ipromo.com/blog/2020-awareness-event-calendar-awareness-days-weeks-and-months/



Provide embargo time/date at the top in bold caps (NEWS RELEASE 20-apr-2023 5:00 am EST)



The title/headline should be short, enticing and in the active voice

a.	Maximum 90 characters including spaces
b.	Use 25 point font
C.	Bold



The sub-headline should touch on some of the key findings and it must be engaging

- Many reporters do not read past the subheading
- No more than 255 characters including spaces
- Use 14 point font
- Italicize



Write the byline "University of Toronto"

Start content with Toronto, Canada

Insert your university and location

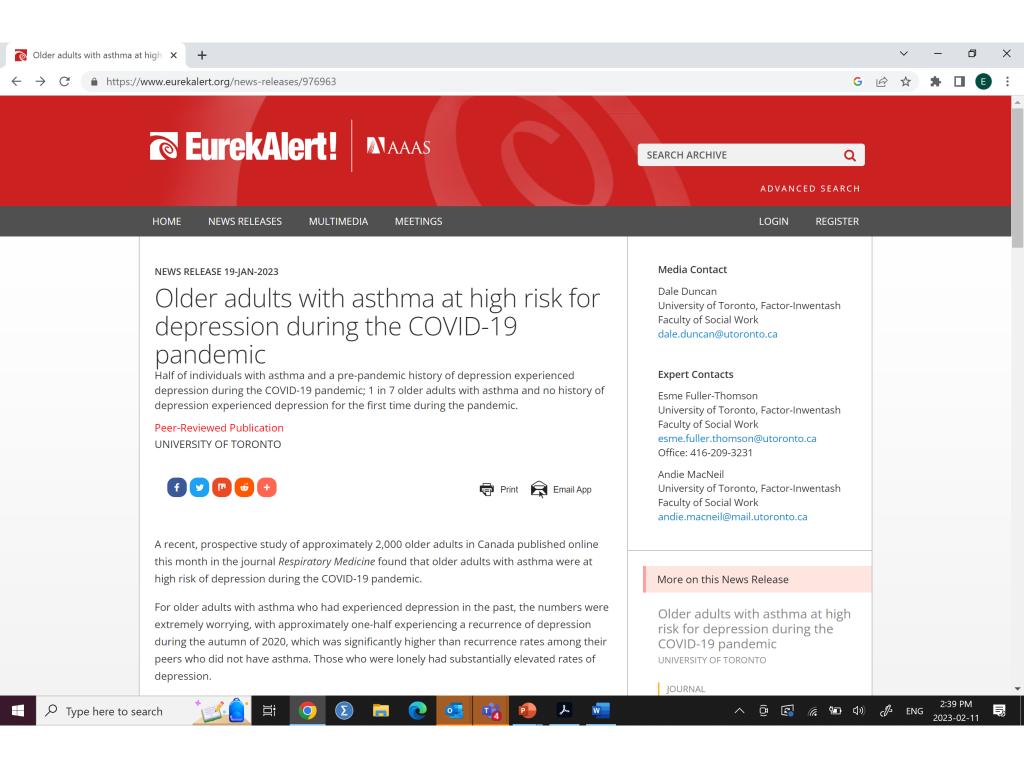


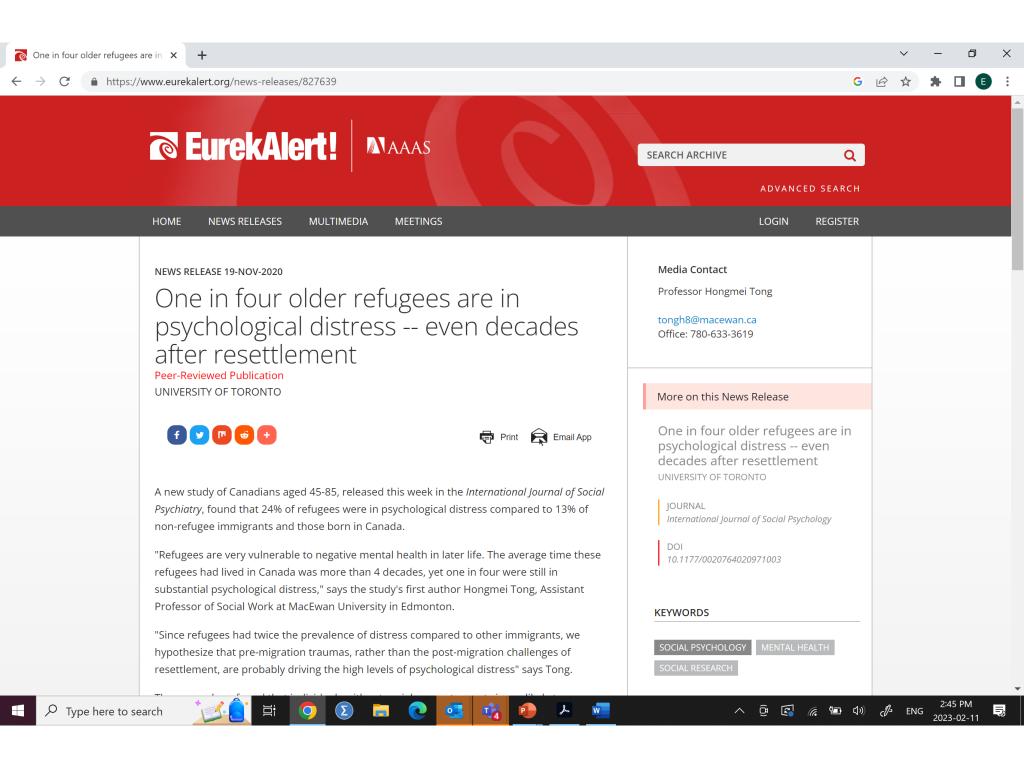
Sadly, positive news gets much less attention than negative news (and null findings are completely ignored)



Summarize All Key Findings

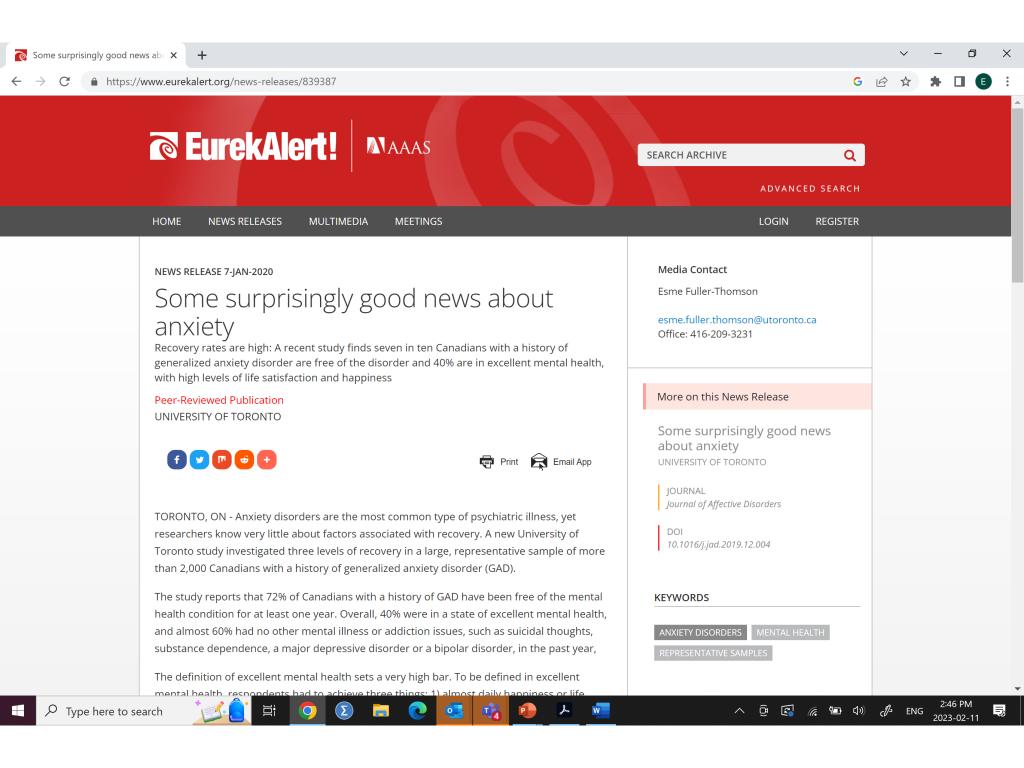


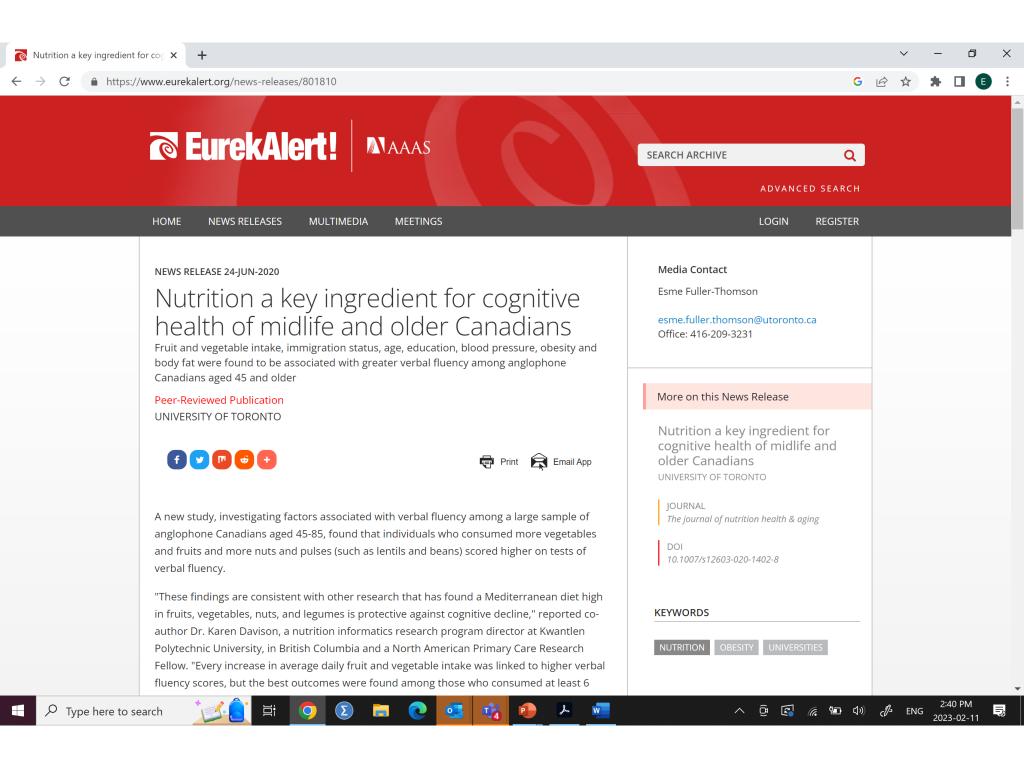




Catchier Headline but Less Information

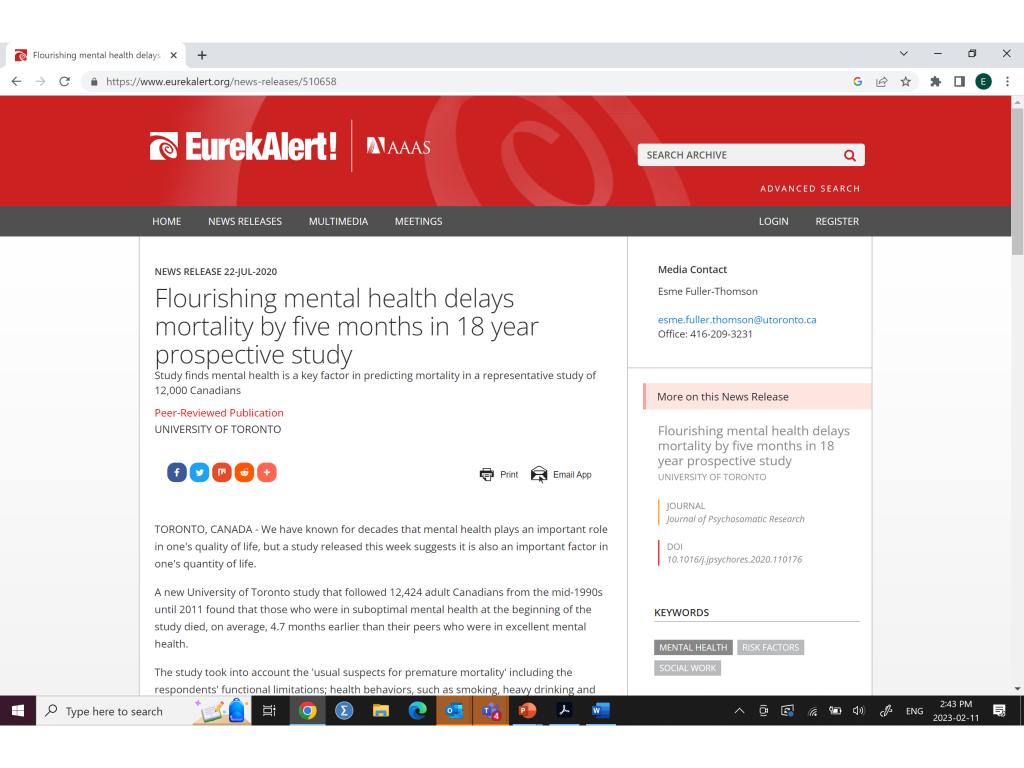


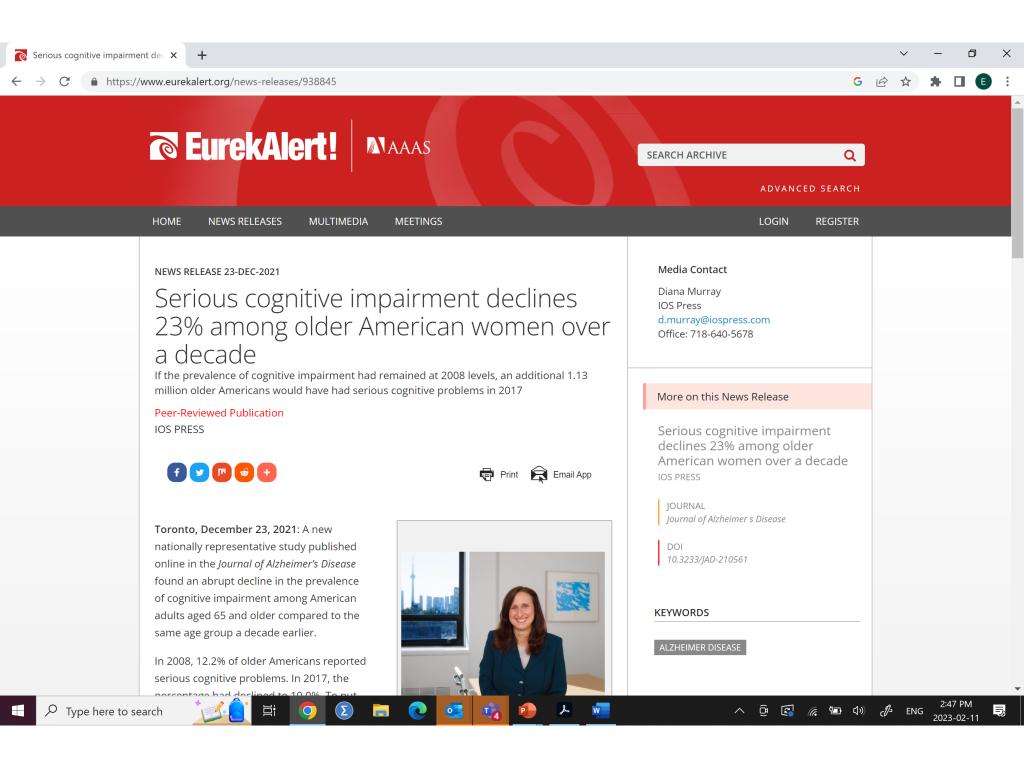




Translating Findings into Something More Tangible

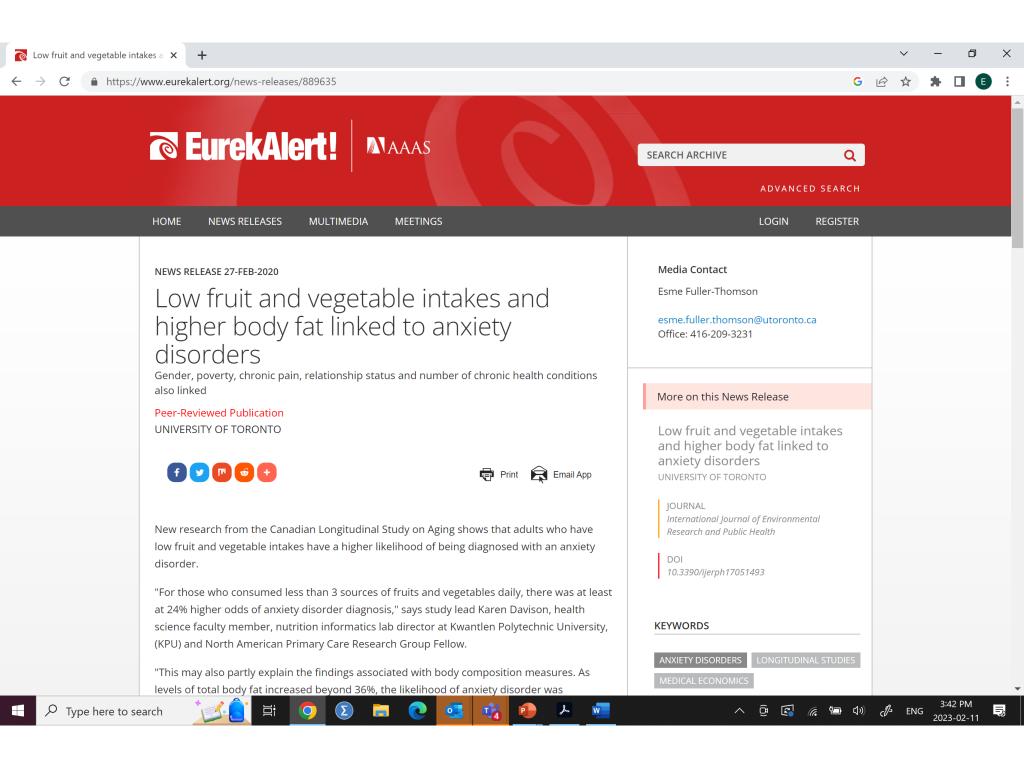






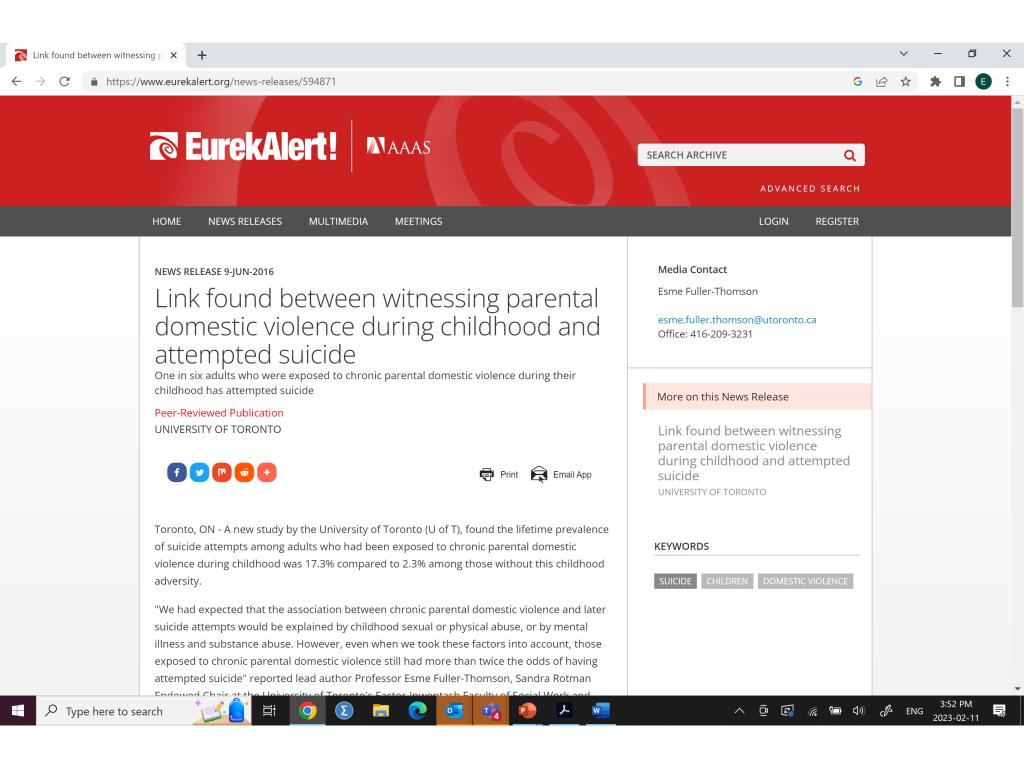
Focus on the Most Novel Finding





So was chronic pain and serious physical health problems but neither of those factors are particularly novel, so these points were buried lower in the press release



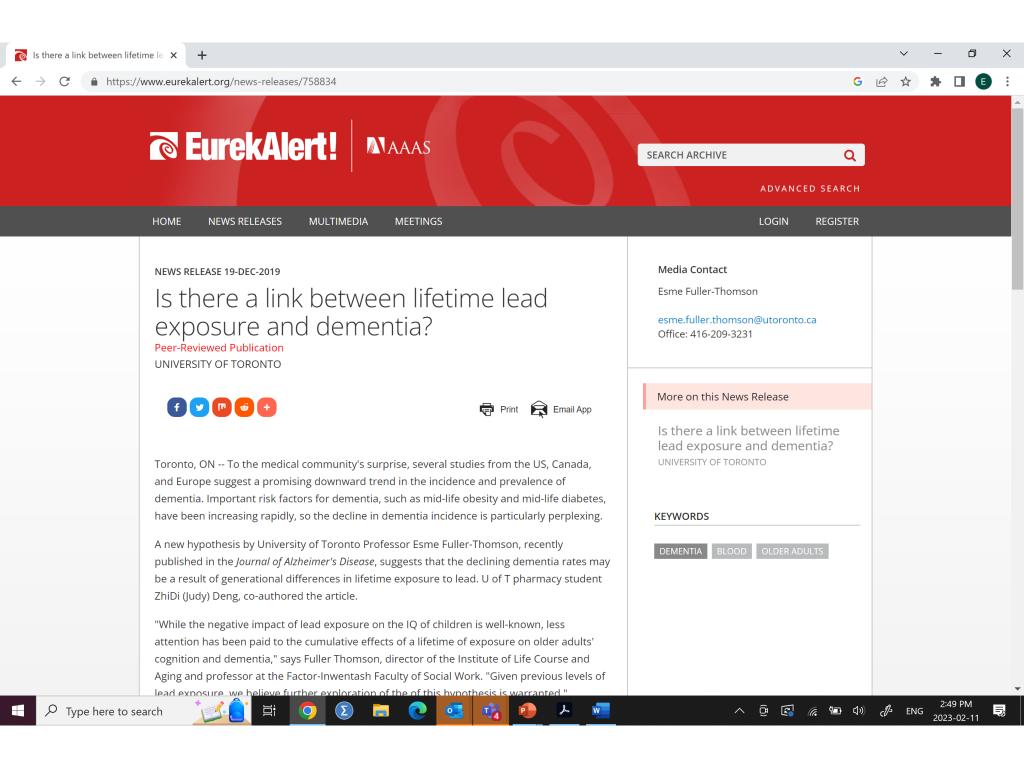


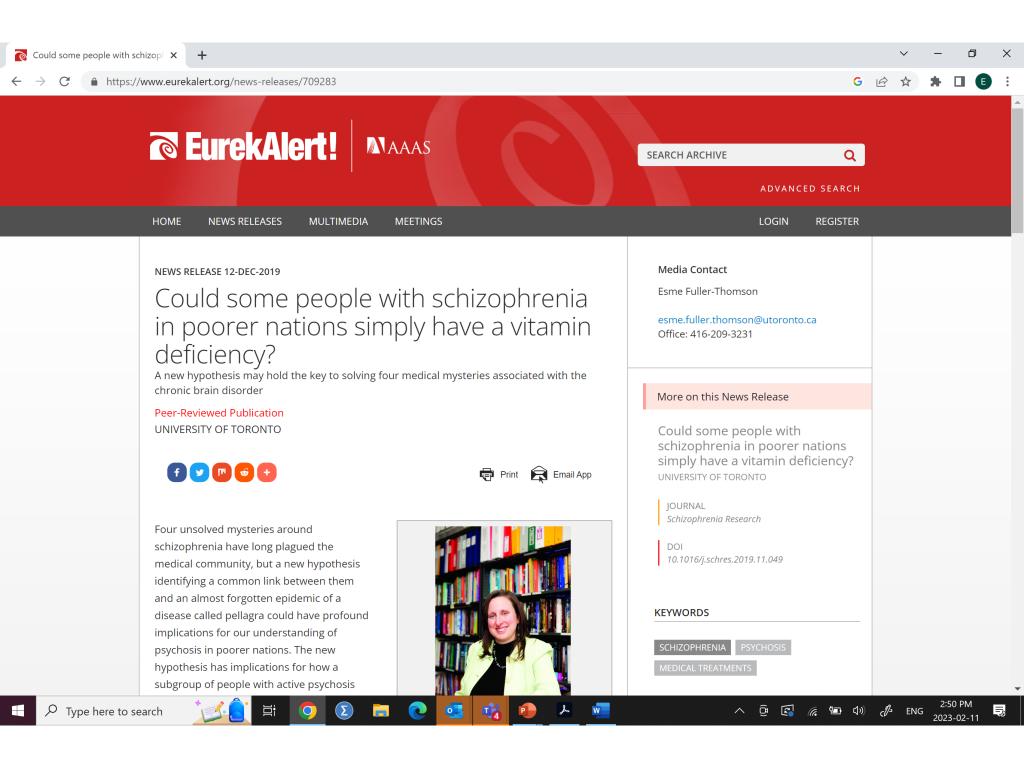
Childhood sexual abuse & childhood physical abuse were also risk factors for attempted suicide, but these have been well documented in the previous literature, so these were discussed later



Asking a Question: Great for Hypothesis Papers







The text should be succinct

a.	Maximum of 500-700 words (Fewer words are fine)
b.	Order information so the most important is first
c.	Be accurate, avoid hyperbole- Don't overstate the findings!
d.	Be clear-avoid jargon such as SES
e.	Avoid too many technical details

Provide engaging quotes that provide opinion or insight on each main finding

- I use one quote per author
- Never more than one quote per paragraph
- I draft all the quotes so that the story flows
- Always send the drafted press release to the whole team and ask them to respond by email confirming they are OK with their quotes and with the whole press release
- Put the quote first, then "said co-author NAME and then their title and position at the end

Try out the ideas on your kids/friends first, someone else with limited knowledge of topic

- Think about the "3 minute" cocktail party overview of the paper
- What 2-3 points are the most important, most interesting and/or most novel?



First paragraph needs to catch people's interest and be engaging

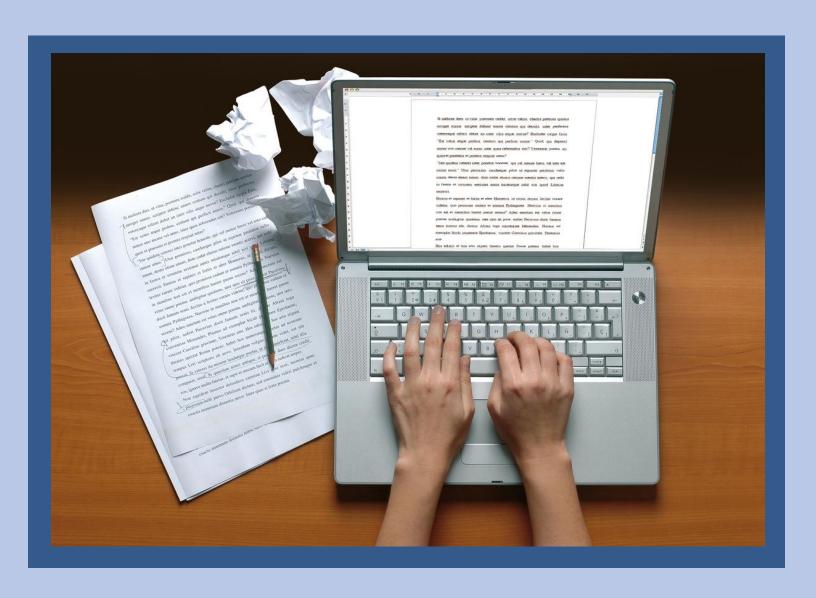
• Think of a press release's first paragraph as the '1 minute elevator speech" overview



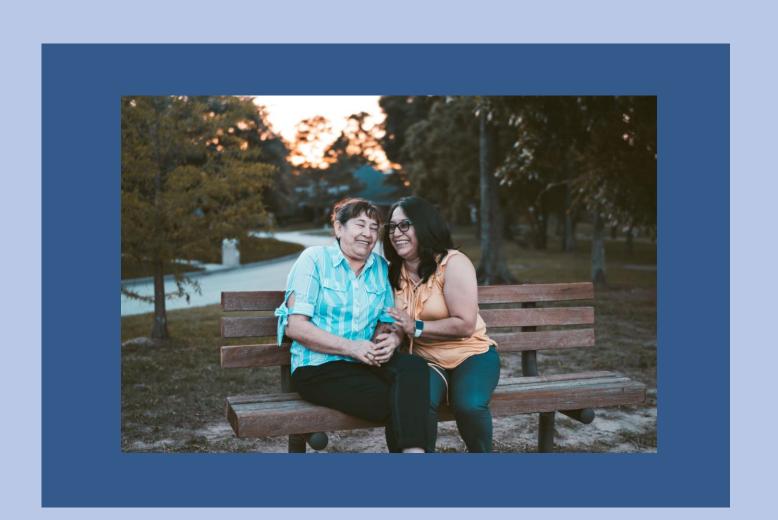
Use many short paragraphs with spaces between paragraphs



If it isn't self-evident why the findings are important, unexpected or exciting, you need to make that evident within the first few paragraphs



Quote: "We were surprised and delighted to learn that more than 70% of our sample maintained their excellent state of health across the study period," says the first author, Mabel Ho, a doctoral candidate at the University of Toronto's Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work (FIFSW) and the Institute of Life Course and Aging. "Our findings underline the importance of a strength-based rather than a deficit-based focus on aging and older adults. The media and research tend to ignore the positive and just focus on the problems.".



Somewhere in the press release (middle or later), provide details on when and where published:

- Example: "The study was published online this week in the journal *Respiratory Medicine*.."
- At a minimum, try to send out the press release in the same month is it published (ideally the day of)



Near the bottom, perhaps 2nd last paragraph, put in information on the methodology:

• "The study included 2,017 participants of the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA) with asthma, who provided data at the baseline wave (2011–2015), follow-up 1 wave (2015–2018), and during the pandemic (September–December 2020)."

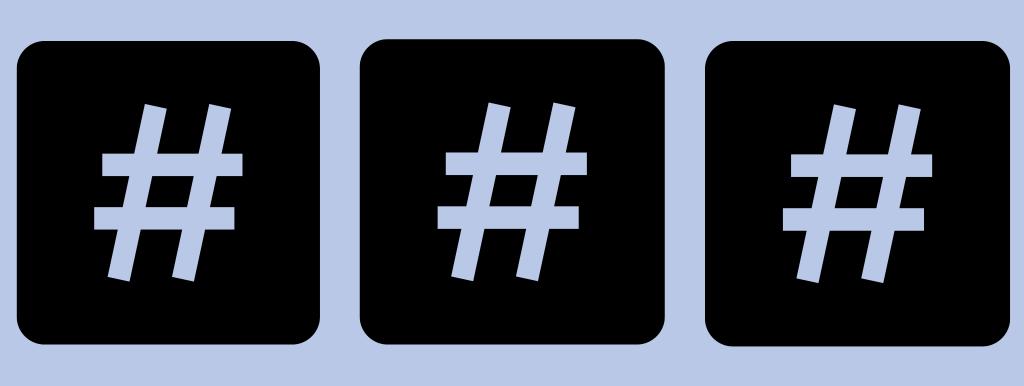


Last paragraph put in a quote that sums up:

""As life gradually returns to normal following the pandemic, it is still important to consider the potential longstanding mental health effects," said **MacNeil**. "We hope these findings can help inform targeted screening and referral to efficacious treatments such as cognitive behavioral therapy to support older adults with asthma who are experiencing depression".



Follow the text by ### in the middle of a blank line

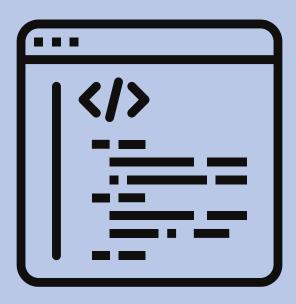


After the break put Publication Source:

• Give full citation with DOI number and link which will go live after the embargo date (note the production team at the journal will give this to you upon request):

Publication Source:

MacNeil A, Birk S, Villeneuve PJ, Jiang Y, de Groh M, Fuller-Thomson E. Incident and Recurrent Depression among Adults Aged 50 Years and Older during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Longitudinal Analysis of the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health.* 2022; 19(22):15032. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph192215032



Next section provide the contact details with bolded headed:

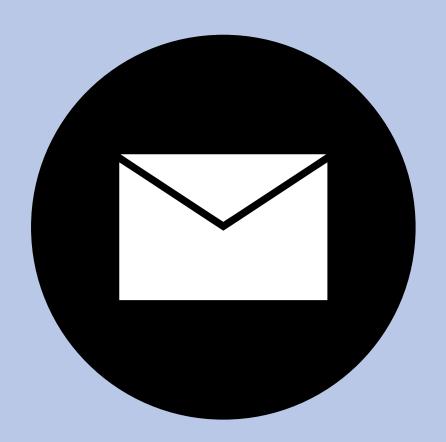
Media contact:

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If there is a paywall for the article add the following

• "A full copy of the paper is available to credentialed journalists upon request. Please contact esme.fuller.thomson@utoronto.ca.



On the day of the press release

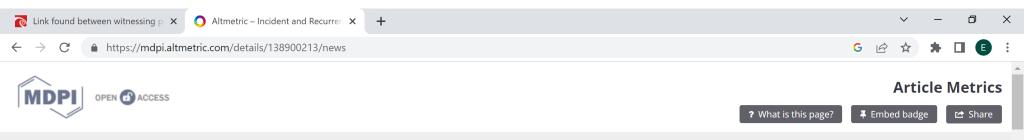
- Try to have lots of free time to answer any media calls/emails
 - Most reporters appreciate a call back within an hour
- Have a one-page point form list of the key points you want to emphasize
- Have on hand a succinct quote or two

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday 2	Thursday 3	Friday Sah
6	7	8	9	10	11 1210
13	14	15	16	17	18 19
20	21	22	23	24	25 26
27	28	29	30	31	

Tracking Media Pick-up

Altmetric, Google Searches, & Your Media Relations Office





Incident and Recurrent Depression among Adults Aged 50 Years and Older during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Longitudinal Analysis of the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging

Overview of attention for article published in International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, November 2022

