

# AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN **PUBLIC RELATIONS 2020**



# Best Corporate Communication

## Best Corporate Campaign



*Pictured is Dr Marion Hogg, Honorary Lecturer at RCSI and FutureNeuro investigator, who is the lead author of the study that found a pattern of molecules that appear in the blood before a seizure happens, which may lead to the development of an early warning system for those with epilepsy. Photo by Maxwell Photography.*

### Campaign

RCSI Discover

### Description of Campaign

*RCSI Discover* is an integrated and targeted strategic communications campaign aimed at building RCSI's global reputation as a leader in healthcare research.



### Organisation

RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences

### Background to the Campaign

RCSI is not-for-profit health sciences university which is purposefully committed to solving the greatest challenges of modern healthcare. Our translational research enhances patient treatment, informs policy and clinical practice, and improves the quality of education of healthcare professionals.

In 2019, RCSI's in-house communications team was charged with developing and delivering an integrated strategic communications plan to build RCSI's global reputation as a leader in healthcare research.

The campaign set out to:

- Improve public awareness in Ireland of RCSI's impact in healthcare research.
- Enhance RCSI's reputation among the global research community and improve the University's performance in the reputation surveys which are part of the international university rankings.

## Statement of Objectives

We identified several clear objectives which would support our goal of enhancing RCSI's global reputation and against which our success would be measured, namely:

- Improved performance in the reputation surveys of the international university rankings.
- Achieving high Altmetric\* scores for key research papers.
- Increase in the volume of international media coverage for key research stories.
- Increase in the volume of domestic media coverage achieved for key research stories.
- Evidence of strong social media engagement among identified priority audiences.
- Strong engagement with video content.
- Strong and consistent open rates for stakeholder e-campaigns.

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## Programme Planning and Strategy

The strategy had two strands – internal and external. The internal strand focused on supporting our academic and research community to communicate effectively and to be positive brand ambassadors for RCSI. The external strand focused on delivering targeted communications which convey a compelling story about RCSI's world-class research and education. The campaign, "RCSI Discover", comprised of national and international media engagement, a triannual stakeholder e-newsletter, regular digital campaigns, and social media profiling of our researchers.

### Campaign Planning

#### Identifying target and media audiences

Effectively targeting the global research community is a core objective for RCSI Discover. Leveraging audience analysis provided by RCSI's Office of Institutional Research and Planning, the campaigns have been deliberately targeted at the relevant audience for each research area.

For example, the RCSI Discover newsletter contains four or five stories in each issue. When shared on social media, target audiences are developed for each of the subject areas in the email which are leveraged for a digital campaign, maximising the reach of the email.

Using the Cision platform, we have identified the key traditional, online and specialist international publications for each research area which has supported our success in achieving strong international media coverage.

A committee comprising the Communications team, the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, members of the Senior Management Team and senior researchers are responsible for determining the thematic focus of the campaigns under RCSI Discover. The campaigns are chosen based on their strategic importance to RCSI, the strength of RCSI's research in each area, and the availability of a compelling story and a strong spokesperson.

### Campaign delivery

Throughout 2019, RCSI Discover delivered several integrated campaigns involving traditional media relations, organic social media, paid social media and video. Most of the videos for RCSI Discover have been planned, scripted, filmed and edited by the Communications team, demonstrating the rich mix of skills across the team.

Examples of our campaigns include:

- The evolution of RCSI's Department of Anatomy and Regenerative Medicine: Producing and sharing a short piece of film, the campaign targeted researchers in anatomy and regenerative medicine. We aimed to showcase RCSI as a unique institution steeped in heritage that has evolved to drive impactful and innovative research in regenerative medicine. **Success – the campaign reached 2.66m people with 1.4m views of the film.**
- TB Research – a research paper on a potential new treatment for TB was leveraged to achieve national and international media coverage, strong media engagement and video views. Our social media campaign was targeted specifically at TB researchers based in regions which still have high incidence of TB (India, China, and Africa). **Success – high profile national media coverage, 56 pieces of international media coverage, social media reach of over 630,000 and 87,000 video views.**



- Diabetes – a campaign to profile RCSI’s research on diabetes across the specialties of regenerative medicine, microbiology, and nursing. **Success – social media reach of over 64,000.**
- Sepsis – the discovery of a potential treatment for sepsis was the focus of a national and international media relations campaign. **Success – 16 items of national media coverage and 20 items of international media coverage. It also achieved a social media reach of 55,000. The coverage resulted in contact being made by potential investors.**
- European Research Council award recipients – a video-based campaign which aimed to raise the profile of RCSI’s three ERC grant recipients. **Success – social media reach of 1.97m and 128,000 video views.**
- New treatment to predict epilepsy seizures – a very significant finding that has the potential to transform the lives of epilepsy patients was the focus of campaign across national and international media and social media. **Success – the campaign achieved strong domestic coverage including the Irish Times, Morning Ireland, and Six One News, over 80 items of international media coverage and social media reach of over 20,000. The lead researcher’s interview with Scientific American (a division of Springer Nature) ran online and in print, helping her raise her profile with her global peers.**
- Recruitment of Chair in Global Surgery – leveraging the visit of the Irish Times to RCSI’s college of surgery programme in Africa, we built a digital campaign aimed at promoting the recruitment of a Chair in Global Surgery. **Success – the campaign reached 84,000 people and secured engagement and endorsement from several influential stakeholders. The panel indicated that the campaign played an important role in achieving a strong candidate pool.**
- RCSI Discover newsletter – the first newsletter was issued in June with a lead story focusing on the discovery of new technologies to remove the unpredictability of uncontrolled seizures for people with epilepsy. The second newsletter was issued in November and its lead story focused on a finding from RCSI’s Department of Chemistry which has the potential to transform the surgical management of cancer. **Success – open rates of 31% and 33% (the benchmark average for the education sector is 21%).**
- Charter Day: Leveraging the annual celebration of RCSI’s Royal Charter as an opportunity to increase awareness among the international surgical science community of RCSI’s pedigree, we shared an infographic through a digital campaign targeted at researchers in that field. **Success – the campaign reached 87,500 people.**

## Measurement

### Improved performance in the reputation surveys of the international university rankings

There are several international university rankings which measure reputation, specifically the Times Higher Education rankings and the QS World University Rankings. The impact of campaigns in 2019 will be captured in the September 2020 Times Higher Rankings.

The 2020 QS Subject Ranking results show that RCSI’s reputation scores have increased, moving RCSI’s School of Medicine from top 300 to top 250 and School of Pharmacy from ‘not ranked’ to top 250. This is a particularly strong outcome which was influenced by the RCSI Discover campaigns on sepsis and TB.

### Driving the Altmetric\* score for key research papers

Epilepsy: before campaign – 13 | after campaign: 383

Surgical management of cancer: before campaign: 6 | after campaign: 122

TB: before campaign: 5 | after campaign: 13

*\*Altmetric tracks the number of mentions that a research paper is receiving on mainstream platforms such as international online media and social media. Altmetric shows the impact of a research publication outside the traditional academic citation metrics.*

Following the campaigns, these key research papers were in the top 5% of all research outputs scored by Altmetric and were classed as having a High Attention Score compared to outputs of the same age and source (93rd-99th percentile).

### Increase the volume of domestic media coverage achieved for key research stories

- Volume of research coverage: 736 (670 in 2018).

- Positive: 99% (98% in 2018).
- CRI: 4,631 (4,443 in 2018).

\*Data provided independently by Rue Point Media

### **Increase in the volume of international media coverage for key research stories**

- 2019 – 774.
- Not measured in 2018 (estimated at <100).

### **Evidence of strong social media engagement among targeted audiences**

- Targeted reach of 8.58m across Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

### **Strong engagement with video content**

- 1.76m video views on YouTube and on social media channels.

### **Strong and consistent open rates for a campaign of stakeholder emails**

- RCSI Discover – 31% and 33%.
- Charter Day e-card – 41%.
- Post event email – 49%.
- End of year research message – 31%.

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