

# Careers in Science Policy

Dr Eva Sharpe

# Careers in Science Policy

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# My background

## Career pathway



### Scientific

- 2002 – 2005 BSc Biological Sciences at University of Edinburgh
- 2005 – 2006 MRes in Biomedical Sciences at Imperial College London
- 2006 – 2010 PhD at Imperial College London

### Policy

- 2010 Policy Internship at the Royal Society of Biology
- 2011 – 2013 HE Policy Officer at the Royal Society of Biology
- 2013 – 2016 Science Information and Policy Manager at the ICR
- 2016 – 2018 Senior Policy and Engagement Manager at the ICR
- 2018 Six month secondment to the Greater London Authority
- 2018- present Head of Policy and Engagement at the ICR

# What is science policy?



## **Policy that uses science as evidence base**

Eg. Climate change, GM crops, breast cancer screening



## **Policy that affects how science is done**

Eg. science funding, legal regulations and governance, reporting requirements



## **Policy that affects how scientific innovation is taken to patients**

Eg. NICE processes, cancer drugs funding mechanisms

# My role

## Aims and objectives

To give the ICR a **strong and consistent voice** on research policy to **influence** the development of policy in high-priority **areas which affect our work.**

# My role

## Topics that I'm working on

- Patient data in research
- Gene patenting
- Big data
- Regulation of clinical trials
- Access to childhood cancer trials
- Animals in research
- Research funding
- How universities collaborate with industry
- How to speed up access to new drugs on the NHS



# Working in policy

## Day to day

- Meetings, networking and conferences
- Reading policy reports and articles
- Research and evidence gathering
- Working with expert groups
- Writing briefing notes
- Responding to consultations
- Organising events
- Blogging about policy



# My role

## Developing positions

Building a framework of policy positions to allow the ICR to take a consistent approach to communicating about policy

**ICR** The Institute of Cancer Research

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### The use of patient data in research

Position Statement from  
The Institute of Cancer Research, London

**Summary**

Access to patient data is vital for the research conducted at The Institute of Cancer Research (ICR). Patient data must be stored safely and securely to ensure patient confidentiality. But such safeguards to confidentiality must not come at the cost of efficient access to patient data for research use. We believe the regulatory system is too risk averse in its requirements for explicit patient consent where research has been ethically approved. Research at the ICR has been delayed while waiting for approval to access patient data because of the complex regulation involved, particularly where initial consent was collected at the start of a long trial, and current norms on data use have developed since initial consent was collected. We are supportive of moves to clarify and streamline processes to access patient data for ethically approved clinical research.

July 2013

**ICR** The Institute of Cancer Research     *The ROYAL MARSDEN*  
NHS Foundation Trust

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### Clinical trials – regulation and transparency

Position Statement from  
The Institute of Cancer Research, London, and  
The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust

**Summary**

The Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) and The Royal Marsden believe the regulatory system for clinical trials puts an enormous administrative and financial burden on academic clinical trials, and has damaged the ability of academic organisations to lead international studies. Since the introduction of the EU Clinical Trials Directive, the complexity, risk and cost associated with running trials has increased. We don't believe the apparently modest increase in the quality of trial data (if at all) justifies the increase in bureaucracy. We would like the regulation of trials to discriminate far better between the different levels of risk posed. We also believe regulations over safety reporting can be burdensome and excessive, and would like to see them refined, particularly for low risk trials, in order to avoid missing genuine safety concerns.

The ICR and The Royal Marsden support moves to ensure greater transparency in clinical trials and would recommend a legal requirement to make results publicly available within a reasonable timeframe in a form that is suitable for non-commercial sponsors. We support the use of data sharing plans, but stress that all data sharing needs to preserve patient confidentiality.

December 2013

**ICR** The Institute of Cancer Research

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### Patenting genetic information

Position Statement from  
The Institute of Cancer Research, London

**Summary**

Patenting and licensing policies at The Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) are driven by our ambition to achieve the maximum patient benefit from research findings.

Research carried out at the ICR and at other institutions into cancer susceptibility genes has transformed our understanding of the inheritance of cancer risk. It has also opened up new avenues for treatment, allowing us to use gene products as drug targets or as biomarkers to predict response to therapies. It's our ambition that genetic information should be routinely used to help people with cancer and their families by informing them about their risk and guiding decisions over personalised cancer treatment. We believe that isolated DNA, as a product of nature, should not be eligible for patenting and worry that current practice on gene patenting can allow companies to gain a market monopoly in areas such as gene testing or predictive biomarkers, limiting access to healthcare.

Where the ICR holds patents that include DNA sequences, we ensure that rights are made available on a non-exclusive basis to maximise patient benefit.

September 2013



# My role

## Communicating our messages

Finding routes to communicate about our policy messages:

- Responding to Government consultations
- Providing evidence for Select committee enquiries
- Releasing reactive media statements



**ICR** The Institute of Cancer Research

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Concept Paper submitted for Public Consultation on Commission Guidelines on the format and content of applications for paediatric investigation plans

Response from The Institute of Cancer Research, London

January 2014

# My role

## Communicating our messages

### Proactive Public Affairs work:

- Parliamentary events
- Meeting policy makers
- Briefing MPs and MEPs



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### Archive

HOUSE OF COMMONS Wednesday 26 March 2014

Commons Chamber  
Meeting started at 11.34am. Ended at 5.43pm

Questions to the Prime Minister  
Paul Burstow

Paused 38:06

# Working with the media

The media team at the ICR arrange media briefings on policy topics and allow us to comment in the press on current issues and recent announcements

**the guardian**  
News | Sport | Comment | Culture | Business | Money | Life & style | Travel | Environment  
News > Society > Cancer

### Children with cancer being denied life-saving drugs, scientists say

Call for change in EU regulations that allow pharmaceutical companies to opt out of children's trials for some cancer drugs

Sarah Boseley, health editor  
theguardian.com, Monday 10 February 2014 22:00 GMT  
Jump to comments (24)

Scientists say cancer drugs are increasingly aimed at molecular targets that may occur in many kinds of cancer. Photograph: Getty Images/Visuals Unlimited

Potentially life-saving drugs are being denied to children with cancer

**THE TIMES**  
Health News  
News | Opinion | Business | Money | Sport | Life | Arts | Puzzles | Papers

### Children lose cancer drugs in EU ruling

Chris Smyth Health Correspondent  
Published at 12:14 PM February 11 2014

Some 1,600 children a year in Britain develop cancer, says a survey by the Sunday Times newspaper.

Children with cancer are being denied life-saving drugs by a loophole in EU rules, leading scientists say.

Pharmaceutical companies are being permitted to test their drugs only on adults, even though children's lives could be saved if medicines were properly tested by under-18s, international experts say.

**The Telegraph**  
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### Children denied life-saving cancer drugs

Potentially life-saving cancer drugs are being denied to children because pharmaceutical companies are not trialling them on youngsters, health experts warn

Children are being denied potential life-saving cancer drugs because pharmaceutical companies are only testing new ones on adults. Photo: ALAMY

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### Children with cancer 'denied drugs because of EU rules'

3 hours ago

Children with cancer are being denied potentially life-saving treatment because of a loophole in EU rules, according to the Institute of Cancer Research.

Of 28 new cancer drugs approved in the EU for adults since 2007, 26 could potentially work in children, but 14 have been exempted from child testing.

Adam Brimelow reports.

Read more  
Children with cancer 'denied drugs because of EU rules'

Share this story About sharing

# Digital communication and social media

Communicating policy messages through blogging, online news stories, tweeting, and video interviews with researchers about policy

**ICR** The Institute of Cancer Research

## Science Talk

Home About The ICR website ICR Chief Executive Blog From Bench To Blog Search

### It's time for change to EU regulations on children's cancer trials

Posted on February 10, 2014 by [evasharpe](#)

**ABOUT US**  
The mission of The Institute of Cancer Research, London, is to make the discoveries that defeat cancer.

We are the UK's leading academic research centre and one of the world's most influential cancer research institutes, with an outstanding record of achievement dating back more than 100 years. We lead the world at isolating cancer-related genes and discovering new targeted cancer drugs. Our unique partnership with The Royal Marsden and 'bench-to-bedside' approach allows us to make a real impact on cancer patients' lives. As a college of the University of London, we also provide

**Eva Sharpe** @EvaSharpe · Jul 1  
Paul Workman blogs about how highly complex 'basic' research is essential for understanding and treating cancer - [icr.ac.uk/blogs/the-drug...](http://icr.ac.uk/blogs/the-drug...)

**Eva Sharpe** @EvaSharpe · Jun 23  
Fantastic morning at Parliamentary #LinksDay2015. Lots of positivity about the value of science and links between science and parliament

**Eva Sharpe** @EvaSharpe · Mar 27  
Lovely interview with @ICR\_London's Laura Danielson in the @guardiannews. Great role model for young scientists![theguardian.com/healthcare-net...](http://theguardian.com/healthcare-net...)

Eva Sharpe Retweeted  
**Andy Roast** @yppahpeek · Mar 23  
The @royalmarsden are live tweeting a prostatectomy - it's absolutely fascinating, a window into a world most of us don't see #TRMLive

**Eva Sharpe** @EvaSharpe · Mar 19  
Good news that @The\_MRC are making science careers more flexible, not everyone follows the same route [insight.mrc.ac.uk/2015/03/18/sci...](http://insight.mrc.ac.uk/2015/03/18/sci...)

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# Working in policy

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# Careers in policy

## Is it for you?



- Quite academic in process
- Work closely with science and scientists
- Always learning new things
- Lots of external meetings, conferences, seminars
- Meet lots of interesting people
- Making a difference



- Can be quite dry at times
- Office based
- Sometimes high pressure - expect a lot to do and with lots of deadlines
- Often working on things outside of your comfort zone

# Careers in Policy

## Where could you work?

### Government and Parliament

- MPs and Peers
- Civil Service
- Special Advisor
- Select Committee clerk

### Scientists advising on Policy

- Policy committee membership
- Advisory Committees
- Chief Scientific Advisers

### Policy professional specialising in science

- Professional bodies
- Charities
- Think tanks
- Universities

# Careers in Policy

## Skills, knowledge and experience

- Writing formally and informally
- Presentations, speaking and networking
- Understanding how science and research work
- Understanding the policy making processes
- Data analysis
- Multi-tasking
- Explaining science to lay audiences

**Demonstrable interest is essential**

**Experience and qualifications are helpful**



# Careers in Policy

## What sort of salary to expect

Policy Officer

£25,000-£35,000

Policy Manager

£35,000-£45,000

Head of Policy

£45,000-£55,000

Director of Policy

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# Careers in Policy

## How to find out more?

Masters courses in Science Policy



Newton's Apple Introduction to Science Policy Workshop



Professional Development Policy Seminars at Centre for Science and Policy



NERC Science to policy training workshops



Other training listed on Campaign for Science and Engineering website

# Careers in Policy

## Where to get experience?

Lots of opportunities for paid policy internships



# Careers in Policy

## Keeping up to date with the latest issues

- **Policy newsletters** from Royal Society of Biology, Campaign for Science and Engineering, Medical Research Council
- **Policy briefings** from the Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology
- **Policy blogs** see the Campaign for Science and Engineering website for recommendations
- **Policy events and lectures** eg Policy Lates, Talk Science, Science Question Time
- **Policy magazines and journals** eg Research Fortnight, THE



# Careers in Policy

## Choosing where to work



Work on a subject you care about

Is it a big or small team? You'll try more things in a small team

What are the opportunities to progress?

Are you doing policy or public affairs or both?

# Top tips for moving into policy

- Follow organisations you're interested in through social media to find out what is happening
- Keep up to date with current affairs
- Find out what its like through work experience or placements
- Attend events (even invite yourself along!)
- Gaining experience of other types of science communication is useful too.

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