

Sex Cells

Elijah Wolfson

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The media, of course, likes a big headline — the First something in history, the Biggest something of all time, the Only time something has ever happened. Nowhere is this truer than in science journalism, where junior reporters take already-overstated press releases and juice them up for even further for their public audience.

This drives scientists crazy. Those whose work gets tagged with these sexed-up headlines are rightfully concerned that the media ends up overstating the claims of their research. And in an environment where it's already a struggle getting funding for nuanced or niche fields of study, it can feel infuriating to think that future success depends on an ability to sell to the media today.

There are ways, though, that these concerns can be negotiated.

Scientists can help science reporters and writers better understand the broader context in which their research has been done, and how to best spin out potential applications and impacts of the work, without overstepping and making overly grandiose claims. It just takes a little patience, a little humor and a lot of creativity on both sides.

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