

Assessment 2

Popular Science Article

Objectives

- This assignment is intended to increase your critical awareness of the scientific world around you, in particular the aspects of evolution that may have relevance to everyday life.
- This assignment should also give you a chance to demonstrate your understanding of general evolutionary concepts and practice your writing skills.

Basics of writing a news article

- The inverted pyramid - presenting the new result at the top of the story and then filling in the background

Who, what, when, where and how

What's new?

Why do we care?

As Dengue Fever Sweeps India, a Slow Response Stirs Experts' Fears



Enrico Fabian for The New York Times

A man at the Yamuna River, an ideal breeding ground for mosquitoes. Filthy standing water abounds in New Delhi. [More Photos »](#)

By GARDINER HARRIS

Published: November 6, 2012

NEW DELHI — An epidemic of [dengue fever](#) in [India](#) is fostering a growing sense of alarm even as government officials here have publicly refused to acknowledge the scope of a problem that experts say is threatening hundreds of millions of people, not just in India but around the world.

Multimedia



India has become the focal point for a mosquito-borne plague that is sweeping the globe. Reported in just a handful of countries in the 1950s, dengue (pronounced DEN-gay) is now endemic in half the world's nations.

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Lethal weapons may have given early humans edge over Neanderthals

Discovery of sharpened stone blades up to 71,000 years old suggests humans leaving Africa were armed to the teeth

Ian Sample, science correspondent
guardian.co.uk, Wednesday 7 November 2012 18.08 GMT

 [Jump to comments \(12\)](#)



The stone blades would have allowed our ancestors to attack Neanderthals – and other humans – from a greater distance and with more devastating effect.
Photograph: Simon Oestmo/Nature

Early humans wandered out of Africa armed with darts and arrows that made them formidable hunters and deadly competitors for any Neanderthals that stood in their way.

The revised version of the human story follows the discovery in South Africa of a haul of small stone blades or "bladelets" that formed lethal weapon tips, either for arrows fired from bows, or spears propelled from wooden throwers called atlatls.

Researchers uncovered more than 70 sharp stone tips measuring no more than 5cm long while excavating an eroded cliff face that overlooks the ocean at a site called Pinnacle Point on the south coast.

The development of the technology allowed early humans to attack wild animals or human foes from a greater distance and with more devastating effect. "People who possess light armaments that can be thrown long distances have immediate advantages in hunting prey and killing competitors," [Curtis Marean](#), project director at Arizona State University, told the Guardian.

6 November 2012 Last updated at 02:43 ET

One test may 'find many cancers'

By James Gallagher

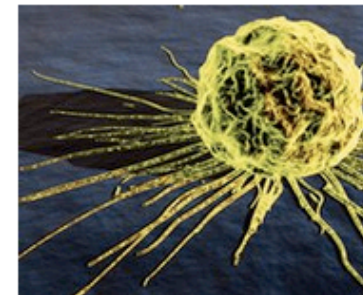
Health and science reporter, BBC News

Targeting just one chemical inside cancerous cells could one day lead to a single test for a broad range of cancers, researchers say.

The same system could then be used to deliver precision radiotherapy.

Scientists told the National Cancer Research Institute conference they had been able to find breast cancer in mice **weeks before a lump had been detected**.

The same target chemical was also present in cancers of the lung, skin, kidney and bladder, they said.



Could one test be used for a range

Related

Test to

How surgery for pets could save human lives

Many devoted pet owners are happy to spend thousands on operations for their cats and dogs – and these procedures could help teach scientists about human diseases, too



Jon Henley

The Guardian, Tuesday 6 November 2012 21.08 GMT

[Jump to comments \(64\)](#)



Harry the cat on the operating table. Photograph: David Levene for the Guardian

If he could see himself now, Harry would be horrified. Slack-mouthed, out for the count, he has got drips going into him, tubes coming out of him, wires and sensors everywhere you look. And now the final indignity: someone is taking the clippers to that rich golden fur.

"Poor thing," says a nurse. "He isn't half going to look weird."

There's worse to come. A neurosurgeon called Patrick Kenny is about to insert two stainless steel pins into Harry's skull. To these he will fit a clamp, immobilising Harry's head. His jaws will be wedged open. Then Kenny will cut a tiny hole through the back of the roof of Harry's mouth and, in an operation that will last more than four hours, set about removing a pea-sized tumour from a vital gland at the base of his brain.

Basics of writing a news article

- Hyperbolic headlines - pique the readers interest without lying, NOT summarising the whole story
- Quotes - avoid quotes manufactured for a press release, go to the source and get them from the scientist, and make the scientist sound human.

Basics of writing a news article

- Emphasize uniqueness of research
- Provide entertainment value or personal relevance to the audience

Basics of writing a news article

- Assume the audience has no science background and explain concepts thoroughly - provide general, simplified science concepts
- Pick an interesting angle and don't try to summarise the results of the study...you are not working for UofT's press office

Basics of writing a news article

- Introduction - creative/eye catching lead + what's new + why it's important
- Background - what has been done before + what does the reader need to know to understand the significance of the study + what big question is being addressed
- Methods - what experiments were done + what were the results + quote from researcher
- Comment – you should “speak” to at least 1 outside experts and quote them. Experts are not affiliated with the study but are qualified to speak about the research. **For out purposes make up a name, and a quote - it can be either a positive or a critical comment.**


Tweet (5%)


Write a Tweet:


- 140 character including spaces (and not a character longer) tweet summing up what *you* consider to be the most important idea from the press conference in an entertaining/attention grabbing way. It doesn't have to be a summary.
- It is okay to use twitter lingo when you feel it appropriate e.g. b/c = because, cld=could, here is a link to some more: http://www.webopedia.com/quick_ref/Twitter_Dictionary_Guide.asp

Tweets

3 new tweets

**Christopher Hayes** @chrishayes 6m
So, GOP votes against Violence Against Women act, for transvaginal ultrasounds and has an all male hearing on birth control.
[#heckofajob](#)
Retweeted by Emily Willingham

**Ananyo Bhattacharya** @Ananyo 59s
Hum. istock thinks this is what a young female scientist looks like
istockphoto.to/wHwrEz

**Guardian Science** @guardianscience 55s
Today's mystery bird for you to identify | @GrrrScientist
gu.com/p/35gjt/tf

**Guardian Science** @guardianscience 55s
British tanks to be sent to Germany for storage so army can sell land in UK gu.com/p/35eqz/tf

**skullsinthestars** @drskyskull 3m
Wow, @DarrellIssa is a misogynistic mofo.
alternet.org/newsandviews/a... #p2
Retweeted by Emily Willingham

BBC (10%)

Write the top four paragraphs of a BBC news article and headline:

- Headline (30-33 characters long including spaces)
- Article (aim for 80 words across four sentences, but you can range between 72 and 88 words in reality)

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One test may 'find many cancers'

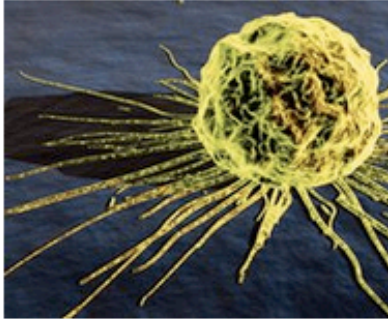
By James Gallagher
Health and science reporter, BBC News

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Could one test be used for a range

Related

Test for

Longer article (10%)

400 word news story in the style New York Times, Globe & Mail, Toronto Star, Washington Post or magazines (e.g. Scientific American, Discovery, New Scientist, Natural History, Newsweek, Time):

- **Headline** (no length limit, but you get one point for having a headline that makes sense, and another for it being snappy/high quality)
- **Article** (less than 400 words; if they are over 440 words or under 360 they are disqualified)
- **Include quotes**
- **Make-up outside comment** if you want to

Things to remember:

- Remember to include a reference to the study e.g. “The study in *Palaeontology*” or the equivalent
- italicize scientific names
- say where people are from

Details

- Articles should be **12 pt** type font, **1.5** spaced
- Student number **ONLY** at the top right
- Order of articles: Tweet, BBC, Longer
- Include number of characters for tweet and BBC article (headline and body), and words for longer article.

- Example Popular Science Article.pdf
- Assignment 3-Writing a Popular Science Article 2012
- Slides from Professor Sharp
- Recordings of press conference will be available.
- Reading: “Nine ways scientists demonstrate they don’t understand journalism”

Deadline

23:59 on 21st November 2012

Submit your articles online before 23:59 on the **21st November 2012** AND by submitting a copy on Blackboard under Assessments/Assignment 2 - Popular Science Article

Remember

- Get a lively quote in there from the researcher
- Think about getting an outside comment
- Remember to reference the original study in the article