Module 07 Lesson 03
VoiceThread: Example Article
Transcript

Let's use the article that you have just read as an example of how the science in the media checklist can be applied.

Let's start by looking at the source. This article appears in TIME magazine which is a science publication aimed at the general public and it employs highly credible scientific writers. As such, it probably has some level of credibility.

The article acknowledges missing pieces of the puzzle as well as other areas of research that are still needed. As such, the claim appears somewhat reputable.

Next we turn our attention to looking at the personnel, starting with the scientists.

One of the scientists mentioned in this study was Dr Matthew Smith. A quick Google search reveals that he is the director of research for a major US academic hospital. As such he no doubt has no commercial interests in the results and therefore should be a fairly reputable source.

The funding agencies were not mentioned so we cannot made any judgment call there but the reporter was Alice Park. A quick Google search reveals that she is a senior reporter with TIME and currently serves as the department head for TIME's science coverage. As such, we can be fairly confident in the quality of the reporting.

So it is probably safe to say that the scientists and reporter were credible.

The next step is to look at the evidence whereby we can assess the article based on what we know about the process of the scientific method.

When looking at the evidence, this article has stated the actual scientific journal where the study was published. It also gives an indication of what the hypotheses were.

If we look at the sample sizes, both studies had quite large sample sizes and both studies used effective treatment and control groups.

No graphs were presented but percentages were provided and given that the research was published in a reputable scientific journal, we can no doubt infer that appropriate statistics were used in the original research.

As such, we can ascertain what the hypotheses were, the sample sizes seemed appropriate, there was proper use of controls, and the proper use of statistics was inferred.

When looking at the point of view, balanced reporting is generally considered good journalism. In this article, even though the results have shown remarkable findings, other experts were consulted who provided a balanced point of view and put the results in a more general perspective.

So it is probably safe to say that the reporting was balanced but the consensus of the scientific community was not presented.

Looking down the list, there is a number of ticks in the green boxes and none in the red boxes, so this article appears to be a good popular media source of scientific information.