

Memo

To: Dr. Derek Ross, Dr. Leigh Gruwell, Dr. Stewart Whittemore
From: Carolina Bell
Re: PFAS Infographic Meta-Analysis
Date: April 7, 2025

This memo describes the goals, development, and design choices for the PFAS Infographic.

Introduction

The document, a 36" by 48" printed academic poster about the risks of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in consumer products, was originally designed as an assignment for ENGL 7080: Document Design with Dr. Derek Ross. After the course, I further revised this document to present at the 2024 Auburn Research Symposium.

Audience and Purpose

The infographic outlines PFAS development, health concerns regarding skin exposure, and relevant public policy. It is aimed at an academic audience, specifically a conference setting. The purpose of the poster is to inform about what PFAS are and the emerging concerns related to personal care products.

Significance

Given distrust in science (Itchuaqiyah et al., 2023; Jordan et al., 2011; Wynne, 1992), this work is an example of how technical communicators can facilitate trust building and community engaged research. PFAS is an emerging health concern and a previously unregulated group of chemicals (Novak et al., 2023). Given the academic audience, I highlighted the gaps in scientific research and how women and users of make-up products and period products are overlooked.

Goals and Document Development

I planned for the infographic to be aimed at the public, but after low-fidelity usability testing with an initial sketch, I switched to an academic audience because of how pervasive PFAS contamination is. With the updated sketch, I conducted focused low-fidelity with reaction cards. According to Benedek & Miner (2002), reaction cards are an effective way to generate feedback data. The user said she felt conviction for the academic poster sketch, which she did not identify for the previous iteration.

InDesign was used to create the design and Photoshop was used to produce the images. In revision for the research symposium, I made several changes to make the visual composition less overwhelming. I made a QR code for my reference list to save space, increased margins between text and images, and rearranged content to create better balance of negative space. I also made a new title (*The gendered impact of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS): A new perspective on PFAS exposure research*) to make the significance of my research explicit.

Design

Type

I chose Veranda as my body text and Proxima Nova as my heading text because I wanted the poster to be clean and simple. Veranda is an accessible text and both are sans-serif texts, which helps contribute to their readability (Wyatt & DeVoss, 2017).

Simplicity

I chose to include photographed images of products instead of hand drawn illustrations. A more figurative than abstractive design allowed me to increase familiarity with products (Cairo, 2013, p. 52, 54). I used a Nikon D3500 Digital SLR camera for high resolution images of 24.2 megapixels. I adjusted the image quality using auto settings of Photoshop, as informed by Kimball (2007). This allowed my graphics to appear clear and detailed when blown up to the bigger size when printed. I picked the shade of red (CMYK 0, 83, 79, 18), and went with monochrome accents (24%, 40% and 70% opacity) for a simple colorway. I also did not include any decorative design elements, as to not distract from the nuanced information. The images with titles and text complements the image and helps strengthen the message (Cairo, 2013, p. 57). All the design elements I included were functional and served a purpose in helping communicate the information.

References

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