

Industry Paper

When Science Goes Urban

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Practitioner Report

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ABSTRACT: With the biennial meeting of the International Society for Cerebral Blood Flow & Metabolism, BRAIN & BRAIN PET, being awarded to Glasgow in 2022 the local organizing committee (LOC) wanted to leave a legacy from the meeting. They wanted the people of Glasgow, Glaswegians, to remember this prestigious meeting being in the city through using this as a springboard to promote awareness of the importance of brain health. A series of events were planned and delivered across the city in the weeks before and after the conference to around 600 children in primary schools and over 1000 members of the general public. Feedback was uniformly positive from these events both from participants, teachers, supporting charities and those who volunteered their time to share their research and interests through these opportunities.

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How to Set Sails

The International Society for Cerebral Blood Flow & Metabolism (ISCBFM) covers various aspects of cerebrovascular research, particularly related to brain function metabolism and imaging and presents state-of-the-art and novel discoveries. BRAIN & BRAIN PET, the biennial meeting of the ISCBFM, is one of the top conferences in neuroscience research particularly aspects such as cerebral blood flow, the function of the neurovascular unit and the blood-brain barrier, brain imaging, and cerebrovascular pathology.

Dr Lorraine Work was involved in the successful bid from Glasgow to host ISCBFM's prestigious BRAIN & BRAIN PET conference in 2022. It was vitally important to Dr Work and the local organizing committee (LOC) that the conference left a lasting impact on the city. The LOC created a Brain Health Awareness Campaign which focused on two distinct areas which it was felt were critical in terms of providing a platform to deliver meaningful impact within the local community:

- Inspiring the Next Generation of scientists, particularly those interested in the brain – Build a Brain Workshops organized and led by Dr Lizzie Burns who joined virtually.

- To impart vital Public Health Messaging, promoting the importance of Brain Health to the population of Glasgow to combat Glasgow's lower-than-average life expectancy - Brain Health Awareness Day.

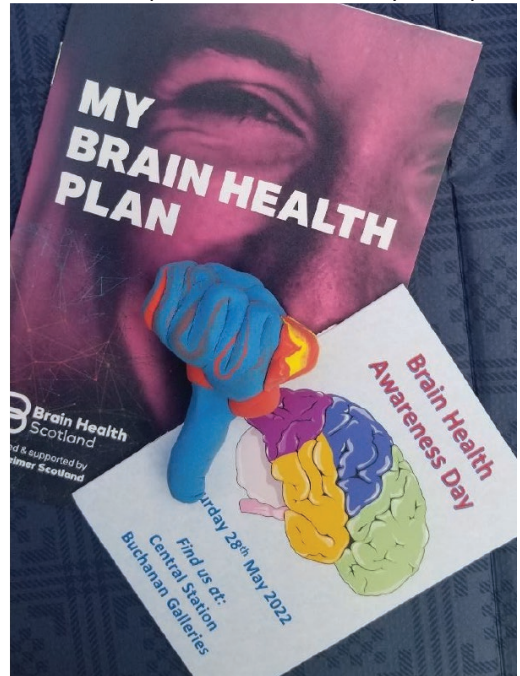
The team at Glasgow Convention Bureau helped to connect the organisers with Glasgow City Council's Education team, Network Rail and Buchanan Galleries to arrange a variety of events aimed at helping people to better understand how making healthy lifestyle choices impacts the human brain.

Some Organizational Insights

- Organizers connected with, Brain Health Scotland, Alzheimer's Research UK (including the Scotland Network) and the British Heart Foundation to host events designed to help people better understand the impact of healthy lifestyles on the brain.
 - The British Heart Foundation is a cardiovascular research charity in the United Kingdom. It funds medical research related to heart and circulatory diseases and their risk factors, and runs influencing work aimed at shaping public policy and raising awareness (www.bhf.org.uk).
 - Alzheimer's Research UK is a dementia research charity in the United Kingdom, founded in 1992 as the Alzheimer's Research Trust (www.alzheimersresearchuk.org).
 - At Brain Health Scotland's mission is to inspire and empower you to protect your brain health and reduce your risk of diseases that lead to dementia (www.brainhealth.scot).
- Dr Lizzie Burns – a science-based artist and communicator who had previously designed the Build-a-Brain workshops was integral in the delivery of the workshops into Primary schools (@DrLizzieBurns on Twitter)
- Glasgow Central Station, the busiest train station in Scotland, hosted a 3,000-square-foot an inflatable brain that people could walk inside.
 - At Glasgow Central Station, the busiest train station in Scotland with over 100,000 passengers per day, we positioned a 3000 sqft inflatable brain that participants could walk inside, exploring the inner workings of the human brain, supported by a team of ~15 early careers and established researchers interested in diseases of the brain, who were given vital exposure representing their work within a public engagement setting.
 - As well as being a visually captivating installation in an area of heavy footfall in the city, more critically, this created a fun way to engage and inform the public about the importance of Brain Health, providing a great platform for early career researchers to discuss their areas of research with the local community.
 - The larger-than-life MEGA Brain is the world's only portable, inflatable, walk-through brain exhibit. Visitors step inside and wander through the interactive exhibit to learn how the brain works from the inside out.
 - The MEGA Brain was critical to the success and impact of the event as we knew it would draw a crowd as well as being an innovative, educational, and fun approach to teaching both adults and children about the central nervous system's most critical organ.
 - The journey starts in the frontal lobe, which is responsible for personality and higher cognitive functions, and continues through the cerebellum, the portion of the brain that controls

balance and coordination. Our volunteers engaged with the public to ensure that they left the MEGA Brain knows how to keep their brains healthy.

- Participants were also encouraged to write their own Brain Health Pledge – a commitment to make positive lifestyle changes to reduce their risk of neurological conditions in later life such as stroke and Alzheimer’s Disease (<https://brainhealthplan.brainhealth.scot/start>).
- Buchanan Galleries, one of Scotland’s largest shopping centres, featured a brain exhibition with brain health activities for people of all ages. Around 25 early career and established researchers volunteered their time to speak with members of the public as they passed.
 - Buchanan Galleries is one of Scotland’s largest shopping centres with 6,600 people per hour passing through its doors. There was a Brain exhibition featuring brain health activities for families and people of all ages to enjoy, including:
 - Building a pipe cleaner neuron
 - Virtual reality walks through dementia experiences
 - Build a brain, models of the brain and the nervous system as well as models to simulate the loss of sensation or vision and loss of function experienced by those who have had a stroke
 - Large snakes and ladders style game to demonstrate the importance of time after you suspect



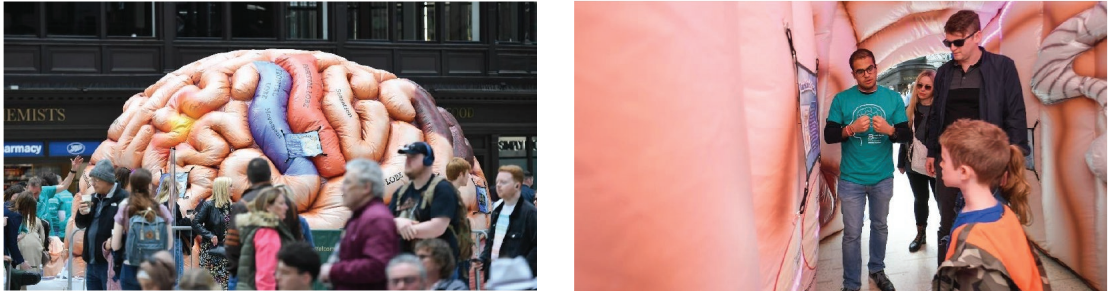


Figure 1a-1d: Snapshots from the Brain Health Awareness Day (©Glasgow Convention Bureau)

Events and Campaign Outcomes

- Introduced the Glasgow Brain Health Awareness Campaign, which used congress subject matter to maximize exposure and dissemination of key research to the Glasgow community.
- Over 1,000 members of the public engaged with and participated in the various activities and many took the “Brain Health Pledge”. The goal was to empower the local population to lead healthier lives, prolong quality of life, and act as advocates to the wider community.
- 18 Build-a-Brain workshops taught 600 primary school students about various brain structures and helped them build their brains from modelling clay. Facilitators helped them build their own brains by modelling clay
- Primary schools hosting Build-a-Brain workshops were selected based on cultural diversity and social deprivation index, assuring maximum benefit from the messages being communicated.
- Brain Health Scotland received a 120% increase in website traffic based on the regular weekly average.
- Twitter impressions increased 33% on the monthly average of Brain Health Scotland.
- Twitter mentions increased 88% on the monthly average of Brain Health Scotland.
- Media coverage included a feature in AMI magazine.

Next to the general public, the volunteers and the association itself took away some important benefits:

- Early career researchers received **training on public engagement** and how to impart science in a language that the public will understand and be able to relate to
- The Society which supports the BRAIN & BRAIN PET meetings, introduced the requirement to include public outreach and engagement for future BRAIN congresses in its bid process.

Conclusion / Lessons Learned

Dr Work and the members of the LOC learned a great deal from the experience. Central to the success of these diverse events were the contacts made through Glasgow Convention Bureau. Further, engaging with the charities and Brain Health Scotland helped to solidify the “Brain Health” message that the LOC were so keen to promote. The original bid aimed to leave a legacy in the host city about the meeting and Dr Work and the LOC feel that they exceeded their initial expectations in this regard. Such was the success of the program of events, funding has been secured within the University of Glasgow (where Dr Work is an Associate Professor) to continue delivery of the build-a-brain workshops while further expanding/developing these to include other systems in the body as outreach activities.