Finger on The Pulse
Spotlighting the people behind the science headlines

Where does personality come from? What’s it like to work in the emergency room during a global pandemic? Is there a cure for heart ache? Weekly podcast The Pulse asks the science and health questions you want to know the answers to, and those you hadn’t thought of yet. In this interview, host and executive producer Maiken Scott told Research Outreach more about the show’s history and mission.

Are you an introvert or an extrovert? Tell me more about the frontline workers about their experiences?

I see my role as translating scientific findings and complex issues to our audience in a way that is accessible.

We spoke to a paediatrician who was trying to weigh up the risks and benefits of allowing kids to go back to school. He explained that many scientists seem to have misunderstood the role of children in spreading the virus. Many of our guests were public health experts, who have been on the front lines, making tough decisions, and have been facing a lot of scrutiny from the public. One of the important takeaways for them has been to think not just about the message, but also the right messenger. Who is most likely to be trusted? What’s the right tone that engages people, and doesn’t sound preachy?

Tell me more about the new show on personality. Are you an introvert or an extrovert? Open to new experiences or comforted by routine? Shy or the life of the party?

Figuring out what makes us tick is an important part of understanding how we function within our families, communities and workplaces. Thousands of tests online promise to assess your personality – but what are they actually measuring? Where does personality come from, how does it form, and where does it live? In this episode, we explored the science behind how we become who we are.

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Maiken Scott has talked with many frontline workers during the pandemic.

Maiken Scott is host and executive producer of The Pulse podcast.

plastic materials. Each episode has a theme that we explore more deeply through feature stories or expert interviews. Our core audience is an educated lay audience.

Have you spoken to any of the frontline workers about their experiences?

Yes, for example, we interviewed an emergency room doctor, Avir Mitra, who worked in a New York City hospital in March 2020. He described the fear and confusion among his colleagues, and how nobody had a ‘playbook for a pandemic’. He also described how physicians were learning new things about the virus and its treatment every day, for example, how to best keep patients off ventilators to improve their chances of a full recovery. We also heard from a nurse who kept an audio diary every day after she came home from her shift and described her total physical and emotional exhaustion.

We hear stories about what makes for a healthy personality, how our brains betray who we are, and why we change depending on who we’re with. You can find a link here and listen as well! Personality is one of those issues where the more you look, the more you find, and realise that you hold a lot of assumptions about what personality is.
In a recent podcast, listeners learned about optimising brain function in times when you need it most.

Could tiny organisms devour our plastic trash?

The best stories have a surprise twist in them, or answer questions you never knew you had.

What was the most surprising fact that you learned whilst hosting the podcast?

So many, I don’t even know where to begin. Recently, I learned about ‘plastivores’ – organisms that live off plastic. They could play a key role in digesting our plastic trash. A few years ago, I was very surprised to learn that scientists don’t understand how exactly anaesthesia works; as in, they don’t understand the actual process. We have learned to use anaesthesia safely, but we don’t understand how it works! That still blows my mind. In our 50th anniversary of the moon landing episode, I was surprised to hear about some of the very serious challenges along the way, which made the fact that the landing happened and the astronauts made it back safely seem even more like a miracle.

What are your plans for the future of The Pulse?

This year, we hope to focus on some of the fallout from the pandemic. What have we learned? How will these new vaccines impact the future of vaccine development? We also want to return to doing more shows about non-health related science.

Is there anything else you’d like to tell our readers?

We’re always interested in hearing about your work so get in touch!