OPEN HEALTH

Unlock the full potential of your Scientific Communication Platform

By Karen King, Zoe Evans, Emma Winter, and Brian Jepson

A well-crafted Scientific Communication Platform (SCP) is an essential cross-functional resource to support your communication strategy, yet SCPs often remain underutilized.

This article draws on OPEN Health's expertise in overcoming some of the common pitfalls of SCPs and highlights key considerations and recommendations to ensure maximum impact. We also highlight how SCPs may need to evolve to support true omnichannel engagement in a medical affairs plan.

Introduction:
Why is an SCP important?

An SCP* is an internal strategic resource designed to ensure clear, concise, and aligned communications across cross-functional teams. It provides the foundation for consistent and accurate communication with external stakeholders underpinning the communication objectives. An SCP typically consists of scientific statements, supporting statements, and evidence regarding the disease state, unmet needs, and attributes of a pharmaceutical product or portfolio of products, and can be developed alongside a scientific narrative and lexicon.

*Different companies can use different terminology to describe an SCP, including a scientific narrative or scientific framework. For the purposes of this document, we assume a scientific narrative is a short summary of the overall key communication points from the SCP.

A well-structured and well-implemented SCP can be a critical asset to enable consistent, impactful messaging and streamline the development of Medical Affairs materials throughout a product lifecycle:

Ensures aligned and consistent communication across all materials and markets

Facilitates identification of data and publication gaps to feed into clinical development and publication planning

Aids cross-functional team planning and acts as a starting point for commercial and HEOR narratives

Creates cost efficiencies by simplifying the content development process

Saves time for internal teams in briefing and reviewing

Supports with team onboarding and training processes

Why are they often underutilized?

"When working with new medical affairs clients, we always review the consistency of key communication points and often find inconsistencies across materials. Although the team have an SCP already, it is clearly not being used. Often it has been developed in isolation so wider cross-functional teams have not inputted into it, or don't know where to find it or simply how to use it."

Karen King, EVP, Medical and Scientific Services

In our experience, the underutilization of SCPs can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, it should not just be a "data dump", presenting an overwhelming amount of detail and facts without a clear connection to the communication strategy. This makes it difficult for users to navigate and find the necessary information. Secondly, the scientific statements and evidence are often outdated, further diminishing its usefulness. Lastly, there is often a lack of effective dissemination to internal teams, coupled with insufficient guidance on how to use the information.

For example, a study of 115 staff conducted by Ipsen found that awareness of SCPs was low and more common among employees in a global role (43%) than those working in a local role (37%); among those in a medical role only 52% were aware of SCPs.[1]

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[1]Blankenship et al. Awareness and use of scientific communication platforms: findings from a mid-sized pharmaceutical company employee survey. ISMPP May 2022 Washington.

Maximizing the impact of your SCP

OPEN Health supported clients with 87 SCPs in 2024, and we have drawn on this extensive experience to create our recommended **"OPEN"** approach for developing and implementing impactful SCPs:

O
Openness
Cross-functional team collaboration to develop content

P
Plan
Consider structure, format, stakeholders, and visuals to increase usability

E
Effective dissemination
Conduct training to increase awareness and adoption

N
Nurture the plan
Measure impact, adapt, and update

Openness

Cross-functional team collaboration to develop content

An effective SCP offers value for all functional teams; therefore, cross-functional representatives (medical affairs, clinical, preclinical, HEOR, commercial, and patient teams) must input into its development to ensure it is fit for purpose. Crucially, securing input from key internal stakeholders early in development facilitates use of the SCP once disseminated to the wider team. Our approach recommends internal cross-functional team input at the following stages in content development:

1. Upfront key internal stakeholder interviews to gather insights

2. Cross-functional team workshop to agree structure and discuss content

3. Review of content throughout

Depending on the stage the product is at within its lifecycle (we often work on SCPs for products in Phase 2 and onwards) and what is already available internally, we can discuss and agree the communication strategy and objectives, proposed structure, themes, and lexicon during the cross functional team workshop. Discussing priority data and whether aspirational statements will be used and how they will be used is also valuable, particularly as gaps in data feed into the publication plan and clinical development, and the wider evidence generation plan. In our experience, products that are part of a portfolio, have multiple indications, or are a co-promote require even more careful consideration, and having expert strategic facilitators who can guide a team through this process can be invaluable. These workshops can be conducted in person or virtually using online collaboration tools such as Mural to obtain input from everyone. Typically, it can take 4–6 months to develop and disseminate an SCP, depending on a range of variables, but taking the time at this stage is important to ensure the final SCP is fit for purpose and can achieve its objectives.
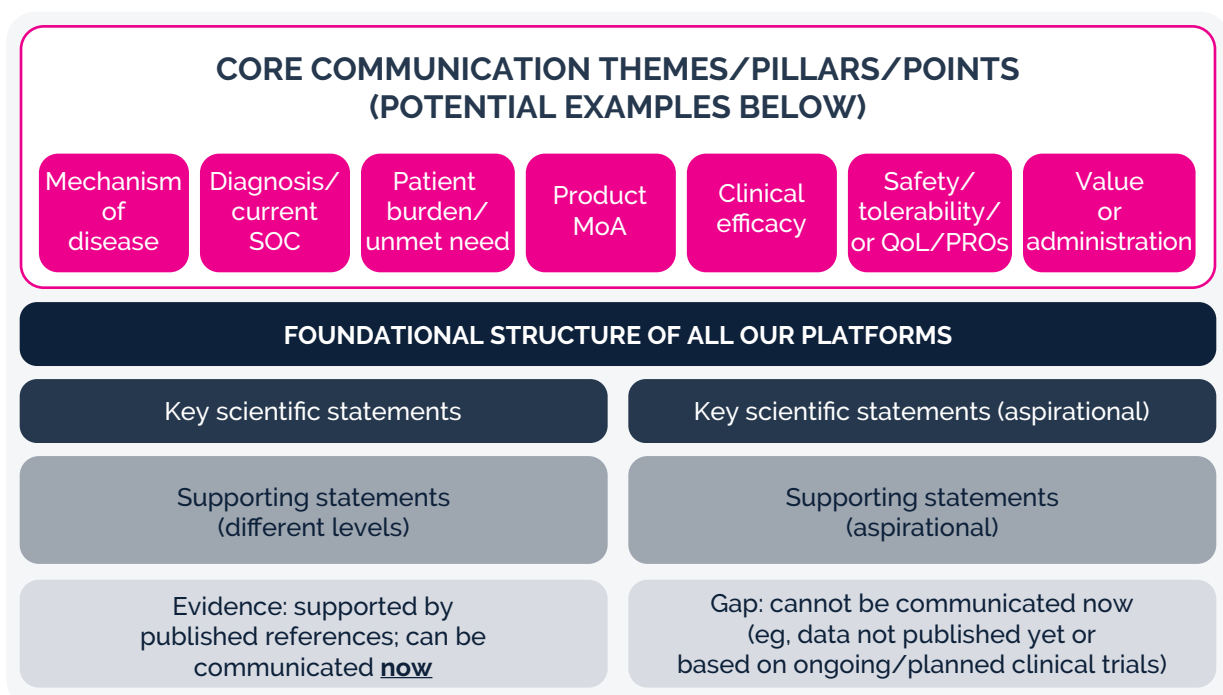
Plan

Consider structure, format, stakeholders, and visuals to increase usability

> *"To ensure the SCP is not a data dump, it needs to be a strategic document that is aligned with your communication strategy and easy to navigate."*

Emma Winter, SVP, Medical and Scientific Services

SCPs often end up being a data dump comprising a vast library of therapy area and product information that can be unwieldy and difficult for the user to navigate. We recommend your SCP only includes key, prioritized communication points aligned with your product communication strategy. Whether structured by communication objective or core communication theme/pillar/point, every level including scientific statements and supporting statements should be clear and concise, and effectively articulate the scientific narrative. Often an SCP is structured to include communication points regarding the disease state, unmet need, product mechanism of action/rationale, clinical efficacy, safety/tolerability, and value. However, you should not feel restricted by this – and we recommend that the structure supports your communication objectives, so your SCP could include testing or administration themes among others, if relevant for the product.

Our recommended structure helps your teams to focus on core communication points

**CORE COMMUNICATION THEMES/PILLARS/POINTS
(POTENTIAL EXAMPLES BELOW)**

Mechanism of disease	Diagnosis/ current SOC	Patient burden/ unmet need	Product MoA	Clinical efficacy	Safety/ tolerability/ or QoL/PROs	Value or administration

FOUNDATIONAL STRUCTURE OF ALL OUR PLATFORMS

Key scientific statements	Key scientific statements (aspirational)
Supporting statements (different levels)	Supporting statements (aspirational)
Evidence: supported by published references; can be communicated **now**	Gap: cannot be communicated now (eg, data not published yet or based on ongoing/planned clinical trials)

In the past, SCPs were typically delivered in Word or PowerPoint formats. Although easy to update and present to teams, these formats can result in teams having multiple versions that lack navigability and filtering functions, although a linked PowerPoint and interactive pdf format can facilitate navigation. Increasingly, digital alternatives are the preferred approach for housing a more user-friendly SCP. Digital platforms and AI solutions can streamline development and enhance the end-user experience by improving:

- **Navigation:** enhanced searchability, tag-able content to support filtering, secure AI-driven Q&A function to find relevant information on a chosen topic (restricted to SCP statements)

- **Integration:** integrated lexicon or glossary, streamlined referencing and abbreviations, inbuilt medical–legal review, Word and PowerPoint plugins to allow direct cross-checking or inclusion of supporting statements in content development

- **Ease of adaptation:** local operating companies in markets can translate each statement and adapt them for their own region while always remaining directly linked to the individual material to ensure consistency across regions

- **Ease of updating:** ability to update individual statements easily without affecting wider content

Although most SCPs are written with the primary HCP stakeholder in mind, considering scientific statements and evidence important to communicate to other key stakeholders can also be helpful. Incorporating key statements for audiences such as payors, policy makers, and patients will help the SCP to be a more valuable cross-functional team document suitable for use across a wide range of omnichannel tactics. This approach can avoid the need for multiple different internal communication documents and enables the SCP to truly serve as a one-stop guide for all cross-functional teams. Taking this a step further, developing scientific statements suitable for HCP personas also increases usability for omnichannel engagement materials.

Creating a visual lexicon or "vizicon" – a clear and consistent visual library to support the SCP

A lexicon is a well-established tool used to support the SCP, defining consistent language and terminology associated with specific topics. We recommend considering development of an additional visual lexicon or "vizicon" to define a consistent look and feel for visual components of the SCP, where relevant, to support effective and memorable storytelling.

Consistency within all elements of the vizicon is key to building a recognizable identity. This includes ensuring colors, style, and formatting are consistent across all visuals, and that elements such as molecules, cells, receptors, and drugs are consistently represented. Key data, such as efficacy data, should also be visualized in a consistent way no matter the type of chart used.

Here, we show an example of a vizicon created to support the SCP of a fictitious drug of the future: "future-cel," a CAR T-cell therapy for glioblastoma.

FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY

Presentation

Glioblastoma is a rare and aggressive type of brain tumour that originates from glial cells

Burden of disease

Glioblastoma is one of the most difficult cancers to treat with lower median overall survival than other cancers

Mechanism of disease

Glioblastoma originates from astrocytes, which are glial cells that support and nourish neurons in the brain

Mechanism of action

Glioblastoma tumour

Future-cel is a CAR T-cell therapy that targets two proteins commonly found in brain tumours: epidermal growth factor receptor, and interleukin-13 receptor alpha 2

Administration

Future-cel treatment process includes blood collection, CAR T cell creation, administration, and side effect monitoring

Efficacy

Future-cel treatment increased the likelihood of achieving a partial response in patients with recurrent glioblastoma
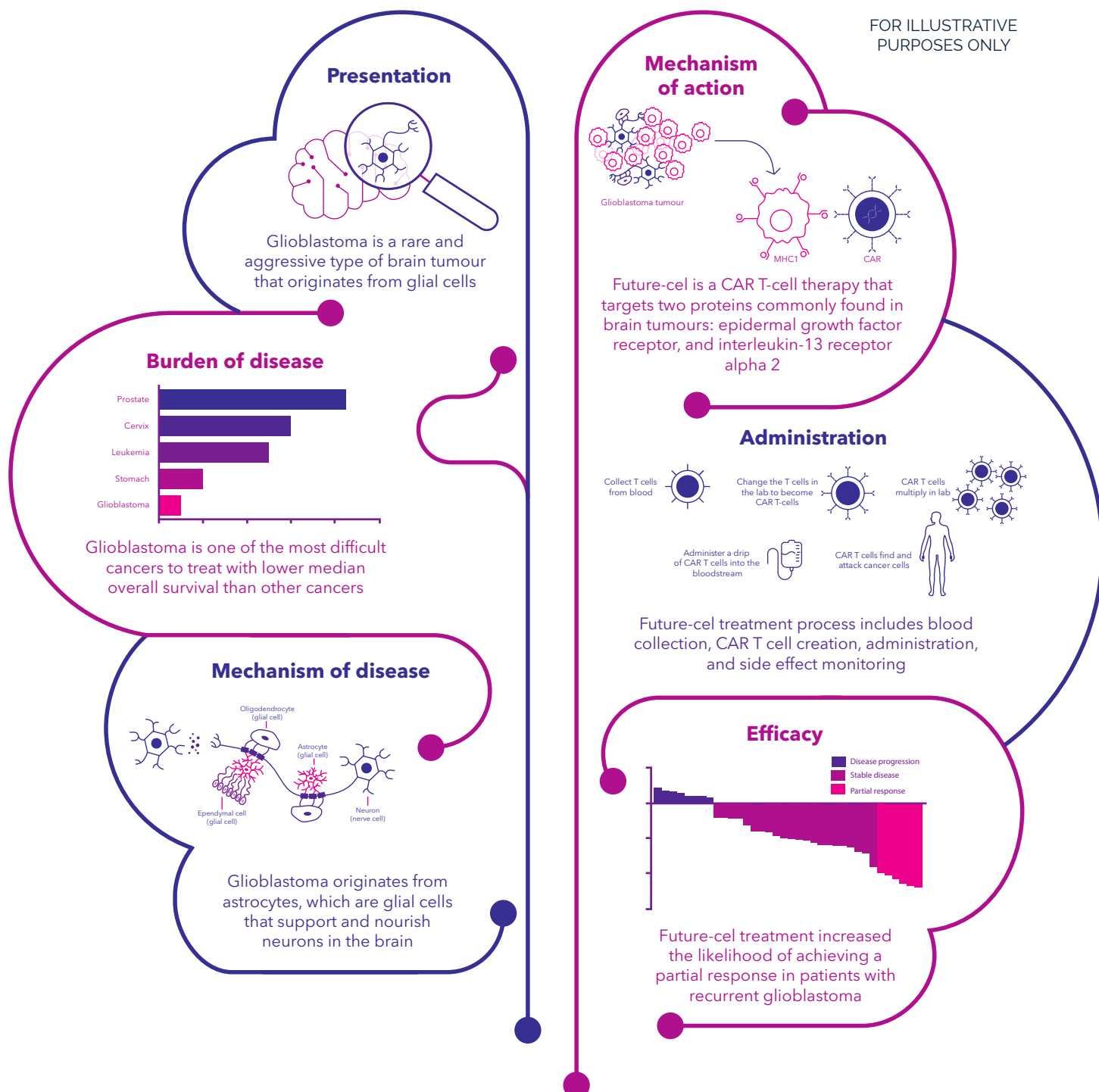
Figure authors: Brian Jepson, Anni Lee, Bradley Meehan, Louise Coghlin, Justin Sodano

E Effective dissemination

Conduct training to increase awareness and adoption

> *"So much time is spent developing the content of the SCP but the roll-out is always an afterthought. However, it is just as important in terms of making an impact."*

Zoe Evans, Scientific Director

Instead of simply uploading the SCP to your internal repository and notifying teams of its availability, we recommend creating a formal dissemination plan: at a minimum, a series of webinars with the wider team and local operating companies, but ideally, a suite of companion materials to show how the SCP should be used across different materials. We also recommend ensuring that teams properly onboard all partner agencies to maximize the value and impact of the SCP and improve consistency in content development.

N Nurture the plan
Measure impact, adapt, and update

It is critical to measure the impact of the SCP, including if and how it is being used and by whom, and to gather feedback on what the global and local teams find most useful. Actively gathering a range of qualitative and quantitative feedback will help medical affairs teams demonstrate the value of an SCP to the broader organization. Off-the-shelf digital platforms also capture extensive metrics that monitor exactly which statements have been used, in what type of material, and by which region. An SCP is a live document that needs to be continuously updated to be useful. In therapy areas in which new data releases are frequent, we recommend the SCP is updated at least every 6 months.

	Qualitative	Quantitative
Example approaches	Survey of users 1:1 stakeholder interviews Focus group of scientific platform users Review of % of external materials (using AI tools) HCP AI social listening	Number of views and interactions Number of downloads Number of times accessed (if online) Frequency of updates/time to update
Benefits	Generate discussion and improve engagement True insights into the "user experience" Assess how SCP being used in materials Impact on HCP conversations	Easy to collect Can track time over time Identify trends in use (e.g. around congress) Understand if agreed process milestones are being achieved

Summary

OPEN Health has deep scientific knowledge across a breadth of therapy areas, alongside wide-ranging specialist expertise in developing SCPs for products across the development lifecycle. Working in partnership with our clients, we are well versed at developing SCPs that cross-functional teams buy into and endorse.

Our scientific and medical strategists can guide you through the process of reaching cross-functional team alignment, as this can be challenging but is made easier with the right tools and expertise. Moreover, we can optimize SCP structure and format to meet your needs, whether that is an easily updated navigable PowerPoint or a full integrated online digital platform to increase access.
We can also partner with you to provide learning and development expertise for implementing an effective dissemination plan, and track metrics to ensure you can demonstrate the value of the SCP to your organization.

Reach out today to discuss how our **OPEN** approach can help you develop an impactful SCP, ensuring clear, concise, and aligned communications across all your Medical Affairs materials.