BioMedBridges is building links or ‘bridges’ between different biological resources to allow the integration of the data they contain. This work will allow new types of research to be carried out, leading to new insights and discoveries. These bridges span across the biomedical sciences and link together a wide range of resources.

Future users of these bridges will come from a variety of backgrounds; they include medics and healthcare workers, PhD students and academic leaders, and research scientists in public health or the pharma industry. These diverse end-users will also have different levels of experience and expertise in their respective fields.

Engagement with end-users will be a critical undertaking for BioMedBridges to ensure uptake of the tools and resources developed in the project. This will involve raising awareness of the tools, informing how they work, when they can be used, and training that effectively guides people to effectively use the resources in their own research.

Tips for good end-user engagement

Know your users
How well do you know your potential users? Whilst you may be developing a resource for ‘clinical researchers’, what do you really know about them? What are their needs? How will they use a tool?

Create user profiles
Creating a user profile will assist in getting to know your users. It is like writing a story, describing what the user currently does, what they want to achieve, and how your tool will help them towards this goal.

Don’t build for yourself
Remember that most users will not be bioinformaticians. The more advanced the tool, the fewer users will be able to engage with it easily. Look at ways to maximise the audience you can reach with the tool.

Ola is an MD/PhD, working on an oncology research project. “I’m looking for protein biomarkers for the early detection of bladder cancer, specifically peptides from transitional-cell carcinomas that are shed into the urine,” she explains. “I do mass spectrometry of samples from patients coming in for biopsies. I need to identify the proteins whose production is up- or down-regulated. I’d like to know more about the cellular processes leading to this change. This might help us find novel therapies, too.”

Keep your message simple
When engaging with end-users don’t over-complicated your core message. Focus on what they will be able to do with it, follow with basics of how it operates, then discuss the technical tool aspects.

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Documentation isn’t training
Anyone should be able to read a manual and make use of a tool. Training goes beyond instructions: it provides context and theory, it explains why and when to do things, and importantly the pitfalls to avoid.

Take onboard feedback
Development is an on-going process. Use training events to assess how the tool performs in the hands of your end-users. This might be observations, discussions or question and answer sessions. All of this can feed back into refining the product.

WP12 is here to help
If you have any questions about ensuring good engagement or want to request assistance in the development of end-user training materials, then please contact us.

BioMedBridges
www.biomedbridges.eu/training