Hosting a successful lab tour

Lab tours are a great way for Alzheimer’s Research UK to show our supporters the difference their donations are making. While it may seem every-day to you, it can be a memorable and inspiring experience for a member of the public who donates money to fund your research.

When you help us by hosting a lab tour, our staff will assist you in organising the day and take responsibility for inviting and communicating with those attending. To make sure everything runs smoothly on the day, we have pulled together a short guide to hosting a lab tour with some key points to consider.

How many people can I host?

You may be limited by seminar room or lab space, so please let us know as soon as possible how many people you can host. That way we can invite just enough people so that everyone feels comfortable and has a place to sit. If you have limited lab space, you could think about splitting up some of the lab visit, so that people can visit different parts of the lab in smaller groups. In some cases, lab tours may be specially arranged for an MP or major donor, and so may be a shorter and more personal visit.

The format of the visit

This is likely to vary depending on the size of the group and the type of supporter attending. Our lab tours tend to be around two hours long and the following format normally works well:

- **Start with refreshments** to give people time to arrive, get to know each other and chat to staff from your lab. You will need to arrange refreshments yourself, but send the invoice to us and we will cover the costs. We will let you know of any dietary requirements for visitors attending.
- **Set the scene** with a short talk. Alzheimer’s Research UK will need to give a short overview of who we are first, and then pass over to you for a 10min (6-8 slide) talk followed by a few questions. A short introduction to your research and its importance is enough, and remember to keep your language as simple as possible and avoid scientific jargon. Try to give your work as much context as possible – how does your research play a part in making life better for people with dementia now or in the future? Be conscious of describing your research in a way that is sensitive to those affected by dementia. Replace words like ‘subject’ with ‘volunteer’ or ‘participant’.
- **Finish with a tour of the lab** so that your visitors can see research in action and talk to some of the staff working on the project. There are different ways you can do this. You may wish to take visitors around the lab yourself as one group or split visitors into smaller groups to visit ‘research stations’ and see different techniques in action. You may also choose to have students on hand to talk visitors through posters or set up small Q&A groups on different topics, whichever works best for you.
Accessibility

Lab tour visitors may have hearing difficulties or be visually impaired. They may also have accessibility needs and so may be unable to climb steps or walk for long distances across a building. Please bear that in mind when deciding which space to use to host your tour. Also bear this in mind when writing your presentation slides and if you will be speaking in an auditorium, make sure your voice will be heard. Our staff can advise you on any particular accessibility needs for those attending.

Please also make sure that the toilets are accessible and easy to find.

Finding the venue

It is important to provide ARUK staff with clear and detailed instructions for how to find the venue, so that we can pass these on to everyone attending. You may also wish to put a sign up outside the building or direction signs around the campus if your building is particularly hard to find. You will also need to provide contact details (including mobile numbers) so that we can get through to you if there are any problems on the day.

If visitors need to check-in with security, please let us know in advance so that they can add extra time onto their journey. Also, make sure that we are aware of any health conditions that may affect the visit (e.g. if visiting an MRI scanner and cannot go in with a pacemaker).

Many visitors may need to arrive by car, so let us know whether parking is available onsite or whether arrangements can be made for this. If not, please advise on the best public transport to your location.

Staffing

Our supporters are always keen to talk to researchers who are benefiting from their donations. Please consider asking members of staff from your lab to attend to talk to visitors, and to chaperone groups moving from lab to lab so that people don’t get lost. Also make sure staff in the labs are aware of the visit so that they can make sure there are no hazards present and can be around to talk to the visitors about the work they are doing.
Check-list

We’ve also pulled together a checklist for you to work through in the run up to the visit.

- What time will it start and on what day?
- How many people can you accommodate?
- What format will the day take?
- Which members of staff will be attending?
- Have you provided ARUK with detailed directions and contact information for the day?
- Does the building have adequate signposting?
- Is there parking available?
- Where will visitors meet and who will meet them?
- Will visitors need to register with security?
- Have refreshments been ordered and any dietary requirements met?
- Is the lab accessible and are toilets also easy to find and access?
- Do you need to warn visitors of any hazards in the lab?
- Have you prepared your talk and arranged audiovisual support (if necessary)?
- Do you need any equipment for the day (e.g. chairs, mics)?
- Do you need to make anyone in your department administration team aware of the visit?
- Is there a registered first aider and are they aware of the visit?
- Are staff in the lab aware of the visit and willing to talk to visitors about their work?