Video introductions from authors can aid non-science majors in understanding primary scientific literature by Kiana Kasmai | Chelsey Manrique | Amy Acosta

Introduction: Primary scientific literature (PSL) is a source of information of current research. Most universities don’t require students to read PSL; this is especially true for non-science majors. I’m interested in asking non-science majors “If you could meet the author of a research paper, what would you ask them?”

Methods: A questionnaire was developed in order to investigate what other learning styles students are interested in. Two groups of students were tested; one group of biology majors (n=360) and another group of non-biology majors (n=20). Students read a selected annotated PSL article and then completed a questionnaire. Quantitative and qualitative research methods were chosen as a way to further understand how participants would want to incorporate other study techniques such as audio or visual aids.

Results: A majority of the responses asked for the authors to further explain the model system being used in the research paper. As this is not currently a Learning Lens category on the annotated PSL, having this information in a video with the author will provide additional information. Similarly, other students asked for the authors to explain the figures shown in the paper. While this is a Learning Lens category, it suggests that simply explaining the figures shown may not lead to a complete understanding and perhaps the author interviews can be used to for this.

Conclusion: Based on these data, I will develop short author interviews that (1) aid in the explanation of the research and (2) put a face to the research. I predict that having additional information from the authors can be beneficial for non-science majors as they read PSL. The additional clarification would aid both students that wish to pursue science and students that wish to better understand the world around them although they are not pursuing science.