**Nigel Russell: Creating a Community of Precision Medicine Leaders by Leveraging the Media to Drive Innovation**

Guest: Nigel Russell, Founder and Co-president Journal of Precision Medicine, Precision Medicine Leadership Summit*Welcome to* [*The Precision Medicine Podcast*](https://www.interventioninsights.com/precisionmedicinepodcast)*, where experts come to discuss the problems oncologists, reference labs, and payers face as precision medicine grows, and consider solutions for advancing the quality of patient-centered cancer care.*

Jerome Madison: Welcome to the Precision Medicine Podcast. I'm Jerome Madison, host of the podcast and today we have Nigel Russell, the founder of the Journal of Precision Medicine. Nigel, thanks for coming on and talking about all the great things that you guys have going on.

Nigel Russell: Oh, my pleasure Jerome, thank you for having me.

Jerome Madison: How did the publication start and how did you develop the focus of your content?

Nigel Russell: Great question. I've been involved in life science publishing for over 20 years and about five years ago started thinking about what are the upcoming issues that face the life sciences in general and had the idea for the Journal of Precision Medicine. We were very fortunate with President Obama announcing the precision medicine initiative about five months after we launch. So we were on a very fortuitous timeline with that and lot of discussions with various stakeholders that we felt there was a need for the journal and it is not a peer-review journal, or a newsy publication, it's more of an opinion-based publication for any and all individuals involved in the precision medicine arena.

Jerome Madison: Who are the bulk of your readers? Is it more industry, more on the clinical side, scientists?

Nigel Russell: As you can probably imagine with the precision medicine landscape being so broad, we have a wide variety of readers from, as you say, from researchers, physicians, scientists, clinicians, regulatory individuals, so it's very, very broad, so we're fortunate in that respect but again, that makes us have to be very diverse in our editorial content.

Jerome Madison: Yeah, I mean it takes a very keen eye because just as you said, the term precision medicine, what we're finding is expanding by the day and there's a lot of key folks who are interested and have eyes on the field, nonetheless insurers and investors, but what's your background because obviously it does take a very attentive focus on building a publication like this.

Nigel Russell: Well yeah, my previous publications were more involved on the manufacturing and outsourcing side of pharmaceuticals. So my background is not solely in the medical arena but it is very interesting that when we were pursing what thoughts were happening and taking place as far as launching the publication, there was just a lot of interest in the area of precision medicine, personalized medicine, targeted therapies, that were being brought to the public and I think the genesis behind the publication and how we decide on what topics to cover is brought to us a lot by our readers, how they feel the marketplace, payer side, is evolving and also the way in which the patient themselves, through various forms, is getting more educated. That brings a very deep insight into what areas that, editorially-wise, we should cover. We try to do that, as you can probably imagine, it's very, very difficult sometimes because there are so many areas to cover, but we try our best.

Jerome Madison: Well, as an industry publication, can you describe the growth and the interest happening in the precision medicine industry that you're hearing?

Nigel Russell: Yeah, great question. As I'm sure you do, Jerome, I attend a lot of industry conferences and try and keep myself up to speed on what's happening but I think in the artificial intelligence, machine learning areas, they're very, very white hot at the moment and that gives an interesting angle to the research and development of the therapies plus a lot of the, within healthcare systems, analyzes of patient populations that can be addressed and ultimately catered to much more effectively. So those are two areas but oncology has been, in my view, the poster child of precision medicine thus far because there's been a lot of investment made in that area but other areas that I have noticed over the last two or three years that have come in to the fore more and more are the cardiovascular arena, autoimmune diseases, rare disease, infectious disease, that are again being brought much more to the fore for these precision medicines, or targeted therapies.

Jerome Madison: It's enormous, the growth in how far genetic and genomic testing and the development of different tools are reaching into healthcare and as you said, it's not just oncology, it's other autoimmune diseases as well. As we said before, precision medicine's a pretty broad term, it's become a buzz word here in healthcare, but what was difficult in the beginning is that this is not a drug, it's not a prescription, it's not something that you can communicate to a clinician, where it's five milligrams BID, it really wasn't a product, but it was a service for the clinician and patient to deliver information. What are your ideas on how to best communicate precision medicine to the masses?

Nigel Russell: That's a wonderful question and I think as an industry that's still very, very difficult question to answer. I'm sure a lot of our listeners here and people associated with precision medicine are still struggling with the lack of education within various groups that are on the forefront of practicing medicine. For example, many of us may go to our general practitioner and bring up some ideas about whether the pharmacogenetic testing for various thing, drug interactions et cetera, and the GP will have no idea what you're talking about and I think that varies from what institution you are. As we all know, 85% of oncology patients reside in rural areas, so if you don't have access to one of the larger academic institutions, where these individuals are very cognizant about what precision medicine is and what it can be utilized, immunotherapies or suchlike, but the education part of it, I think as a publisher and as a conveyor of information, is very, very important. I think that is one area, as a health system, that we can improve on greatly. I think that is lacking.

Nigel Russell: I don't know whether it's a good thing to bring into medical school curriculum, I know students are very busy at the moment, but I think maybe we could bring into that environment more education about precision medicine. Not only on the genomic, that has again been an area that has had very strong support. I think we've got to bring to the discussion the areas of reimbursement, companion diagnostics, there are just so many facets, as you know, to precision medicine, that I don't think we can just focus on one specific area but it's just a broader education so that when someone does graduate from medical school, at least they have a general grounding, especially on the GP level, I think. Once you become more specialized, then you're going to be more aware of what options there are for precision medicine.

Jerome Madison: And I think you guys at The Journal of Precision Medicine do a tremendous service for the industry because you bring those key stakeholders together to talk about precision medicine, how we can communicate it, because as you mentioned, it just means different things to different people and one of the ways that you facilitated this conversation is with your Precision Medicine Leader’s Summit that you have coming up at different times this year. Tell us about the summit and what we can expect in attending?

Nigel Russell: As you would probably imagine, a great addition to the journal. When we first launched the journal, we felt that there was a need for a live event to try and gather the community together to discuss some of these various issues, and I think we're at this stage now, where everybody is more cognizant about what precision medicine means, but now it's about the implementation and how we, as a community, come together and try and face some of those issues.

Nigel Russell: So what we did is we started an annual event three years ago, which took place in San Diego. In the last couple of years, we did San Diego and Jersey City. This year, we're actually running three events, which we're very excited about. One upcoming very soon, in June, on the campus of UPenn Medical School. Another in October in San Diego and in December in Houston at the Texas Med Center but what we're trying to achieve with those events, again is to try and discuss the various areas. We have individuals from biopharm, smaller biotech, large academic institutions, the FDA, NIH, we're trying to ascertain where institutions and individuals are having issues with the implementation because I think that that is the next step in the evolution of precision medicine. What we're trying to do is to create ... I don't want to say a core group of individuals because it's much broader than that, but create a community, again that can discuss these issues on an ongoing basis and then utilize the journal to try and share some of the content that comes from our meetings.

Nigel Russell: So yeah, it's an exciting time, it's a very busy time I think for all involved in precision medicine because there are, again, so many facets and it seems to be a changing landscape every day. It seems to be new breakthroughs and again, sometimes with those breakthroughs come challenges but I think overall, the community itself is ready to address those.

Jerome Madison: Yeah. How do they register and when it comes to cost of registration, and things like that? Give us some information on where to send our listeners if they're interested.

Nigel Russell: It's a very, very simple website. It's www.precisionmedicineleaderssummit.com. There you'll find all information on all of our events. We feel that there's an ability to create a really intriguing discussion at the events and thanks to our sponsors, we consider ourselves one of the most reasonable events to attend.

Nigel Russell: All of the events are two days in length but they vary from, pendant upon your affiliation, whether it be a non for profit, or all the way up to industry, it varies from $200 to $900 I believe. So we feel that that ... and that includes a lot of networking too, which is important in this space because it is a collaborative effort, so not just listening to our panel discussions or our keynotes, there's a lot of opportunity to meet some individuals that you may not get the opportunity to meet otherwise.

Jerome Madison: Yeah for sure. I know I'll be there and it is June 11th and 12th in Philadelphia, the upcoming one, correct?

Nigel Russell: That's correct yeah and we're delighted to have Jerome there, he will be conducting some interviews with our panelists, our speakers, so keep your eyes and ears open for those, probably in mid-July. So thank you for doing that Jerome.

Jerome Madison: Yeah, I appreciate the invitation. As you said, it really is about networking and collaboration with what we're trying to do, bring this to the forefront of healthcare. Real quick, you've been working on this for gosh, I don't know, I'm sure quite a while. What are some of the speakers, the topics and what are you excited about about this summit that stands out?

Nigel Russell: Yeah, well I'm very excited that we've got a great faculty. We're kicking it off with an excellent keynote on digital pathology and artificial intelligence by Dr. Mike Montalto, who is the VP of translational medicine at Bristol-Myers Squibb. We also have a great contingent from the University of Pennsylvania, Perelman School of Medicine, Dr. Bob Vonderheide is going to be talking about immune health on the second day of the event and then one of the things that I'm very excited about is we have a keynote address on the evening of the first day with Dr. Grace Cordovano and she is going to be coming from a patient perspective, patient advocacy, which I think sometimes is overlooked at a lot of these events but at the end of the day, I think the best thing for us to remember, we're all working diligently every day, but the best thing to remember is it is all about the patient, so we're delighted to [inaudible 00:13:51] that perspective to the event and interspersed with that, you'll find other topics such as, oh gosh, diagnostics, accuracy, women's health, bioinformatic side of things, big data, there's just a broad swathe of content.

Nigel Russell: So yes, if you're able, we'd love to see people there. So everyone is welcome.

Jerome Madison: So for those of you out there who would like to follow the Journal of Precision Medicine, what's the best way that they can really follow you besides obviously going to the website, how can they track the articles that are coming out and follow you on social media possibly?

Nigel Russell: No, that's great, we're [inaudible 00:14:30] Twitter, Twitter feed which is @JournPracMed. We also have a LinkedIn presence for The Journal of Precision Medicine and also the Precision Medicine Leader’s Summit, you can get updates there. As far as editorial content, we produce the journal on a quarterly basis, so if you would like to receive that in your mailbox in a digital format, or in a print version, be sure to visit thejournalofprecisionmedicine.com and subscribe so you will ensure your own personal copy but those are the ways in which probably to follow us on social media and through the journal itself.

Jerome Madison: You can also connect with all of us on LinkedIn, I think that's where we're most active on our platform, certainly hit the Intervention Insights company page on LinkedIn, where we'll be posting live from the Precision Medicine Leader’s Summit. If you can also connect with me on LinkedIn, that's E. Jerome Madison on LinkedIn as well. So before we get out of here, also tell them about the other conferences that is coming in both California and Houston and when they should look out for registration for those conferences.

Nigel Russell: Sure, thanks Jerome. We have the PMLS West in October the 10th and 11th in San Diego. Registration will be open for that event mid-June. If you visit, again theprecisionmedicineleaderssummit.com website, there'll be more information on the agenda and ways in which to register and in December, at the Texas Medical Center, we will have our events on December 4th and 5th, registration will be open for that event in mid-August. So again, take your time to review on our website the current agenda and speakers, which will be available, again in mid-August. We'd love to see you at one of the events, so please let us know if you have any questions, we can always be reached via email or phone and our contact details on our website. Open to any questions.

Jerome Madison: Well we salute the work you've done because you have created a first class publication for the industry so we want to thank you Nigel Russell, and of course, all of our listeners for joining us today. We hope you'll tune in for the next episode of the Precision Medicine Podcast. Also connect with us on Twitter @PMPbyTrapelo. Don't forget you can download full transcripts of today's episode at precisionmedicinepodcast.com. If you enjoyed this episode, you probably know someone else who would too, so please tell them, they'll thank you and so will we.