



Centre for Personalised Medicine Art Competition

Additional information for teachers

The Oxford Centre for Personalised Medicine art competition aims to engage young people with the opportunities and challenges of personalised medicine, and is now in its fourth year. We hope it would be an enjoyable stretch and challenge activity for any students interested in art or human biology, and may be of particular note for students thinking about studying medicine or art at university.

Our competition website, [here](#), has all the details of this year's topic and how to apply, along with a downloadable poster and video that may be useful in introducing the competition to pupils. This additional information is intended to provide more context for teachers who might be interested in encouraging their class to take part in the competition.

2025-26 topic: the meaning of 'personalised medicine'

'Personalised medicine' means different things to different people. There is no universally agreed definition, and no single 'right' answer as to what it means.

In a scientific/medical context, 'personalised medicine' often refers to the use of data in determining a person's healthcare. Examples include:

- Tests aiming to work out whether a person might respond well to a particular medicine, or might be likely to get bad side effects.
- Tests aiming to work out if a person has a higher or lower chance of developing a common health problem, like breast cancer or heart disease, in order to adjust any screening they might be offered (for example, starting breast screening at a younger age if they are thought to have a higher genetic risk).

Often these tests are genetic, but they don't have to be- personalised medicine (by many definitions) can draw on any measurements about a person, ranging

from physical attributes like height and weight, to stuff like heart rhythm recordings from a smart watch.

But some would argue that this definition of 'personalised medicine' is too limited and focuses on technical considerations and easily measurable things at the expense of other important things that might 'personalise' a medical encounter. For example, in a research study asking members of the public to reflect on when they had or had not received personalised care, people often gave examples of where a clinician had or hadn't listened to them, or how healthcare systems had made it easier or harder for them to access healthcare (for example, thinking about mobility considerations in planning where to offer an appointment).

We would love to see artworks exploring either or both of these aspects, or that invite us to think about 'personalised medicine' in other new or challenging ways.

While there is no 'right' answer as to what personalised medicine means, we would just note that usually the idea encompasses ways of tailoring healthcare, that could be used for different people, and might mean different choices are made that lead to better outcomes for each person. This is a little different to 'medicine I take' ('personal' medicine/medicine for me). We imagine students creating the best artworks will not just focus on medicines they might actually take, but will be exploring things like *why and how* a medicine (or other aspect of healthcare) might be recommended for a particular person.