WORKING WITH THE NEWS MEDIA
What you should know when dealing with reporters
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I. Introduction

A. Who are the media?
Newspapers – Magazines – Radio – Television – Online

B. What do they want?
News - Hard News and Features

Expert Comment on Breaking News
(New studies, surprising statistics, unusual developments, strange cases – “Man Bites Dog” is news)

The Local Angle – what is happening in this community and how does it affect YOU?

Patient Stories -- more and more a feature of local news coverage

Controversy

C. How do they work?

1. Fast pace: most media queries seek an answer the same day
2. Short, concise answers in simple language
3. Use multiple sources on a story
4. Stories are edited and your well-considered comments may be sliced in half – or more
5. Message control: obtaining media coverage is different from buying an ad

II. Maximize the value of your news opportunities

A. Questions to Ask and Things to Know

1) Who is the reporter and what is his/her reputation? And what information does he or she seek?
2) Know the rules: All of your statements are on the record, even if the camera and tape are off.
Brevity rules! Long answers generally won’t be used. Understand the difference between the needs of a print reporter and those of a radio or TV reporter. Understand what you can and cannot say about a patient.

3) **Have a focused message**: It’s helpful to write down the one or two most important messages you wish to convey and find ways to ‘bridge’ to those messages in your responses.

**B. Elements that need attention**

1) **Content: what you say**
   Conveying a message through the news media assumes certain proprieties; an overly commercial or “selling” message is generally not well received by reporters and editors. Highly controversial statements, or extremely emotional ones, are on the other hand almost guaranteed to air.

2) **Style and language: how you say it**
   Simple – jargon-free

3) **Appearance and Bearing**
   a) **Visual**: Eye contact should be firm and steady and directed at the interviewer, not the camera.
   b) **Facial expression**: should be pleasantly neutral, not scowling or inappropriately happy during a crisis.
   c) **Movement?** None! Never do an interview in a swivel chair; it’s highly distracting from your message.
   d) **Gestures** should be moderate. Clothing should be comfortable and non-distracting; eliminate dangling earrings, loud prints, etc.

**III. What can media exposure realistically achieve for you?**

- Public awareness of an issue
- Name recognition for your program
- Over time, creation of a reputation for a program or organization
- On occasion – demand for a clinical service

**UW Health Public Affairs Media Relations: 263-5830**