Guide to conducting media interviews

Part 1. Background

3. Contacting the media

Target audiences

Different media are aimed at various groups - from the general public to policy makers, medical specialists, or people with RMDs. These are referred to as target audiences.

Remember that policy makers and medical experts also read publications and watch broadcast programmes aimed at the general public.

Research and preparation

• **Realistic placement** analysis – it is often better to target a few appropriate journalists or broadcasters than to mass target

• Identify and offer **appropriate spokespeople**, who have received some training or briefing in advance

• Find out **how far in advance** of publication or broadcast journalists like to receive information

• Find out the **timing of planning meetings**, but avoid making calls on publication days!

• Decide your **key messages** in advance

• Have a clear **story to pitch**

• Have a **news hook** ready to interest the journalist

• Develop **memorable pitch words**, tailored written messaging and verbal communication

• Ensure **messaging is succinct**

• Have **photography/images or background video footage** available

• Have **relevant facts and figures** to hand to support your key messages

• Make sure you or a colleague will be **contactable to respond to journalists** once a news release has been distributed

• Ensure everyone in your organisation knows who your media spokespeople are so calls from journalists can be appropriately directed
Developing a news release (also known as a media or press release)

When writing press releases or emails to journalists / broadcast researchers; the shorter the better. National journalists can receive at least 200 emails a day. Think about what will make them read your email over the other 199. Tell the ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘where’, ‘when’, ‘why’.

- Decide your key messages in advance (up to three)
- Have a clear story to pitch and a news hook ready to interest the journalist
- Be as brief and to the point as possible
- Respond promptly and directly to calls and questions
- Make sure you or a colleague are contactable at all reasonable times during a media campaign

Being proactive / becoming a resource

Building relationships with target journalists means you will have their attention when you need it and feel more confident when they approach you with a story.

Contacting journalists or broadcast researchers directly helps to:

- Generate and maximise media coverage
- Build journalist relationships

Don’t just contact journalists when you have a story to sell, keep up a dialogue with those you trust and are empathetic with your cause

- Alert journalists to issues that might become a story in the future so they can follow them from the beginning
- Call journalists you have a relationship with to ‘sound out’ a story, ask which aspects might be of interest to them and what additional information could make it more interesting
- Become the ‘go to’ resource for journalists seeking trusted information and comment