MUSC Media Training

Session One

Media Interview Skills
You are not alone!

Just as YOU are a niche subject matter expert...

WE are experts in media relations & interviewing - USE US!
When you receive a media request or you schedule an interview, contact:

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### Session Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEDIA RELATIONS</th>
<th>How to know if your story is a news story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTERVIEW PREP</td>
<td>Key messages, experts, partnering, story telling, determining your audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE INTERVIEW... &amp; LEARNING TO THINK LIKE A REPORTER</td>
<td>Keeping control, answering tough questions, what to do if you don’t know the answer, reporter tactics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOW TO RUIN YOUR REPUTATION</td>
<td>Interviewing no-nos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COACHING &amp; FEEDBACK</td>
<td>Practice, practice, practice to discover your strengths and weaknesses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nothing travels faster than the speed of light with the possible exception of bad news, which obeys its own special laws.

(Douglas Adams)
Media Relations

Do you have a newsworthy story?

**TOPICAL?** - Related to a story already in the news

**PROXIMITY?** – Local or local tie? Can you “localize” a national story?

**CURRENT?** – Discovery, research, patient results, game changer, change in protocol?

**SIGNIFICANT?** - Are many people affected?

**UNUSUAL/BREAKTHROUGH?** – “Wow” factor?

**HUMAN INTEREST / EMOTIONAL?** – Does it tug at the heart strings?
I’m newsworthy...now what?

Let us know!

Research related stories

Research-comm@musc.edu
Benefits to localizing stories

• Easy to do - MUSC has experts in any health related field imaginable
• Elevates our brand
• Makes us a trusted “go-to” resource for:
  – Journalists
  – Patients
• Raise awareness / Drive patients to MUSC
• Gives you a “foot in the door” when you are ready to pitch an idea in the future or need a “friend” in a crisis.
The Robin Williams Story

- Record # of shares from MUSC PR Facebook page
- Created lots of social commentary
- Let audience/community know we care
- Educational
- Provided resources for patients/families/providers, etc.
Interview prep: Getting ready for the reporters
Interview Prep: Experts, partnering

• Why are you the expert?

• Is there someone else (colleague, peer, donor, etc.) you should partner with for the interview? Who can serve as your back-up?

• Can you recommend a third-party source for the reporter? (Lend credibility, leverage a different audience)
Interview Prep:
Key Messages

• What are your key messages?
• Keep it to no more than three if possible
• “Crystallize” the message – K.I.S.S.
• Practice your key message in “sound bites” (reporters are hungry for these info nuggets)
• Keep the “train on the tracks” with regard to your key messages if the reporter starts to derail the interview
• Know your audience
Key Messages –
The clock is ticking!

Average sound bite on broadcast news

*About 10 seconds*

Average length of quote in print

*1-2 sentences*
Interview Prep
Key messages via “sound bites”

What are they?
“...a minimum of sound to a maximum of sense.“
-Mark Twain

Examples:
“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself”
-FDR inaugural address, 1933
Interview Prep: Anticipate

• Follow-up questions

• “Controversial” questions

• Questions you cannot or should not answer
Interview Prep:
Determine Your Audience

Deliver your message to YOUR audience, NOT the reporter!
Interview Prep:
Provide Supporting Materials

• Statistics
• **Stories**
• Videos
• Collateral
• “Props” →
• B-roll
• Other resources helpful to the journalist
The Interview
(Where prep work pays off)

Keeping control or “driving” the interview means you always come back to your key messages no matter where the reporter tries to lead you.
The Interview

Answering tough questions

Don’t panic and “react”...

It’s OK (much better, actually) to take a moment to think about your answer.

Or......

BRIDGE
The Interview
“Bridging”

A method allowing you to take back control / refocus the questioning / dialogue during a media interview when reporter goes in a direction away from your key messages.
The Interview
“Bridging”

• Example bridging statements

  ▪ “The most important thing to know is...”
  ▪ “It’s important to note X, because...”
  ▪ “I can’t speak to XXX, but what I can tell you is...”
  ▪ “It’s true that...but it’s also true that...”
  ▪ “As I said before...”
  ▪ “Another thing to keep in mind is....”
  ▪ “Let’s remember, .....”
The Interview

• How do you answer questions for which you don’t know the answer.

DON’T!
The Interview

• Questions you shouldn’t “answer”
  – Outside your area of expertise
  – You are not authorized to speak on a certain topic
  – Legal implications
  – You are asked to speculate
  – Personal opinion when being asked as to comment as an MUSC employee
  – Privacy violations
  – Other??
The Interview

Cheat Sheet: Reporters’ tactics

• Looking for the “tease”
• Befriending the interview subject/finding common ground.
• Can you think of a controversial angle?
• What would the “devil’s advocate” ask?
• Is there risk somewhere in the situation?
• EVERYTHING is part of the interview – even when the interview’s over!
Interview No-Nos
NEVER say / do this...

“No Comment”

Go “off the record”

Ask to approve a story
Things That Are OK to Say/Do

• Can’t review whole story, but can ask to hear your direct quotes read to you.
• If you feel you weren’t clear – you can ask to clarify what you meant / intended.
• Have new information that changes things? Offer it up in the name of accuracy.
• “I thought of a better way to say something.”
Finally...

Please

Thank the reporter for the opportunity!
Media Coaching
Let’s Practice!!
To schedule media or key messaging training

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