Media Interview Tips

(Continued)

During the Interview

How should I act?
- Be energetic, enthusiastic and friendly
- Be honest and sincere
- Make eye contact with the interviewer
- Speak in complete thoughts so your comments can stand on their own
- Don’t interrupt or talk over the interviewer

What should I do if I don’t know the answer or if the questions are negative or wrong?
- If you don’t know the answer to a question, that’s OK – don’t guess, speculate or ramble
- Correct the reporter if he or she bases questions on information that you think is incorrect
- If you don’t understand a question, ask for clarification
- Don’t say “no comment” – if you can’t answer a question, explain why
- If unprepared for a certain question, get back to the reporter later with information
- Don’t be intimidated by silence – it’s better than chatter or circling around an issue
- Don’t be defensive or argumentative
- Don’t answer hypothetical questions

What else should I think about to help make an interview successful?
- If offered a final thought, reinforce key messages concisely in one thoughtful sound bite
- Be mindful of visible PHI in your work space – manage the environment
- Remember it’s not over until the reporter leaves – beware of “hot” microphones
- Be mindful of body language – don’t cross your arms tightly, don’t clutch furniture

After the Interview

Can I review the story before it airs, or is published or posted?
- Almost never – with the exception of some technical trade journals – most major media outlets do not let sources review and approve content
- Editors will often allow sources to review quotes or fact-check specific information

Should I do anything after a story appears?
- If you liked the story or have received some nice feedback, let the reporter know
- Share stories and links on social media
- If you don’t like the story, don’t overreact
- Let the reporter know if there is an error – good reporters want to be accurate
- Letters to the editor may be helpful to correct or clarify certain information, but these can also keep a negative story alive longer
Media Interview Tips

Interview Preparation
What do I want to say?
- Identify two or three key messages in advance
- Write them down, keep them in front of you on phone interviews and memorize them for on-camera interviews (If you could write the quote attributed to you, figure out what it would be and practice it)
- Be prepared for reporter’s questions – especially the hard ones
- Think about helpful background information to provide in advance

How do I say it?
- Make points briefly and concisely (A 30-minute interview may be 7 seconds of air time)
- Give the reporter something usable – use analogies, colorful expressions, stories, and crisp and clever “sound bites”
- Use simple, understandable terms (fractured femur = broken leg, myocardial infarction = heart attack)
- If subject is sensitive or controversial
  ◆ Set parameters ahead of time and stick to them
  ◆ For certain situations, written statements may be the best way to respond
  ◆ Stick to your points and do not let yourself be drawn off your message
  ◆ Think about the worst possible questions that could come up and figure out how you would respond if they are asked

Should I give information on background or talk off the record?
- Rule of thumb is that you should never say anything you do not want to read in print, hear on the radio or see on television or the Web
- Sometimes providing important context or certain sensitive information can be helpful in fostering a more accurate story
- Often depends on the familiarity and relationship with reporter
- Public Affairs can provide framing context or connect reporter to outside sources

What should I wear if I’m going to be on camera?
- Wear what makes sense (suit/dress/lab coat/scrubs)
- Bright solid colors work best on television
- Makeup is useful (for men and women) in reducing facial glare and shiny heads

Continued ➤
Public Affairs Contact List

Sarah Alger
Director, Russell Museum
617-726-3182
salger@mgh.harvard.edu

Cassandra Aviles
Public Affairs Officer/Media
617-724-6433
cmaviles@mgh.harvard.edu

Noah Brown
Public Affairs Officer/Media
617-643-3907
nbrown9@mgh.harvard.edu

Arch MacInnes
Director, Publications
617-724-6422
amacinnes@mgh.harvard.edu

Michelle Marcella
Manager, MGH History and Archives
617-724-2755
mmarcella@mgh.harvard.edu

Katie Marquedant
Senior Project Specialist,
Cancer Center
617-724-6423
kmarquedant@mgh.harvard.edu

Colleen Marshall
Manager, Internal Communications/
Editor, Hotline
617-726-0275
Cell: 617-416-1306
cmarshall3@mgh.harvard.edu

Sue McGreevey
Manager, Science &
Research Communications
617-724-2764
smcgreevey@mgh.harvard.edu

Michael Morrison
Manager, Media Relations
617-724-6425
Cell: 978-290-7002
mdmorrison@mgh.harvard.edu

Terri Ogan
Public Affairs Officer/Media
617-726-0954
togan@mgh.harvard.edu

Peggy Slasman
Senior Vice President, Public Affairs
617-724-2750
Cell: 617-759-8433
pstrasman@mgh.harvard.edu

Emily Williams
Public Affairs Officer/
Internal Communications
617-724-2753
ewilliams18@mgh.harvard.edu

Updated 11/2014
As an internationally recognized academic medical center, MGH attracts significant media attention. While the Public Affairs Office is responsible for overseeing the media relations program, each member of the MGH community plays a vital role in telling the hospital’s story. The guidelines below can help ensure an organized and effective media program:

- **Refer media calls to the Public Affairs Office (617-726-2206).** A representative of Public Affairs is available 24 hours a day (pager #28383) through the hospital page operator 617-726-2066. The Public Affairs staff is experienced in handling a vast range of media issues and is always available to assist with inquiries and opportunities.

- **Any patient information released to the media should be coordinated through the Public Affairs Office.** Patient confidentiality is the highest priority. Generally, Public Affairs releases only a one-word condition—good, fair, serious or critical—in accordance with American Hospital Association guidelines and HIPAA requirements. No other information is released without the consent of the patient and/or family.

- **If staff members have an existing relationship with a reporter and agree to an interview, please inform Public Affairs as soon as possible.** Knowing about media activity enables Public Affairs to track and report any resulting news coverage.

- **Any member of the media or any film crew or photographer coming on to hospital property with a camera of any type—still or video—must be accompanied by a Public Affairs staff member.** The Public Affairs representative will obtain the necessary clearances and consents. Public Affairs must be informed and involved in advance of all shoots, including those for promotional or training videos and matters unrelated to MGH.

- **Researchers should contact the Public Affairs Office as soon as they learn a paper has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal.** Public Affairs can discuss communication strategies that may include drafting and distributing news releases, arranging interviews, creating videos and using social media. Scientific publications often present great opportunities for coverage. Embargoes are always honored. Sue McGreevey, 617-724-2764, smcgreevey@mh.harvard.edu, is manager of science and research communications.

- **The Public Affairs Office can offer live broadcast interviews on demand.** An in-house ReadyCam studio provides broadcast-quality audio, video and lighting, allowing the media to gain access to MGH experts quickly, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day.

- **Social media: Public Affairs hosts the MGH accounts on Twitter and YouTube. (Marketing oversees the MGH Facebook account.)** If you have stories or posts for social media, Public Affairs can help get out the message quickly. MGH social media guidelines are available at http://www.massgeneral.org/social-media/.

For more information about the hospital’s media program, contact the Public Affairs Office at 617-726-2206, Peggy Slasman (senior vice president for Public Affairs) at 617-724-2750, pslasman@mh.harvard.edu; or Michael Morrison (manager of Media Relations) at 617-724-6425, mdmorrison@mh.harvard.edu.

Updated 11/2014