

## Working with the media – top tips

Generating positive media coverage of your event is a key objective and is an effective way of delivering key messages, including:

- Television depictions of pathologists are not very realistic.
- Pathology is not just about dead bodies, the majority of pathologists work for the benefit of the living.
- Pathology is at the heart of modern healthcare - 70% of diagnoses in the NHS involve pathology.

If the target audience for your event is the general public or a particular group such as school children, your local media will probably be interested in covering the event. Ideally, newspapers and possibly radio and television too.

### Work with your local Trust Communications office.

Your Trust (or workplace) Communications/press office will need to be involved if you are planning to invite the press. They will also usually want to handle any media enquiries.

Contact them as soon as you decide to hold an event and they will be able to advise you on how to approach and work with the media.

### Prepare a media list

Many of your local media organisations will be listed in the Yellow Pages ([www.yell.com](http://www.yell.com)) and your Trust's Communications Department or Press Office will have details of your local media. Timing is very important as TV, radio and the printed press all work to different fixed deadlines. Features and articles generally need more preparation than news items.

### Timing

Letting the press know about your event in advance is crucial if you want them to attend. If your event is on the same day as your local newspaper is published, the paper may want to run a feature on your event in advance of the event itself. Your Communications Department can advise you further on the best way to organise this.

**Press invitations** - If you want the press to attend and cover your event, you need to get your event booked in their diary listings. Journalist and editors book future events, announcements and fixtures into a central diary.

4-6 weeks before the event, send your media list a short press invitation so they can get the date booked into the diary listing. The invite should feature date, time, venue, contact details and short description of the event. You can download a press invitation template from the RCPATH website [www.rcpath.org](http://www.rcpath.org)

### Press release - 1-2 weeks before your event.

Send out your press release. Ideally, your release should be sent at least a week prior to the event, depending on the media deadlines. The press release is the journalist's introduction to a story and it needs to stand out from all the other news items that are coming into the news room all the time.

Some examples that can make a press release stand out include:



- Facts and figures – For example, you could work out how many tests your lab process in an average working week and feature this in your release.
- Unusual cases (remember that patient confidentiality might apply here).
- Human interest stories – Do you or your colleagues have any unusual interests or hobbies outside work? This might provide an interesting angle for a journalist who is interested in covering your public engagement event.

### **Tips for writing a press release**

You can download a generic press release from the RCPATH website which you can tailor to your own needs but remember to contact your Trust Communications office. Most Trusts will want to be the first point of contact for media enquiries and will usually want to have their contact details and Trust logo on the press release.

- Try to keep to one side of A4. Include the day and date of release at the top.
- The title and first paragraph should be concise, relevant and capture the reader's attention and answer all of the following questions: Who? Why? What? When? Where? How?
- Draft a snappy quote to include in the release. This can be from yourself or the Head of your department but ideally someone who is involved in the event itself. Journalists will often lift a quote from a press release and use it in their articles – especially if they are unable to attend the event themselves.
- A "Note to Editors" after the main text is for practical details such as directions and your contact details.

### **Media spokespeople**

The media love speaking to an expert so they will expect to be able to speak to a pathologist if they are going to come along and cover your event. So be ready to field someone who can speak to the journalist. If you are putting forward a colleague make sure that they are fully briefed about the reasons behind the event. Remember that the journalist will come along to your event to cover a positive news story but if your Trust has had recent bad publicity the journalist may ask you about it. Always let your Trust Communications Department know that a journalist will be attending your event and who will be speaking to them. Refer the journalist to the Trust press office if they ask about issues not directly related to your event.

### **Media interviews**

Keep it simple and to the point. Don't use technical or medical terms - most journalists are lay people and aren't medical experts. Be enthusiastic and explain why the event has been organised and what you hope people attending the event will get out of it. The journalist will also probably want to speak to someone attending the event. If your event is for school children you should let teachers know that the press have been invited.

### **Case studies**

Do you have any patients who would be prepared to speak to the press about their experience of pathology? Journalists like to include patient case studies when covering healthcare stories.

### **Photographs**

A good photograph is a great way of generating media coverage. If the media is interested in a story they might send a photographer to cover the event. However, you should be prepared to take some photographs yourself. Taking some good shots of the event on the day and sending them to the local newspaper with a good caption may result in them running the story after the event.

### **After the event**

Drop an email to journalists who came along to the event thanking for them attending and for any subsequent coverage (providing you are happy with what they have written!). A local journalist is always a useful contact; you can always get in touch with them after your event if you have a

pathology-related story, event or issue you think they might be interested in covering. For more information contact: [samantha.jayaram@rcpath.org](mailto:samantha.jayaram@rcpath.org). Tel 020 7451 6752