Media Training 101
Making the Most of Your Media Interview
Why Work With the Media

- Promote and support your institution
- Get your message out
- Help the media get the story right
- The media will get the story with or without you
- Participating will help get your voice heard
How the Media Works

- Reporters live on deadlines
- Reporters are just doing their jobs like you
- Many are very good at their profession
- Reporters are not out to get you
- Most reporters care about the job they do ... and want to get the story right
- They truly need you as a source
What is News?

• Anything editors and reporters feel will interest their readers and viewers
• Trends
• Breakthroughs
• Controversy
• Bad things
• Anything unusual
“When a dog bites man, nobody cares. But when a man bites a dog ... now that’s news!”
Interview Basics

• Always tell the truth
• Be prepared
• It’s OK to say “I don’t know”
  – You can always check on details later and get back to the reporter
• Stay on message
• Know the audience
• Have a reason for being interviewed
• Let the reporter know how much time you have available
• And always remember ...
• It’s difficult to win a fight with the news media ...

“Never pick a fight with someone who buys ink by the barrel.”

Mark Twain
The Successful Interview
Scheduling An Interview

• You don’t have to do an interview if a reporter calls you blind
  • Tell the reporter you can’t talk at that moment but will get back to them shortly. This gives you time to collect your thoughts and contact your communications office for assistance.

• Keep in mind that reporters have deadlines and can’t always put off interviews for days

• Reporters are generally happy to schedule their interviews
Seek Support

Before doing anything, make sure your Public Relations Office is aware of your interview. They can:

• Prepare you for the interview
• Provide background on the reporter and news outlet
• Gather additional information about the interview
• Be with you during the interview
Prepare for Your Interview

• Know what topic the reporter wants to discuss
• Phone or face-to-face
• Broadcast or print
• Think about what you want to get out of the interview
• Prepare 3 to 5 points you want to get across during the interview
• Ask who else will be interviewed
• Interview on your time when you’re ready
Expected Questions

• Have someone help you prepare a list of probable questions
• Review and practice your responses
• Obtain information or data you don’t have
Location, Location, Location

- For TV interviews consider ...
  - Visual location
  - Office, lab or patient care area
  - Noise issues (air blowers, machinery)
  - Will other people be in the way
  - Patient confidentiality
  - Props
  - Attire
TV Dress Code

- **Do’s**
  - Solid colors
  - Jackets with lapels to clip on microphone
  - Brush your hair
  - Check your smile

- **Don’ts**
  - Sunglasses or gradient lenses
  - Busy patterns
  - White shirt with white lab coat
Body Language

- Stand or sit straight
- Avoid excessive movement
- Don’t swivel or rock
- Use hand gestures as you would in normal conversation
- Relax and be comfortable
- Smile
Question and Answer

- Listen to the reporter’s questions
- Have a conversation with the reporter
- Listen – Think – Respond
- Q = A + 1
Q = A + 1

- Q is the question
- A is your answer
- 1 is a bridge to your point or agenda

Question: How did this error happen?

Answer: We’re not certain how it happened, but ...

+ 1 : ... we are still investigating the cause and will cease this procedure until we know exactly what happened.
Don’t ...

• ... give personal opinions ... you are speaking for your organization, not yourself
• ... speculate
• ... respond to third-party discussions
• ... respond to blind sources (material you haven’t seen)
• ... go off the record
• ... use jargon
• ... fill the silence
Don’t ...

• ... speak in monotone – add inflection
• ... talk down to the reporter
• ... use non-words such as “um” or “uh”
• ... let the reporter put words in your mouth
• ... ever respond “no comment”
Always ...

- Be empathetic
- Speak clearly
- Use analogies ... mitochondria is like a furnace ... to help explain things
- Explain technical terms
- Finish your answers if interrupted
- Speak in conclusions and then support them with concise, quotable details
- Be passionate and “jazzed” about what you are discussing
Always ...

- Say only what you would be comfortable seeing in print or hearing on air
- Look at the reporter ... the camera will find you
- Maintain eye contact
- Be confident, but not cocky
- Turn off cell phones and pagers
At the End of Your Interview

- Review your main points
- Cover any items the reporter did not ask about
- Ask the reporter if there’s anything they don’t understand
- Remind them how to contact you again if they have additional questions
- Offer to proof facts or quotes
- Ask when the story will appear/air
**Soundbites**

- Sum up important points in a few words
- Only 10 seconds or so of your answer will be used
- Use simple analogies
- Use simple words
Live/Remote Interview

• Make sure your ear piece and the volume is comfortable
• Talk to the camera
• Ignore the camera operator
• Know who you’re talking to
• Ask to turn off the monitor
• Remember ... you’re live
• Know the questions ahead of time
• Expect the unexpected question
• Don’t move until you’re told
Phone Interview

- Keep your notes and key message points in front of you
- Best to use a desk phone during a radio interview for better sound quality
- Don’t drive while you’re interviewing
- Don’t try to multi-task during an interview
The Hostile Interview

- Remain calm
- Don’t get personal
- Don’t return the hostility
- Know when to end the interview
Final Thought

• Even if only a small part of your interview is used, it was still valuable