

# The Foundation – Media Relations and Successful Media Campaigns

Glen Nowak, Ph.D.

Senior Communications Specialist, National Center for  
Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, CDC

Former Chief, Media Relations

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention





Root Canal Awareness Week  
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I'd rather have  
a root canal...

...than stop eating ice cream  
...lose a tooth  
...or live with pain.

# Warning☺ Getting favorable news media attention is often harder than it seems (or you want it to be)

- Competition for news media attention is fierce
- News media priorities and practices matter most
  - Attracting and attractive to audience, not education
  - Need stories (and prefer shorter to longer)
  - Deadlines limit amount of research reporters can do
- Stories – understand what that means
  - Interesting, relevant, compelling to the medium's audience
  - Likely to offer more than one view

You want media interest, coverage –  
Why?

# Common Reasons for Seeking News Media Attention

- “Publicity” / (increased) visibility for organization, effort, event
- Media (i.e., some journalists, reporters, media outlets) are very likely to be interested or deem newsworthy
- Help shape or “frame” issue, how issue is thought about
- “Educate” or increase awareness of – reporters, public, specific population – to a finding, program, recommendation, new report, new initiative, your position on an issue, etc.
- Establish/build/maintain reputation (e.g., as expert, as important program or effort, as doing good things)
  - “Third party endorsement”

# Common Reasons News Media May Turn to You or Seek You Out

- Something about the you or your organization
  - Unique or unusual mission, activities, event
  - There's a good story (e.g., human interest)
- A reporter wants a reaction or needs “the other side”
  - To a new study or finding
  - To a proposal / proposed law / to a proposed change
- A new initiative (e.g., campaign) / upcoming event
- Your expertise – e.g., verify facts, get background information, get good quotes, provide context
- You're a good and reliable resource

# News Media Need News, which means. . .



Cash-strapped states want workers to pay more of their health care and pension costs. But some states are going further, trying to end unions, CNNMoney reports.

- Of interest/relevance to the medium's audience
- Controversy / Criticism
- Contradiction
- Confrontation
- Catastrophe
- The Unexpected
- Gossip / Scandal
- Breakthrough
- Human Interest
- Entertainment

# Characteristics of a good story

- Conflict
- Controversy
- Contradiction
- Confrontation
- Catastrophe
- Unexpected
- Drama
- Suspense
- Gossip / Scandal
- Emotion - love, hate, reconciliation
- Novel, unexpected elements, developments
- Sides in opposition
- Relevant to your interests
- Villian(s), victim(s), hero(es)

# Stories Need a Good Setup (e.g., headline)

## CDC press releases:

“Many young children overdosing from medicines at home”

“Rotavirus vaccination leads to large decreases in health care costs and doctor visits”

“Melanoma skin cancer has costly and deadly impact on America”

## Recent news stories/articles:

“Bacteria From Mouth Can Lead to Heart Inflammation”  
(Healthday, March 25)

“As Hoverflies grow, so do their acting skills,” New York Times

“This Just In: Healthy People Live Longer, Study Finds,” ABC  
News Blog

# Sound Bites, Quotes, and Key Messages

## ■ Framing matters

"The 40-year decline in tobacco in the United States has stalled. The industry has gotten even better at sidestepping laws designed to get people to stop smoking. They ensure that every cigarette they sell is designed to deliver nicotine quickly and efficiently to keep people addicted."

## ■ How you say what you say matters

"This saves lives" vs. "This intervention has the potential to be impactful."

## ■ Health messages need to be strong and clear

"The threat of untreatable infections is real," says Arjun Srinivasan. "Although previously unthinkable, the day when antibiotics don't work in all situations is upon us. We are already seeing germs that are stronger than any antibiotics we have to treat them, including some infections in health care settings."

# Keep in mind. . .

"Reward" 

Risk 

"Safe"  Little, less or no  
attention

# A Framework to Guide You

# Five Planning and Preparation Steps

- Communication / media objectives (e.g., what are you trying to accomplish?)
- What are your 2-5 “key messages” for a broader audience – and what is the story they tell?
- Target audience(s)- who needs to hear the messages? What is/are the best way(s) to reach them?
- What’s the “news” here? Would this make the news? Why? What’s the desired headline? Lead sentence?
- If you get news media interested, 1) what are they likely to ask, 2) what else could they ask about or focus on, and 3) will their story be the same as yours?

# Finding and Creating Opportunities

- Common approaches
  - Press releases
  - Statements
  - E-mails
  - Letters to editor, op-eds, guest columns
- Websites
- Social media
- Meetings, events
- Visits (to the media)

# Two things that also matter. . .

- Targeting
  - Specific media, publications
  - Specific journalists, writers
- Timing
  - Current events, including in other communities
  - Media tendencies (e.g., seasonal topics)

# Press releases need to stand out and offer highly likelihood of news

- “Absenteeism can be strongly influenced by supervisors”
- “US Department of Labor's OSHA revises Hazard Communication Standard”
- “White patients get better pain-related treatment from some doctors”
- “Cheesecake Factory expands sub-600 calorie items on SkinnyLucious menu”
- “Moderate drinking associated with lower risk of stroke in women,”
- “White rice ups diabetes risk”
- “Sexual Deprivation Increases Ethanol Intake in Drosophila”
- “Dr. Richard Birkel to Lead NCOA's Center for Healthy Aging”
- “HHS: Health reform helps more than 5.1 million people with Medicare save over \$3.2 billion”

## “Deprived of sex, jilted fruit flies drink more alcohol”

Sexually deprived male fruit flies exhibit a pattern of behavior that seems ripped from the pages of a sad-sack Raymond Carver story: when female fruit flies reject their sexual advances, the males are driven to excessive alcohol consumption, drinking far more than comparable, sexually satisfied male flies.

Now a group of scientists at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) has discovered that a tiny molecule in the fly’s brain called neuropeptide F governs this behavior—as the levels of the molecule change in their brains, the flies’ behavior changes as well.

Flies in the laboratory will normally drink to intoxication if given the choice, but this behavior is altered when neuropeptide F levels are altered in their brains because of their sexual experiences. Mated flies are less likely to seek out such rewarding experiences. Rejected flies, on the other hand, had lower levels of neuropeptide F in their brains, and sought alternative rewards by drinking to intoxication.

# Things happening in the world also can provide opportunities...

- “Maryland looking to beef up vaccine requirements,”  
Baltimore Sun, May 15, 2012
- “More than 160 students without vaccines banned  
from school,” Scranton Times-Tribune, May 16, 2012
- “Whooping cough outbreak has public health officials  
wary,” USA Today, May 15, 2012
- “Pharmacies offer shingles vaccine, but few get the  
shot,” New Hampshire Eagle-Tribune, May 14, 2012
- “Amid Rise in U.S. Measles Cases, High School  
Parents Divided on Vaccinations,” U.S. News, May 15

Thanks!