

Working With the Media

Improving the Value of Medical Journalism

Why Engage the Media

As a major source of medical information, the media can be particularly important in educating the general public, the medical community and policy makers.

The News Media: The Public's Perception

Negative opinions about the performance of news organizations now equal or surpass all-time highs



66% say news stories often are inaccurate, 77% think that news organizations tend to favor one side, and 80% say news organizations are often influenced by powerful people and organizations.

75% of Americans believe news organizations care most about "attracting the biggest audience" compared with 19% who think the organizations' priority is "informing the public"

Pew Research Center for the People and the Press

Most news articles on medically related topics fail to discuss important issues such as evidence quality, costs, and risks versus benefits

How informative is the print media coverage of colorectal cancer?

Colorectal Disease 2012

About 13% of newspaper articles were found to have any educational content

Presentation of eating disorders in the media.

Patient Education Counseling 2007

48% of articles ran in the arts and entertainment section; only 8% of patient profiles discussed treatment and recovery within a medical context

Barriers to Good Medical Reporting

- Lack of time
- Lack of space
- Lack of knowledge



Additional Barriers

- Difficulties understanding subject matter
- Problems finding and using sources
- Competing demands



Overcoming Barriers: What Can Doctors Do to Help

- Make yourself available
- Provide accurate, up-to-date information about health-related topics
- Be professional
- Tell a good story



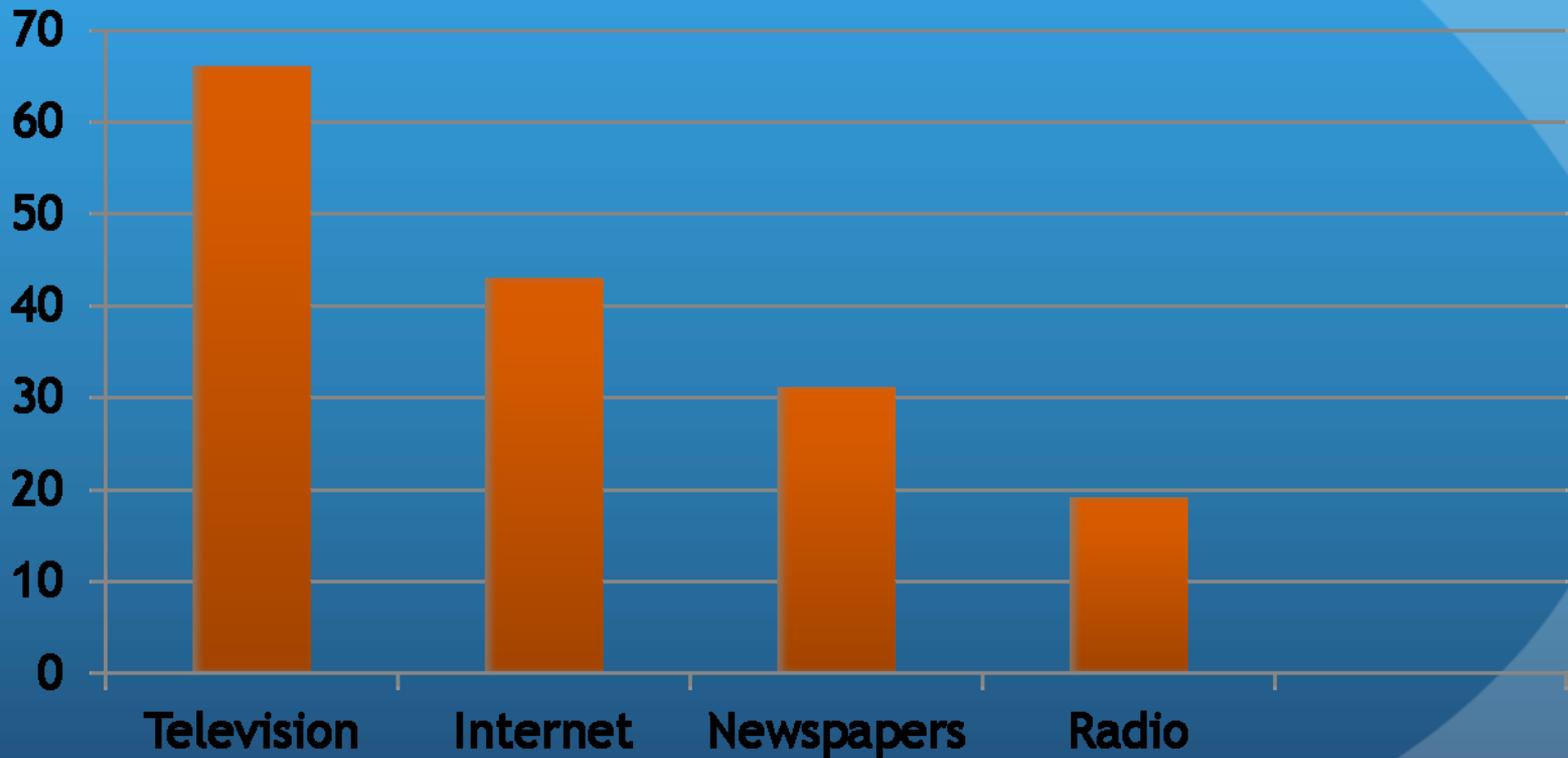
Should I Do the Interview?

- Find out what the reporter wants to know and what their attitude toward the subject might be
- Get to know the media outlet
- Determine if you're the right person to do the interview
- Decide whether it's worth your time and energy



Where Do People Get Their News?

News Sources



DON'T BE AFRAID TO TURN DOWN AN INTERVIEW!



Preparing for interviews

- Bring the journalist up to speed
- Get yourself up to speed
 - Prepare and practice key message points
 - Review facts and figures
 - Identify questions (easy, hard and terrible) and formulate responses

Conflicting Goals

The goal of the medical journalist and that of the medical expert aren't always in sync



Practical Considerations

- Allow plenty of time for the unexpected
- If you're traveling to the media outlet, arrive early and then expect to wait
- If the interview is in your office, be prepared early and make sure there will be no interruptions



The Interview

- Answer their questions in clear, concise, simple language
- Stick to what you know
- Take charge
- Take a stance
- Be enthusiastic!



Keep the Interview on Message

- Bridging
- Blocking
- Answer + 1
- Headlining
- Enumerating points
- Pauses
- Know when to stop



Avoid Getting Trapped



- Stay calm and positive
- Don't pretend to know something you don't know
- Correct inaccurate information
- If you make an error, correct yourself as soon as possible
- There's no such thing as "off the record"

Follow-up After an Interview

- Ask if you'll have the opportunity to review and correct the piece
- Make yourself available for follow-up questions



Television

- Dress appropriately
- Talk to the reporter (not the camera)
- Don't get distracted
- Sit still (but not stiff)
- Project energy



Radio

- Use your voice to your best advantage
- Use notes



Telephone

- Call from a quiet place
- Eliminate distractions
- Use notes



New Technologies = New Opportunities

Traditional Media Outlets

- Television
- Radio
- Print (newspapers, magazines)

New Media Outlets

- Internet
- Social Media

Don't Wait for Them to Call You!

- Send press releases
- Invite to press conferences
- Provide them with information kits
- Reach out to personal contacts
- Submit letters to the editors
- Write spec articles

Use Social Media

About a quarter (27%) of adults say they regularly or sometimes get news or news headlines through Facebook, Twitter or other social networking sites.

This rises to 38% of people younger than 30, but now spans a notable share of older Americans (12% of those 65 and older) as well.



“Paradox of Journalism”

While the number of news outlets grows, the number of stories covered and the depth of many reports decreases.