

How to...handle media enquiries

Always remember the following...

- **Take some time out:** In the event that you do receive a call from a journalist, do not feel pressured into answering the journalist's questions immediately. You may want to ask the journalist to call you back in about 20 minutes. This should give you time to collect your thoughts.
- **First things first:** Find out exactly what the interview is for before giving away any information and find out the reporter's deadline.
- **Prepare in advance:** Prior to the interview, write in bullet points two or three key messages and answers you would like to get across. Ensure that you don't give away any identifiable patient details.
- **Focus on your key messages:** When speaking on the phone, smile as you speak, but do not get too carried away by a reporter's ability to make you feel relaxed and chatty.
- **No jargon:** When writing or speaking to journalists, avoid using jargon. Say heart attack, instead of myocardial infarction.
- **By email:** When dealing with print media, you can email a written response to the journalist's inquiries. Don't forget that members of the press team at Londonwide LMCs are also here to help.

Media pitfalls to avoid

- Do not give general background information before you agree to do an interview and avoid speaking off the record – nothing is ever quite 'off the record'.
- You can always say 'let's agree a quote' and ask the journalist to quote back to you what you've said...correct something if necessary...however there are never guarantees.
- Be sure about the facts before quoting them.
- If there are sensitive issues involved, like a rape or death case, avoid commenting if an investigation is still being carried out and if a court case is involved or pending. Say to the reporter: "It is not possible for me to comment **at this time** for legal reasons". Never say 'no comment'.
- Express empathy when appropriate, for example if there has been a death.
- Avoid putting down other professions or organisations.
- If you are speaking as an LMC representative be sure to give the views of the LMC and avoid giving your personal views.
- If you are giving your personal opinion, ensure you make this clear.

Before doing an interview, seek the advice of our press office: Sue Broome on 020 7387 2034 ext 238 or mobile during evenings/weekends 0782 4886 762, Hannah Millard on 020 7387 2034 ext 239 or email hmillard@lmc.org.uk. You must always buy yourself time to think and prepare before speaking – it will help you to avoid saying things in the heat of the moment.

How to promote your practice in the local media

The media is a powerful platform to help you promote your practice. In spite of the boom of digital media, local newspapers still have a strong readership and can serve as a medium to inform their highly targeted audience about the services you can offer to patients at your practice. Likewise the tips here will apply to local radio. Believe it or not, local media like reporting on new and positive health stories too.

- **Be informed:** Learn which paper/radio stations operate in your area.
- **Build relationships:** Call your local paper and inform a reporter that you are happy to give quotes on local health stories and leave your contact details.
- **Raise your practice's profile:** You may also want to send out a press release to the local media if your practice is doing something new and exciting, like launching a new breast cancer awareness campaign or if a new GP has joined your team [see how to...write a press release factsheet].
- **Sending out your press release:** Keep the release concise, include quotes and contact details. If at all possible try to send photographs with your press release.