



Here's the Pitch...

Tips to Help You...

Pitch Stories to the Media

Talk With the Media



2006 Scleroderma Foundation National
Conference

Before You Get Into the Game...

Create your media list

- * Weekly and daily newspapers
- * Local and regional magazines
- * Local and regional radio stations
- * Area television stations
- * Local/Specialty websites



Before You Get Into the Game...



How to develop your media list

- * Open the trusty yellow pages

N for newspapers/T for television (cable, local access)/R for radio stations and broadcasting companies/P for magazines (Publishers-Periodical)

- * Open the trusty Google search

Television is best to find this way. Open a search and type in "NAME OF CITY" television stations. Also works well for newspapers. Magazines can be found this way, but may be spotty.

- * For each, collect general addresses/phone/fax/e-mail address

Before You Get Into the Game...



How to develop your media list

- * Identify the proper contact for each outlet

This is important. Sending info to the wrong person is a waste, it will often not be routed to the right person. It will be tossed.

- * How do I find the proper contact?

- * Who is the proper contact?

Generally health reporters, news/city desk, calendar editor at newspapers; news directors at radio stations; assignment editors, health reporters, morning/noon show producers at television stations.

- * Ask each person how they prefer to be contacted

Now You're Ready to Play...



Create Your Pitch Letter/E-mail

- * The major purpose of this letter is to sell, not educate
Educate=impart knowledge Sell=appeal to a need
- * This letter pitches an angle, not a broad topic
The angle is the “big idea” you’re selling. Remember the “so what?” factor. Just because it’s important to us doesn’t mean it’s important **to** a reporter.
- * This letter uses anecdotes/stories/examples
Facts are important, but remember that a good pitch letter sells first, and reporters often look for a compelling story to tell in order to illuminate facts, trends or a broader topic.

Now You're Ready to Play...



Create Your Pitch Letter/E-mail

- * Reporters scan, they do not always read
Write a tight letter—a letter that gets to the point, imparts important info and sells the angle. Should not be longer than a page, preferably shorter.
- * Offer an interview and/or a responsive contact
Every pitch should include a contact name and contact info. If a reporter follows up respond to them promptly. Remember, the reporter does not serve us. In media relations, we serve the reporter.
- * E-mail, fax or mail the letter
Send it about four weeks before the event (if there is a time element), follow up by phone/e-mail about a week and half after you send the letter

Now You're Ready to Play...



Making the (Follow up) Call

- * Be aware of the media's deadlines
- * Have a plan for the call, be quick and to the point
Briefly remind them what the pitch said, don't try to force or in any way coerce the reporter. Answer questions. Be kind. Thank them for their time.
- * Tailor your comments for the media you're in contact with
Offer visuals for television (if possible); Radio likes timeliness and good sound; print likes substance and facts. If you're missing some of these elements, do the best you can.

Talking a Good Game...



Talking to the Media – Before the Interview

- * Get your key messages down pat
These include the "Main Seven," and your local points. Knowing these will make you confident about what you're saying. This will make you a much better interview.
- * Dress appropriately
Wearing some SF item (wristband, shirt, etc.) will help "brand you" if you are photographed or on camera.
- * If you're nervous, relax yourself
Remember, you're the expert on your topic. The reporter is not trying to trip you up. They want to get a good story, which begins with getting your key messages down.

Talking a Good Game...



Talking to the Media – During the Interview

- * Remember, it's a conversation

The best interviews become a conversation. The reporter will ask most of the questions, but if you're not sure what a reporter is asking or looking for—ASK.

- * Speak slowly and clearly

Most of the time there is no need to rush. Avoid one word answers to questions, and be mindful of your tone. Reporters don't know what they don't know. Reasons for the Re-Ask.

- * If a reporter makes an incorrect statement...
...graciously and gently correct them.

Talking a Good Game...



Talking to the Media – During the Interview

- * If you are asked something and do not know the answer, say so

If you're unsure about an answer, don't be afraid to say you don't know. But **DO** offer to find out the answer and get back to the reporter before their deadline. (If you're unsure of their deadline, ask.)

- * If you have facts at your command, you're a better interview

Commit statistics and percentages and study findings to memory. If you appear to be informed reporters tend to listen more.

- * If a reporter asks if there is anything more you'd like to add, please restate one of your key messages

Reporters will sometimes use this question as a guide to what the single most important idea in the interview might be in the event it's not clear to them.