

Tips for Media Interviews

When speaking with patients and their families, community leaders and the media, it is important to anticipate what issues may arise so you are prepared to answer questions and capitalize on your unique perspective as a hospital insider.

Tips for talking with the Media about any issue:

- Prepare media kits and include facts, figures, and program information about your hospital. Include annual reports and/or other easy-to-understand publications. Have these materials on hand at all times.
- Determine the subject of the interview in advance, then draft three key messages and prepare related talking points to make sure these messages are concisely and consistently presented to the reporter
- Include the board and staff members as part of the communication team and make sure they have access to talking points so everyone is communicating the same messages.
- Hold media interviews in an active location, not your office. Let them see, firsthand, the high quality patient care activities that are taking place in your building
- Make sure all the information you share with the media and the public is factual, straightforward and consistent. Stick to the facts.
- Establish an audience target before meeting with the media: get a clear message of who needs to hear the message in order for you to reach your goal
- Use language geared toward your target audience. Use analogies or anecdotes from the hospital to get your message across.
- Respond to your situation only; refrain from speculating or offering opinions about health care in general lest you alienate other stakeholders, spread misinformation or overstep your bounds.
- Answer each question and then be silent. Resist the temptation to embellish your comments and resist subtle pressure to chat about them
- Don't dwell on problems - emphasize what you are doing to improve a given situation
- If the media uses negative language, do not repeat it in your response. Be mindful of negative buzzwords such as "failure," "layoffs" etc.
- If a negative question is asked, "bridge" your response to the message you want to convey
- Always remain positive. This is an opportunity to provide clarity about what your hospital does and whom you serve.

If you have questions about communicating with the media or need assistance on a specific issue, contact OHA Public Affairs at (416) 205-1325 or at kkelly@oha.com.