



SPCR Annual Trainees' event: Handling the media

Top tips

- 1) **Know why you want media coverage.** What is the message you want to give, and to which audience?
- 2) **The media is a channel, not an audience or an end in itself.** Is your message best delivered to your target audience via the media? Other communication channels – targeted publications, online stories, audio, video – might be just as effective.
- 3) **Package your message with something a journalist wants.** Think about their ultimate aim: to interest as many people in their target audience as possible. Their readers/viewers/listeners are asking: 'Why should I care?'
- 4) **What makes people care?** Stories that are relevant to them and that provoke emotion (e.g. curiosity, indignation, surprise, amazement, amusement, empathy). Human interest is important (and individual case studies will dramatically multiply your chances of coverage).
- 5) **News is new.** If something happened yesterday, it's too late to tell a journalist about it.
- 6) **Make life easy for the journalist.** They have to produce several stories a day for tight deadlines on a range of topics. They need information in concise, digestible form, and they need to be able to phone you for immediate follow-up. Good images help a lot – a great photo can make a story.
- 7) **Be topical.** If you've found a cure for cancer, you set the news agenda. In most other cases, you need to fit into it. Are there certain times when your message is more likely to fit into the media's existing agenda? Is there a big story out there that you have something to say on?
- 8) **There's more to media than The Guardian and The Times.** Don't just think about newspapers: TV, radio and some websites have much bigger audiences than print. And don't just think about UK media: there are potential funders, researchers, collaborators and students in many other countries.
- 9) If your story is unlikely to make it into the national or international media, how about local or specialist media? **Keep a list of what people in your area of interest read/watch/listen to.**
- 10) **Get some training.** See over for more details.



Further information

The **Science Media Centre** provide a link between the media and scientists. They are very good at helping researchers explain complex or controversial topics. They also run media training events for scientists.

www.sciencemediacentre.org

Sense About Science have various resources to help explain science and research. Some are especially for early career researchers. They also run workshops for early career people through the Voice of Young Science campaign.

www.senseaboutscience.org

The **National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement** is funded by the four UK Funding Councils, Research Councils UK and the Wellcome Trust. Its role is to help inspire and support universities to engage with the public.

www.publicengagement.ac.uk

The NCCPE also has a useful page about training opportunities across the UK at:

www.publicengagement.ac.uk/do-it/training

The **Wellcome Trust** offers training and also has a useful guide at **<http://po.st/WTMedia>**
www.wellcome.ac.uk

STEMPRA is the professional association for people who do science and technology PR. They run a number of events, usually in London.

www.stemptra.org.uk

The **British Science Association** support public engagement activities and has various events and resources.

www.britishsociety.org

But also check with **your own university**. There will be a team responsible for media relations and it's extremely likely there will also be public engagement specialists.