

Ten top tips for engaging with the media



1. Be strategic

Think about *what* it is that you want to share, *why* you want to share it, *why* people should take notice of it, and *what* it is you want to achieve.

Equally, you need to consider:

- the timing of what you want to say
- how you might structure it
- what you might have to say
- why you are doing this
- and why now.

2. Take advice – you're not alone.

The DDA has a communications officer experienced in dealing with journalists. The DDA is there to help you and will know how best to communicate your story. Email the DDA office for assistance: office@dispensingdoctor.org

3. Don't expect journalists to share your agenda.

Be flexible about your message – journalists may not necessarily be interested in dispensing practice, so be open to the fact that your message may be communicated in a different way than you had intended.

4. Do your research.

Take initiative, research media outlets and try to match up your own interests with the interests of a specific journalist. Look for journalists that are interested in what you have to say in your area of expertise, and you'll have more success.

5. Give journalists notice.

Think about the journalist's timescale before you make contact; the more notice you can give them, the better. Again, your press office can help with this. Deadlines are much shorter these days, so you may want to give them a few days' notice, particularly for print. For longer term projects, the journalist may want to go out and talk to some real people that have experienced some of the

issues your research tackles. For documentaries, journalists need a lot more time – don't drop it on them at the last minute!

6. Have a clear message and deliver it in plain English.

Although this sounds obvious, it is something GPs can struggle with. The average reading age of most good quality broadsheet newspapers is around 11 years. Use very short words and short sentences to communicate your message, and keep it very simple, plain and direct. Journalists receive hundreds of messages a day, so don't overwhelm them with dispensing jargon, acronyms or complicated concepts that will lose them in the first paragraph.

7. Be interesting.

Again, this sounds obvious, but don't tell them something they already know. You want to surprise them, and this can be difficult. Journalists are going to be more drawn to something that, to them, looks new and different. It may be that, while it's not surprising to you, it is intriguing to a journalist because it is not widely known to the public.

8. Consider the time factor.

Try to match your time and theirs. Aim for a quiet news day when journalists are more likely to be receptive.

9. Stay in your comfort zone.

We are aware that some GPs are not very confident in engaging with the media; if you're unsure, take small steps. If you feel nervous, don't accept an interview on live television straight away – get some media training and experience first. Your confidence will grow as you gain more experience of this.

10. Remember journalists are human.

If you do get a piece of news out there, the chances are the journalist will come to see you as their 'go-to' GP. This will help you to establish a relationship with them. So, if you have a good experience, say 'thank you', and this gives you the opportunity to mention other work you have coming up in the future. Journalists want new stories and contacts.