

Press

- The Importance of Media Relations in Advocacy
- Media Tips
- Sample Media and Communications Placements
 - “Reject Impersonal MinuteClinics” by Dr. Yul Ejnes in the *Providence Journal*
 - “Medicare cuts threaten access to primary care” by Steven Craig, MD, FACP in the *DesMoines Register*
 - “State reforms must ensure health care is accessible” by Dr. Robert McLean in the *New Haven Register*
 - “Cuts to physician payments threaten S.C. Medicare patients” by Dawn Clancy, MD, FACP in *The Post and Courier in Charleston*
 - Testimony to the Alaska State Senate HELP Committee by Dr. Richard Neubauer
 - Speech at ACP’s 2006 State of the Nation’s Health Care Report by Dr. Vineet Arora
 - Interview to “Health Talk,” a local cablevision program, by Dr. Robert McLean

The Importance of Media Relations in Advocacy

Public Awareness = Influence

Media Relations are a related, but slightly different aspect of advocacy. Media or Public Relations are designed to win the favor of the general public and promote better understanding of ACP's policies and issues.

If the public is made aware of a story through the media, such as newspapers or on nightly television news, politicians must take heed. These media reach broad audiences and the public will believe that, if a story is in the news, it must be important. Legislators depend on local media to reflect the views of their constituents. The media can help you generate support for an issue and provide a forum for you to present and discuss your position.

By building the knowledge base among the public for understanding the unique pressures faced by internists, our advocacy is likely to meet with greater success. Physicians need to go beyond talking among themselves and focus on providing more information to the general public.

Catching the Attention of Your Legislator

When writing a media piece regarding advocacy issues, you can greatly increase the chances of catching a particular legislator's attention by simply using their name. You may want to note that you are "calling on Congressman X" to take a specific action favorable to your cause. You increase the chances that your quote or opinion piece will come to the member's attention when you include his or her name.

Also, as you follow the actions of your legislators you may wish to submit letters to the editor or op-ed pieces that call attention to some of these. These pieces could be about the legislator voting for, or against, a piece of legislation you support, or for taking a position on an issue you agree with or not.

The Legislative Action Center's (LAC) Media Resource

ACP's Legislative Action Center (<http://www.acponline.org/hpp/advocacy/lac.htm?hp>) now includes a Media Center to help you obtain coverage on important advocacy issues outside the legislative arena. It acts as an excellent database for local newspaper, television and radio outlets by providing contact information for a wide range of individuals from general editors to reporters who cover specific beats. Once you have written your opinion piece or letter to the editor, use the Media Center to e-mail or fax directly to the outlet of your choice. If you require assistance crafting your piece, contact ACP's Communications and Public Affairs staff.

MEDIA TIPS

SERVICES OF ACP'S PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

- ❖ Draft press release (Sample A)
- ❖ Write letters-to-the-editor & op-eds
- ❖ Create media contact lists
- ❖ Draft talking points for interviews
- ❖ Sample article placements (Sample B)
- ❖ Coordinate media events at your ACP Meetings
- ❖ Contact the Public Affairs department in the Washington, DC Office at (800) 338-2746.
 - David Kinsman, extension 4554
 - Jacquelyn Blaser, extension 4572.

CONTACTING THE MEDIA

- ❖ Select key reporters in your area covering health and business and tell your story.
- ❖ Keep your explanation simple and free of jargon.
- ❖ Stay focused on how the issue affects your patients or other consumers.
- ❖ Who to Contact:
 - Television or Radio Stations:** Contact a news director or program director.
 - Newspaper Articles:** Call the assignment editor, city desk editor or health reporter.
 - Letters to the Editor:** Simply write and mail or email in.
 - Op-Eds:** Contact the editor. Clarify their length requirements and lead times. In general, op-eds should be between 500-750 words. Include your name, title, home and business contact information so they can verify your authorship. Follow up a week later.

PREPARING YOUR PITCH

- ❖ **Make the story relevant to your local area.**
- ❖ Ask colleagues or patients in your town to relate their stories.
- ❖ Provide hard facts or personal examples:
 - Number of Medicare beneficiaries in your state. (Online at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MedicareEnrpts/>)
 - A story about a Medicare patient whom you have personally treated.
- ❖ Summarize your story in one or two sentences that relate to the audience:

"A combination of high student debt and an unfavorable economic environment is causing many medical students and residents to choose careers in subspecialty medicine, rather than general internal medicine."

MEDIA TIPS

PREPARE FOR YOUR INTERVIEW

- ❖ Never take a cold call from a reporter– find out what the story is about and the deadline. Prepare yourself and call back.
- ❖ Stick to no more than three key messages that can each be stated in one sentence.
- ❖ Support messages with facts and real-life anecdotes.
- ❖ Talking points (brief notes) are essential to ensuring that your message is delivered.
- ❖ Ask a trusted colleague to test your responses to “tough” questions.
- ❖ There is no “off the record.” If you don’t want to be quoted, don’t say it.
- ❖ Do not ad lib. Try out new phrases or ideas in advance.
- ❖ Practice delivering your messages in advance, without jargon or complex language.
- ❖ Speak in a normal conversational pace and volume.

HOW TO ANSWER TRICKY QUESTIONS

- ❖ Remember that you are speaking on behalf of a larger group. Everything you say may be taken to reflect the organization’s official position.
- ❖ “No comment” is reserved for lawyers with guilty clients. Explain why you can’t answer.
- ❖ Do not respond to negative wording of a question by repeating the negative phrasing. Just rephrase the question and relate it to one of your key messages.
- ❖ If you don’t know an answer, say so. You can always follow up with a reporter after the interview.
- ❖ For irrelevant questions, simply say that the subject is outside your area of expertise.
- ❖ Avoid answering hypothetical or multiple-choice questions.
- ❖ Avoid being “cornered” and return to a key message.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

- ❖ Eat lightly, drink decaffeinated, sugar-free beverages and avoid milk products beforehand.
- ❖ During a telephone interview, stand up, move around and gesture.
- ❖ For a television interview, wear clothing with conservative style and solid colors, especially medium blue and charcoal gray.
- ❖ Do not overuse numbers – just one or two key statistics will do.
- ❖ If an interview is taped, take your time and ask to repeat or rephrase statements if necessary.
- ❖ If an interview is live, be succinct and strive for accuracy.

Most Importantly – Be Yourself!

Examples of Media Placements

Following are examples of ways you can use your experiences as physicians to contribute to the public understanding of the issues facing health care. You are experts in what it is like to be physicians today. And, your personal stories and anecdotes can help to explain that experience in compelling ways that facts and statistics cannot do by themselves.

The first four examples are editorial pieces submitted from ACP members to their local newspapers. “Reject impersonal MinuteClinics” from Yul Ejnes, MD, FACP, is a letter to the editor that was published in reaction to an editorial that ran in the paper. “Medicare cuts threaten access to primary care” is an op-ed submitted by Steven Craig, MD, FACP. “State reforms must ensure health care is accessible” from Robert McLean, MD, FACP, is an op-ed that appeared commenting on the actions of his state legislators. And, “Cuts to physician payments threaten S.C. Medicare patients” is an op-ed submitted by Dawn Clancy, MD, FACP.

The next two examples are remarks given by ACP members in two different settings. The first is testimony that Richard Neubauer, MD, FACP, gave to the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee. The second is a speech given by Vineet Arora, MD, at the 2006 State of the Nation’s Health Care briefing. At the time, she was the chair of ACP’s Council of Associates. While you may never find yourself in the same circumstances as these two members, both sets of remarks contain good examples of the power of using personal stories to explain your position.

The last example is an interview given by Robert McLean, MD, FACP to *Health Talk*, a local cablevision program.

