

# Media Training

Berlin Rosen

USPATH



- Training goals
- Media landscape overview
- Interview best practices
- Effectively educating audiences
- Dispelling misinformation
- Q&A

# Agenda

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# TRAINING GOALS

- Understand why and how to communicate through the media to inform audiences
- Gain more confidence in interactions with reporters
- Understand what makes a clear message and how to explain evidence-based medicine in media interviews

# Media landscape overview

# ENGAGING WITH MEDIA

- Working with reporters can be frustrating when so many are misinformed, but the best way to encourage accurate coverage is to have conversations with reporters
- In most cases, reporters are reaching out in good faith to learn more and educating reporters can help lead to a more accurate story
- When in doubt, direct reporters to WPATH's media inquiry page

# HEALTH EXPERTS CAN SHAPE ACCURATE STORIES

- Stories about health care should feature experts, not political pundits
- Health care providers are widely trusted to speak with authority and educate broad audiences
- Pushing back on misinformation is critical to ensure the broader field of health care isn't politicized

# VETTING INQUIRIES

- Look into the media outlet
  - Is it a legitimate outlet that reaches a key audience?
- Look into the reporter
  - Have they previously covered gender-affirming health care or other nuanced health topics?
  - Are there any red flags on their social media profiles?
- Consider the terms the reporter uses in their inquiry
  - Do they make inaccurate assumptions?
  - If they are inexperienced, do they seem open to education?

# RESPONDING TO INQUIRIES

Make sure to have a plan before a reporter reaches out:

- Discuss media protocol with your institution and/or WPATH/USPATH
- Align on talking points to ensure you're speaking in one unified voice with your institution

If a reporter reaches out to you, it's important to respond quickly. But don't rush your response or feel the need to say yes to an interview on the spot. First:

- Ask for deadline
- Ask for more detail about the angle and potential questions
- Ask who else they're in touch with for their story



# HANDLING NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES

- If a reporter breaks trust or makes a mistake:
  - It's important to remember not to be reactive or adversarial. While it is understandable to feel frustrated, anything you say to a reporter could be published and taken out of context
  - If there is an error in reporting, reach out to explain the error and offer any relevant data or resources to support a correction
  - Reach out to WPATH for additional counsel around tricky situations

# Interview best practices

# ON AND OFF THE RECORD

- Establish how quotes will be used:
  - **On the record:** Direct quotes that can be attributed to you
  - **On background:** Information that can be generally referenced, but not attributed to you by name
  - **Off the record:** Information that is not for publication or attribution
- Always consider yourself “on the record”— that is the default
  - The exception is if you’ve directly established beforehand that the conversation is on background or off the record
- “Off the record” is not retroactive and doesn’t advance your key messages

# AN INTERVIEW IS NOT A CONVERSATION

- Our natural inclination is to treat an interview like a conversation, but it's not!
- You are in control. Answer the question you want to be asked
- In an interview, you are not talking to the reporter: you're talking to their audience
- To reach your audience, you must identify the key points you want to communicate to them; these are your messages
- Think through your three key messages and find creative ways to repeat them

# ANSWER THE QUESTION YOU WANT TO BE ASKED

- Don't feel the need to provide a direct answer to every question a reporter asks. What do you want them/your audience to know?
- Use your messaging (you can have your notes in front of you for print or radio interviews, but be careful on Zoom!)
- If you feel like you're repeating yourself...you're doing it right!
- Often the last question you'll get is, "Do you have anything else to add?" or "Did I miss anything?" This is a perfect opportunity to restate your message clearly and concisely

# AFTER YOUR INTERVIEW

- Be polite
  - Send a thank you to the reporter and/or producer (even if it didn't go well!)
- Be social
  - Post clips on social media and share with your networks
- Be proactive
  - Keep in touch with the reporter and periodically send new studies/reports
  - Keep the clip on hand as it can help credential you for future interview opportunities

# Print, broadcast and radio

# BEST PRACTICES: PRINT

- Feel free to reference notes, but avoid reading off a script
- Avoid sarcasm or excessive subtlety—this does not translate well on the page
- Remember to repeat your top messages—only a few quotes will be picked up
- Memorize a good soundbite!



# BEST PRACTICES: RADIO/PODCASTS

- Speak a little slower than your usual speed
- Minimize background noise
  - Don't shuffle your notes close to your microphone
  - Turn off your phone
- Use a landline or Zoom/ Skype if possible: cell phones, speaker phones or headsets generally produce lower quality audio
- Stand up straight and smile when speaking
- If it is a call-in show, encourage your friends and colleagues to call in

# BEST PRACTICES: TV

- Speak slowly—regular speech is too fast for television
- Incorporate the question asked as a statement in your response (but don't adopt a negative frame!)
- Sit forward with feet planted or crossed at the ankles; don't lean on the table
- Look at the reporter, not at the camera
- Maintain steady eye contact and use natural hand gestures that don't distract
- TV flattens emotion, so the absence of a smile looks like a frown. Smile and remember the camera is always on!
- To avoid sounding monotone, try emphasizing one word or phrase in each sentence

# BEST PRACTICES: VIRTUAL INTERVIEWS

- Choose a place with strong internet signal, that is quiet and well-lit
- Light (natural or artificial) should come from the front of your laptop
- Do not sit too close to the camera and aim to have your webcam at eye-level. Keep your eyes on the camera, not the screen
- Sit in front of a wall that is not too busy, but also not completely bare
- Refrain from wearing clothing with logos or words. These can be distracting and may need to be blurred out
- If possible, refrain from using headphones, but keep them nearby in case they're needed for audio

# BEST PRACTICES: PANELS

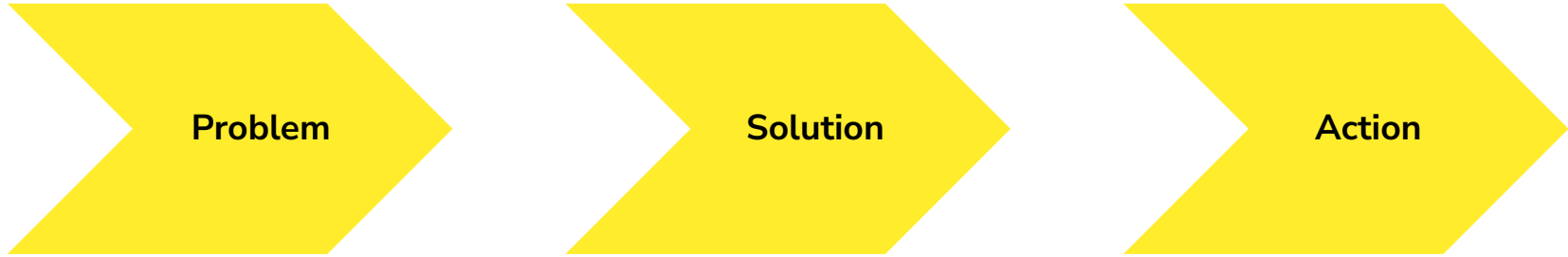
- Ask who else is going to be on the panel with you and familiarize yourself with their perspectives
- Get to your main point first and think soundbites. When an audience is listening to multiple speakers, you want to give them something easy to remember
- Don't be afraid to answer the question you want (same as interviews)
- Be assertive and join the conversation. Reference your co-panelists or host by name to politely interject: "I really want to expand on what Mr. Johnson said," or "Katherine makes a great point..."
- Stay engaged and alert when you're not speaking

# Educating audiences

# UNDERSTANDING AUDIENCES

- Different audiences are engaged by different messages
- Be consistent in the big picture message
  - What you say in front of one audience is likely to reach another
- Every interaction should support your goals and amplify the facts

# USE CLEAR MESSAGES TO EXPLAIN THE ISSUES



A good message is a short, compelling roadmap that does three things:

1. Defines the problem you're trying to solve
2. Outlines your broad vision for a solution
3. Offers specific actions your audiences can take to solve the problem

# MESSAGE EXAMPLE

- **Problem:** *Policies attacking health care providers are not informed by research or medical expertise. In fact, these political attacks go against decades of research and expert recommendations.*
- **Solution:** *Medically necessary care should be accessible to everyone. Care for transgender people is safe and effective and endorsed by all leading medical associations.*
- **Action:** *Elected officials should allow healthcare providers to give their patients the best care possible to meet their individualized needs.*



# KEEP THE SCIENCE SIMPLE

- Don't assume a reporter has a working knowledge of this space. Wherever possible, lean on easy-to-understand comparisons
- Stick with values and outcomes, avoid treatment details that could confuse or distract
- Assume people don't know what you know, so avoid jargon and keep any necessary explanations high-level
- Emphasize real world impact and shared values

# THE POWER OF PERSONAL STORIES

- A good personal story makes the problem real and memorable for your audiences
- You can add a personal element to your messages without telling a whole story about yourself:
  - “As a provider, I know that quality health care includes...”
  - “I’ve been researching this topic for 10 years. The data shows...”
- You can reference patients’ stories without disclosing too many personal details
  - “I’ve seen many young people flourish once they have the health care they need...”
  - “One of my patients told me that this health care has been life-changing...”

# Tricky situations

# AVOIDING MESSAGING TRAPS

- Remember, an interview is not a conversation
- Don't repeat inaccurate information, even to debunk it
- Reporters are trained to listen and even take lengthy pauses between questions, so it's important to stop talking when you have delivered your message. You do not need to fill the void – stick with your key messages!

# BRIDGING TO YOUR MESSAGES

- If a question takes you off your chosen message, bridge back to your messages with phrases like:
  - Let me tell you what the real issue is...
  - I can tell you from my own experience...
  - As a doctor, I let the science guide me, and what the science says is...
  - I would put that differently. The real challenge right now is...
  - I think what's really important to remember is...

# STAY ABOVE POLITICS

- Reject the politicization of health care
  - Emphasize your perspective as an apolitical expert speaking on science, not political beliefs.
- Examples:
  - “Health care shouldn’t be about politics. Health professionals agree that...”
  - “As a doctor, I just want to provide the best care for my patients and don't want politicians interfering with that...”

# CORRECTING MISINFORMATION

- Remember that you are the expert – there's a reason the interviewer wants to speak with you
- Address misinformation, but don't get stuck on it – get back to your key messaging or the issue at heart of the question
- Offer corrections respectfully
- Hold your ground and know when to end the conversation

# Questions?

Forward media inquiries or questions to:  
**[berlinrosen@wpath.org](mailto:berlinrosen@wpath.org)**