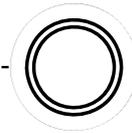


# Media & TV Training

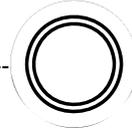


## MEDIA POINTERS: TELLING YOUR VA RESEARCH STORY



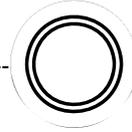
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# VA Research and Media Interest

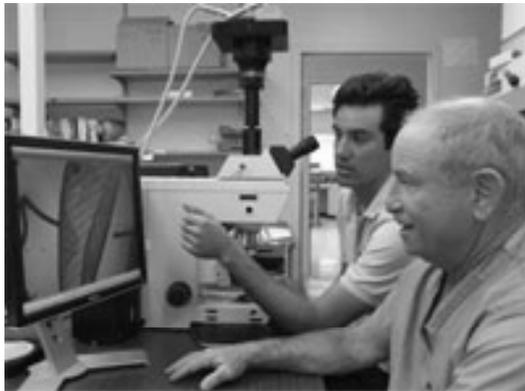


- **New York Times: *Better Antiseptic Curbs Post-Surgery Infections***
  - “The study’s leader, Dr. Rabih Darouiche, of the Michael DeBakey VA Medical Center in Houston, and other experts expect the newer antiseptic to replace iodine.”
- **New York Times: *Older Bypass Method is Best, a Study Shows***
  - “...In the study...2,203 patients were randomly assigned to have their bypass surgery on pump or off...A year later, those who had had off-pump surgery had poorer outcomes. Dr. Frederick L. Grover, the principal investigator for the study and a heart surgeon at the Denver VA, said his group was analyzing the costs of the two types of operations.”
- **Reuters: *New Tool Can Help Predict Alzheimer’s Risks: Study***
  - “U.S. Researchers have developed a checklist that can accurately predict whether a person over 65 is at high risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease within six years.”
- **Los Angeles Times: *Mammogram Guidelines Spark Heated Debate***
  - “A government panel’s recommendation Monday that women under the age of 50 do not need regular mammograms set off a furious debate about the importance of the routine screening tool, leaving many women confused about how best to protect their health.”
- **New York Times: *Screening: One More Reason to Get Up Early***
  - “...a new study suggests that early morning is an ideal time to schedule a colonoscopy...The new study looked at the results from 477 colonoscopies at the West L.A. VA Medical Center...”
- **Washington Post: *VA is Testing an Advanced New Prosthetic Arm***
  - “Last week, VA announced the start of a three-year clinical trial that represents the first large-scale testing of the arm, a critical step before it can be made widely available. The first patient was fitted with an arm in April.”

# VA Research and Media Interest



## NPR Science Friday (website) (2009):



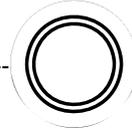
### **Living Band-Aid Beats Like A Heart**

Jordan Lancaster and Steven Goldman, researchers from the Southern Arizona Veterans Administration and the University of Arizona, put rat heart cells on a piece of synthetic mesh and within a few days, it started beating. The hope is that down the road the patch of cells could be used to treat damaged hearts.

**Cell therapists— Dr. Steven Goldman (right) and pre-doctoral fellow Jordan Lancaster view a microscope image of an implantable, synthetic mesh patch seeded with living**

- **heart cells. (Photo by Daniel Stolte/U. of Arizona).**

# VA Research and Media Interest

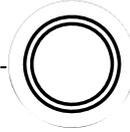


## **PRESIDENT HONORS OUTSTANDING EARLY-CAREER SCIENTISTS Focuses on Need to Maintain World-Class Science and Engineering Workforce**



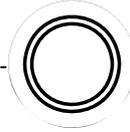
President Barack Obama talks with the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE) winners in the East Room of the White House, Jan. 13, 2010. VA Palo Alto Health Care System's Alex Sox-Harris, Ph.D is in the back row under George Washington's arm. Melina Kibbe is from Jesse Brown VAMC.

# CURRENT EVENTS



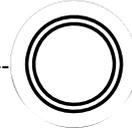
- **TIME Magazine/CNN:** *Haiti: After the Devastation, the Emotional Wreckage*
  - By JEFFREY KLUGER - Sunday, Jan. 17, 2010
  - - “It may seem premature to think about now, but Haitians who survive the horrific earthquake will be at risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Americans have become increasingly familiar with PTSD in the wake of 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina, not to mention in the experiences of veterans returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan — who have suffered such symptoms as depression, anxiety, emotional numbing, sleep difficulties, substance abuse and more. The Veterans Administration estimates that 7% to 8% of the U.S. population will suffer from the disorder at some point and 5.2 million Americans experience it in a given year.”

# CURRENT ISSUES



- **Minneapolis Star-Tribune: *Brain Scans Pinpoint Stress Disorder in War Veterans***
- **There's never been a simple test to diagnose post-traumatic stress, but a group of Minnesota scientists say they've found a high-tech way to identify people who have the disorder -- by studying their brain signals.**
- **The discovery could have huge implications for the way PTSD is diagnosed and treated in the future, says Dr. Apostolos Georgopoulos, who led the research as director of the Brain Sciences Center at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center.**

# **3 Basic Assumptions**



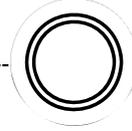
**1. Reporters are not out to get you.**

**2. You have control over interviews.**

**3. Interviews = Opportunities**

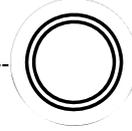
**\*4. Assume no one else is a scientist.**

# **Mother Theresa:**



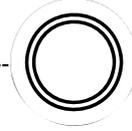
- **“It is harder to face media than to bathe a leper.”**

# Interview Basics



- **Know why you were asked for the interview**
- **Know the audience**
- **Know the format and theme of the program**
- **Establish ground rules**

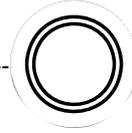
# **Do Your Homework**



- **Know your subject**
- **Anticipate questions**
- **Current events**
- **Look for good B-roll**
- **Potential Veteran participation**

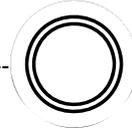


# **Cautions**



- **Cameras & microphones**
- **Opinions (DoD)**
- **Hypotheticals**
- **Suspicious**
- **Endorsements**

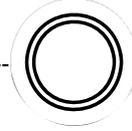
# Dos & Don'ts



## **DO:**

- ✦ Be positive
- ✦ Conclusion first, then expand to backup facts
- ✦ Use short quotes
- ✦ Make your point and stop
- ✦ Listen carefully
- ✦ Speak the public's English

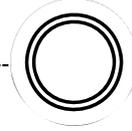
# Dos & Don'ts



## **DON'T:**

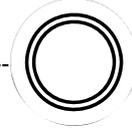
- ✦ Lie
- ✦ Avoid jargon & acronyms- speak everyday language
- ✦ Say “no comment”
- ✦ Accept reporter’s misinformation/facts
- ✦ Give information “off the record”

# Reporter's Questions



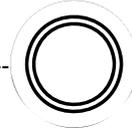
- **Puffball**
- **Hypothetical**
- **False Facts/False Assumptions**
- **Leading or Loaded**
- **Putting Words in Your Mouth**
- **Forced Choices**

# **The 4 C's**



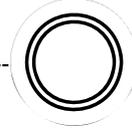
- **Commercial**
- **Credibility**
- **Cosmetics**
- **Control**

# **The 4 C's**



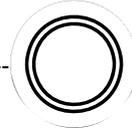
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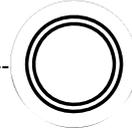
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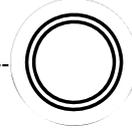
- **Commercial**
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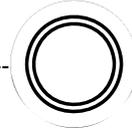
- **Commercial**
- **Credibility**
- **Cosmetics**
- **Control**

# Being Quotable



- **“If it doesn’t fit, you must acquit.”**
  - –Johnny Cocheran, during the OJ Simpson trial.
- **“I did not have sex with that woman.”**
  - –President Clinton during the Monica Lewinsky scandal.
- **“...I'm the decider...”**
  - –President George W. Bush, defending Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld
- **"I truly believe that that is going to take an individual that has testicular fortitude."**
  - --Paul Gibson, president of the Sheet Metal Workers' Union, explaining at a Hillary Clinton rally why she has the strength to take on tough problems like NAFTA.
- **"Forgiveness is not an occasional act: it is a permanent attitude."**
  - -- Dr. Martin Luther King
- **"What does not destroy me, makes me strong."**
  - -- Friedrich Nietzsche
- **"When in doubt, tell the truth."**
  - -- Mark Twain

# “ABC” Method of Control



**A** =

Acknowledge the question

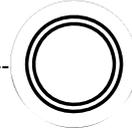
**B** =

Bridge phrase to where you want to go

**C** =

Use your Commercials

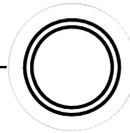
# REVIEW



- **4 C's:** Commercial, Credibility, Cosmetics, Control
- **Question  $\neq$  Answer:** Remember your key messages
- **Work with your PAOs** & alert to publication dates
- **Practice, practice, practice!**

# **Media & TV Training**

## **Questions?**



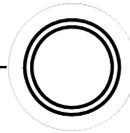
**MEDIA POINTERS:  
TELLING YOUR VA RESEARCH STORY**



**PRESENTED BY KERRI CHILDRESS**

# **Media & TV Training**

**<http://abclocal.go.com/kgo/story?section=news/health&id=7099126>**



**TO VIEW A PRIME EXAMPLE OF MEDIA  
COVERAGE ON VA RESEARCH VISIT THE  
WEB ADDRESS LISTED ABOVE**

# MEDIA Guide



***Media and  
Interview Tips  
for VA Employees  
Who Work With  
News Media***

# Notes



# Your Basic Checklist

## **Before you accept the interview:**

- Who is the audience?
- What is the issue to be discussed?
- What is the format?
- Who will be the interviewer?
- Is there a hidden agenda?
- What is the cost/benefit?

## **Prior to the interview:**

- Practice questions and answers.
- Avoid acronyms and jargon but be prepared to explain those you must use.
- Be familiar with current news items...some may trigger a question.
- Check dress, grooming
- Establish a rapport with the reporter.
- Review the ground rules.

## **During the interview:**

- Avoid hypothetical questions.
- Be confident and calm.
- Listen carefully.
- Keep eye contact with interviewer.
- Don't forget your key messages.
- Never say "no comment".

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# Introduction

**A**s an government agency, VA has a responsibility to provide accurate and timely information to the general public and the media.

As a VA employee, you may be asked to speak to media as a subject matter expert or to respond to an inquiry. That's why this guide was developed.

Dealing with media can be a daunting, but understanding how media operates, focusing on your messages and learning a few helpful tips can make the process comfortable, positive and controlled. It's important to see that media presents us with an *opportunity* to tell our stories.

Whether it's a face-to-face interview, a telephone interview or with a camera focused on you, it is important to be at your best and project your best image when communicating VA's message. We hope this guide will provide you with useful information and some easy tips to help you with your media interviews.



# Body Language

**N**on-verbal communication is as important as your verbal messages on television. Impressions often outweigh substance and attention must be paid to how you look and the subtleties of how we communicate with our eyes, hands, posture, etc. Here are some key points on body language:

- Avoid darting eyes and keep focused on the interviewer. Do not look into the camera.
- Keep your head up.
- Don't slouch or lean to one side. Hold still in swivel chairs.
- Use natural hand gestures for emphasis.
- Don't "death-grip" the arms of the chair or cross your arms.
- Lean slightly forward to convey engagement in the conversation.
- Don't play with rings, bracelets and other jewelry.
- Keep hands out of your pockets and avoid rocking when standing.

*Examples of other bridging statements:*

- “Yes...” (the answer), “and in addition to that...” (the bridge).
- “No...” (the answer), “let me explain...” (the bridge).
- “I don’t know...but what I do know is...”
- “That’s the way it used to be...here’s what we do now...”
- “The most important thing to remember is...”
- “I think it boils down to these three things...”
- “Let’s not lose site of the most important point...”
- “That’s not my area of expertise, but what I can tell you is...”
- “That’s a good point, but I think you’d be interested in knowing that...”
- “Before we get off that subject, let me add...”
- That’s an important point because...”



**M**edia have an important job to do. They provide a network of understanding, decode and interpret information and provide a source for organizations attempting to speak. More importantly they are a 24/7 watchdog. We need media...and they need us.

Most reporters are not “out to get you”. They have a job to do, one that may require them to look to you as the expert who can provide accurate information. We must respect and understand the challenges they are up against...including a revolution in how their world is changing and impacting how they gather and report news.

According to recent research, getting news in one form or another remains a daily habit for most Americans, however fewer than half of all Americans now report reading a daily newspaper on a regular basis.

Newspapers across the country are in decline and many have already folded. Instead, online sources of news are gaining viewership against television and newspapers across all age groups but particularly among young people.

Some of media's challenges are:

- **Changing Media:** The world of media is changing... staffing is being cut and reporters are being required to do more with less.
- **Short Deadlines:** Reporters are almost always under short deadlines so it is in our best interest to be prepared to react on short notice.
- **Time-Space Limitations:** Print and electronic media use very little space or time to tell a story. Therefore, we must be brief and to the point.
- **Inexperienced Reporters:** Many reporters know little about VA, therefore we need to educate them. Also most stories are written as though they would be read or heard by an audience at an eighth grade level. Make sure your responses are clear and concise.
- **Competition:** Journalists can be aggressive in pursuing a story in order to break a story first. Also with the speed of online information, reporters are even more under the gun to get a story filed. We must ensure that despite time constraints, we tell VA's story appropriately and accurately.



## Bridging Techniques

**B**ridging is a technique used to move from one aspect of an issue to another. It is especially effective when an interview is going in a direction you don't want to go. You "bridge" your way back to the messages you want to talk about. This technique is critical in maintaining control of an interview.

### Example:

**Reporter:** "We hear that some veterans don't want to come to VA because it's substandard care. Should the VA system be retired?"

**Response:** "*On the contrary*, VA is now a leader in health care and has been cited in major medical publications and general publications like Newsweek, that our system is actually setting the benchmark for quality control, computerized record systems and many other key areas of modern medicine. This is not your grandfather's VA."

In this example, the responder does not repeat the negative words used by the reporter and instead uses the phrase "on the contrary" as a bridge to get back to the positive messages that VA is a leader in health care. The last phrase is very quotable also.

*During an interview:*

- Be yourself.
- Listen carefully.
- Know your message(s).
- Stick to your area of expertise only.
- Don't be afraid to say "I don't know".
- Avoid jargon, acronyms. Speak plainly, briefly and to the point.
- Maintain eye contact with the interviewer.
- Don't give personal opinions and don't deal with hypothetical questions or "what if's".
- Personalize your answers.
- Never repeat or introduce a negative.
- Answer questions with a.) a conclusion, b.) an explanation/transition, and c.) your core message.
- Keep your cool under fire—don't argue.
- Correct misinformation respectfully.
- Never say "no comment".



**R**adio interviews can be done over the phone or in person, but have the great advantage of allowing you to have notes that you can refer to if you need them since no one can see you.

Other points to remember with radio:

- **Know the Audience:** Target your remarks to the interests and concerns of that particular audience.
- **Your Voice is Your Tool:** Keep your voice interesting through variety, tone and inflection. It's your only tool for holding the audience's interest.
- **Conversational and Brief:** Make your points in a conversational way. Answers over 20-30 seconds are over-answering.
- **Enthusiasm:** Be positive and enthusiastic and show you have conviction. End each segment with an upbeat, summarizing benefit.
- **"On-the-Air":** Assume you're always on-the-air. Don't say anything you don't want to hear broadcast over the air waves.



## Print Tips

**P**rint media has the advantage of being able to go further in depth with a story than either TV or radio. Other points to remember :

- **Materials:** Supply the reporter with materials that help clarify a complex issue before the interview.
- **Photos:** If a photographer is coming with the writer, think about some ideas for photos/photo opportunities that will help you tell your story.
- **Third Parties:** Reporters often like human stories to illustrate the topic. For example, if VA pioneered a new heart surgery technique, a reporter may want to talk to a veteran who had the procedure.
- **Taping:** If you have an interview on a hot topic or with a particularly challenging reporter, you can tape record the interview. Let the reporter know before the interview begins.
- **After the Interview:** Don't ask the reporter to see the article before it goes to print and don't ask him/her to send you a copy. Offer your availability if the reporter needs further clarification. If the article is positive/balanced, call the reporter to thank him/her.



## Interview Basics

### Your Interview Bill of Rights



*You have the right...*

- To know who is interviewing you
- To have ground rules
- To have your public affairs officer present
- To be told if you are being recorded
- To have time to get your points across
- To set a time limit on the interview

Other points to consider:

- Ask yourself, “If I could make just one point about this subject, what would it be?” Build your responses around this key message.
- Ask yourself what questions veterans or community members would ask.
- Determine what facts or statistics you should have handy.
- Ask yourself what are the most controversial or sensitive questions that may be asked by the reporter.
- Practice, practice, practice!!!



**T**elevision is visual, therefore, how you look, act and body language are as important as what you say. Other points to remember:

- **Format:** Watch the show before you go on to get an idea of its format—is it one-on-one, a panel show or one with an audience? Observe the interviewer’s style.
- **Sound Bites:** Talk in a conversational tone and keep your answers concise. Think in terms of sound-bites and don’t use VA “jargon”.
- **Sitting/Standing:** If sitting, don’t swivel your chair or drum your fingers on the arms. If standing, don’t rock back and forth, put your hands in your pockets or stand in a “fig-leaf” position.
- **Relax:** Take a few deep breaths before you go on, smile, keep eye contact with the reporter and speak in a conversational style.
- **Attire:** Conservative, simple and tasteful are best. Lightweight clothing helps under the bright camera lights. Doctors can wear a white coat to convey credibility. If make-up is offered by the studio, accept it.



## Telephone Interview Tips

**W**hen you are called on the phone by a reporter who wants to interview you on the spot, here are some helpful tips:

- **Key Information:** Never accept an interview when first called, but find out who you are talking to, when their deadline is, their contact information and key information they are seeking. Always insist on a call-back time at which you can call the reporter back.
- **Time Limit:** Set a time limit and keep it. Remind the reporter of your time limit by saying “I only have time for one more question.”
- **Notes:** Keep notes handy so you can find all information you need.
- **Vacuums:** Don’t fill vacuums of silence. The report may be writing, thinking, looking something up or waiting for you to volunteer something more juicy.
- **Call Backs:** If you promise the reporter more information, ask someone else to call them back with it. Otherwise you have re-opened the entire interview.



## Preparing Your Messages

**B**efore you do an interview, know why you were asked to do it, what you want to say and how you want to say it.

- You should have **2 or 3 key messages** (“silver bullets”) that are positive and offer something to the audience.
- For each message, have 2 supporting messages that you can use to back up your primary message.
- Messages should be **brief and to the point**. Think in terms of “sound bites” (no more than 20 words). This helps make them more quotable.

### Example:

**Key Message #1:** VA operates the largest integrated health care system in the world.

**Supporting Message A:** VA employs more than 14,000 physicians and more than 50,000 nurses.

**Supporting Message B:** In 2005 alone, there were some 57 million outpatient visits to VA facilities nationwide.