



Working with the media

A quick guide for Paediatric Society members

When journalists contact an expert, the number one thing they need from you is a timely response. With deadlines looming, reporters often need a reply quickly. Best practice is to respond quickly with a realistic timeline. If the request is via email, acknowledge the enquiry and let them know when you can respond. If it is by phone, it is often best to offer a definitive time to call back after you have considered the issues described below, including composing your thoughts and finding a quiet, convenient location.

Keep it simple. An expert who can explain complicated things in a lively, clear and accessible way is priceless to the media. But what if it's not really your field? If you know more about the topic than the reporter asking the questions, that may be all they need. But if you're really not the right person for the job, say so and if you can, suggest someone who might be able to do the interview instead.

When a journalist calls

Find out why they are calling:

- What organisation do they work for?
- What is the general line of the questions they want to ask you?
- Why are they reporting on this now? What's their 'angle'?
- Who else have they spoken to?
- Find out what their deadline is
- Let the PSNZ Communications Manager know you've been approached for comment, email ally.clelland@paediatrics.org.nz
- If you are busy when they call, ask if they could send you the questions. This will give you time to think about how you can best answer them
- If they are asking for a radio or TV interview, ask if they want to pre-record or do a live interview?
- Prepare the three most important points you want to get across
- Call the journalist back within the timeframe promised.

Giving a great interview

Keep your answers brief and conversational. Speak slowly and try to avoid saying um or ah

Stop when you have answered the question: don't ramble

Be prepared, but don't script your answers, that will sound stilted and unnatural

Don't just **jargon** or overly exact numbers

Do use **interesting analogies** and examples

If you don't feel comfortable answering a question, say so, but then return to one of your main points. For example - I don't have that information to hand, but what I can tell you is.... If you can ask them to **use your title** but add, and member of the Paediatric Society.

TV interviews

- Dress well and don't wear anything that could prove distracting such as striped clothing, brightly coloured ties or long dangly earrings
- Relax and don't fidget
- Look at the interviewer, not the camera, they represent your audience
- Where appropriate, be expressive about your topic. Convey your passion, excitement, disappointment, frustration.
- Stay in your lane, stick to what you know.

Other media matters

If you have any questions related to media issues please contact our PSNZ Communications Manager – email ally.clelland@paediatrics.org.nz