World Eye Cancer Hope
life and sight for every child

Communication

Talking to the media can seem daunting, particularly if you are not used to it. We are here to help you if you have any questions, so please do not hesitate to contact us.

Telephone Communication

In the process of compiling your media list, creating your action plan and following up, you will need to make a number of telephone enquiries. These conversations can have a crucial impact on the success of your media campaign, so take some time to prepare for them beforehand. If a journalist, news editor or producer feels you have efficiently and considerately provided useful, interesting information, they are more likely to follow up your story.

Interviews

An interview is the best opportunity for clearly sharing your message. Interviews with print and radio journalists are frequently conducted by telephone. Face-to-face interviews are more likely to be for television. Whatever the format, an interview is your golden opportunity to present the most important aspects of your story, and to build a positive relationship with a journalist. .

Remember that your time during telephone conversations and interviews will often be very limited – particularly during television and radio interviews. The number one rule of media communication is therefore Be Prepared.

Whether you are telephoning to enquire about deadlines, talking to a journalist about your story, or doing a live studio interview for your local TV station, a little thoughtful preparation goes a long way. Following the tips and advice below will enable you to be positive during any verbal communication with the media**.**

Five Top Tips For Good Verbal Communication:

- Don't speak too fast (practice on your own first, to calm any nerves).
- Use proper grammar, and avoid slang.
- Keep your message simple, clear and to the point.
- Do not use jargon (e.g.: "surgical removed" is better than "enucleated".
- Speak naturally – regurgitating a memorised script usually sounds stilted

Do Not Be Afraid

Journalism is a time-pressured job, and journalists may seem abrupt and demanding, but they are human too! Be patient and polite, and provide them with the information they need, in the format they request, and you will do fine.

Be Prepared

When telephoning the media, make sure you know what you are needing to say or ask, and that you are prepared to answer any possible questions. Have a note book or word document open, with notes for your call, and be ready to make notes during your conversation. If you are arranging a meeting or interview, have notes ready about possible dates, times, locations and logistics, and confirm them before you end the call, so that you do not have to call back.

Introduce Yourself

Tell the reporter your name, and explain that you are a local volunteer fundraiser for World Eye Cancer Hope, an international children's cancer charity. Then briefly describe the purpose of your call. Make it clear that you are a member of the local community with a great human interest story. Journalists will be more likely to talk with you than if you give the impression of corporate PR . They will also be more forgiving and flexible if you make mistakes.

Make Yourself Available

The more accessible you are to the media, the more likely they are to cover your story. If journalists cannot easily make contact with you to discuss your event or arrange an interview/photograph, they will quickly lose interest.

Return Calls / Emails Promptly

Journalists have deadlines. Delaying for even a day may cause you to lose a valuable publicity opportunity. Even though you have a very interesting and vitally important message wrapped up in your story, the reporter may not be able to wait to speak with you. So always respond quickly to any telephone messages or emails.

Neither Friend Nor Enemy

Think of a journalist as a professional "gatekeeper" to the public, and speak with the public in mind. Establish a professional relationship, and don't assume the reporter will put your interests above the story, or highlight your viewpoint.

Be Brief and Focused

Think of your conversation as exchange of information rather than an entertaining yarn. A very useful preparation technique is to imagine you are taking an elevator ride with the reporter. Think about the information you want to impart, and how you would share it in that short time.

Be Genuine

Lack of clear personal interest or enthusiasm for the cause you are promoting is a real turn-off for journalists. If you are nervous, think about what inspired you to support WE C HOPE, and weave that into your main message, as this will naturally bring out your enthusiasm.

Expect Awkward Questions

The journalist is an investigator. He is only doing his job, so don't be negative or hostile. Be prepared to answer the questions honestly and politely.

Never Say "no comment":

This is an evasive response, and gives the impression you have something to hide. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. Add that you will find out and let the reporter know. If someone else is better able to comment, say this, and arrange for the journalist to speak with the person – or to us.

Be Honest

If you don't know the answer to a particular question, are uncomfortable answering, or cannot share the information requested, don't be tempted to lie or guess the answer. Remember that you are representing World Eye Cancer Hope, and helping to educate and inform the public – so if you give false information, you will be misinforming the public, and potentially damaging WE C HOPE. The chances are that you will be caught out, and your credibility with the media will be lost. Far better is to say "I can't speak on that because..." and explain why. Do not be forced into commenting, and remember that you are perfectly entitled to not answer a question.

No Such Thing As 'Off The Record'

Journalists are never off duty, so if you don't want to see something that you say in print, or hear it over the airwaves, don't say it to a journalist.

Look Ahead

Emphasise that retinoblastoma eye cancer can be clearly visualised in photographs as a “white pupil”, and that simple awareness of this can save lives and sight.

Follow the WE C HOPE Line

Even though you may have personal views on an issue, please bear in mind that you are speaking on behalf of WE C HOPE in this situation. Media statements about our policies, or position on any issue in the press, should only be made through WE C HOPE officers. If you are asked for a comment on such an issue, please refer the caller to WE C HOPE for a response.

Media Interviews

Most television Interviews last around 2.5mins, and approximately half of this time will be taken up by the interviewer asking questions. So you must **be well prepared**. Print journalists may also have limited time available to speak with you, and the tips for tv/radio interviews are equally important when talking with a publication reporter.

Dress Appropriately

Whether you are to be interviewed for a story in your local paper, or filmed for a television news segment, appearances matter. A scruffy appearance creates a bad impression. Don’t dress in a suit an tie if you don’t usually wear one, but do give particular thought to the clothes and accessories you will be wearing to the interview. Dress comfortably, but smartly. For example, jeans and a t-shirt are fine for media interviews at your event, if they suit the environment, but make sure they are neat, and think carefully about the appropriateness of any motifs on t-shirts. A suit, collared shirt and slacks or a dress are always preferable for meetings with journalists, or for studio interviews.

Special Considerations When Dressing for a TV Interview.

- Bright white causes glare with cameras.
- A red top can make your face look very pink.
- Large, dangly earrings distract viewers from your message.
- Glinting jewellery reflects light too much for the cameras.
- A strapless dress/top makes women appear naked in head and shoulders shots.
- Close stripes and tight checks come over badly on camera. Plain is better.
- Socks should be long enough to prevent exposure of your ankles when seated.

Be On Time

Remember that journalists are busy people, and studios work to a tight schedule. If you keep interviewers waiting, you may miss your opportunity, and you will damage your future credibility.

Agree a Brief

It possible, do this before the interview is recorded. This will enable you to have some control over what is to be taped, and if necessary you can gain permissions in advance (for example, if you are filming at a school, the school may have a policy about photographing its pupils).

Stay With the Crew

Accompany camera and sound crews at all times. Be careful what you and others say, as your comments could end up on air.

General Interview Tips:

- Don't fiddle with your hair or clothing.
- Don't make manic gestures with your arms when speaking
- Don't point at the interviewer of camera.
- Sit still, but not rigidly – be relaxed.
- Engage with your interviewer by making eye contact.
- Look at the interviewer, not the camera.

Be Prepared

Don't rush into the interview with ill-conceived thoughts. Choose only one or two points to emphasise, and be clear about the message you want to put across. Consider how you could lead back to this message if a question does not relate to it directly, or seems to be side-tracking.

If you are using a spokesperson, check well ahead of time whether that person has had any media experience or training, and whether they have used this media pack to prepare for the interview. Are they well briefed on the key points you have identified to be made about retinoblastoma?

Don't Digress

Answer questions honestly, but don't waste time deviating from your message. Even if the implication of the question is negative, answer it, and then "bridge" to the point you wish to make.

- **Example:** you want to emphasise that high death rates from retinoblastoma in developing countries can be dramatically reduced through awareness campaigns targeting primary health workers and parents of young children.
  - **Interviewer:** "Eye cancer is not really a priority in developing countries – surely we should be focusing on issues like AIDS and malnutrition?"
  - **Your reply:** "These are very important challenges, and they already receive much funding. Every child has the right to life-saving health care, whether

they have AIDS or cancer, but childhood cancer receives minimal funding. The key point is that this cancer can be easily diagnosed when you know what you are looking at, and it is very curable with surgery alone when found early, so simple awareness can save many children".

Emphasize Your Main Point

Reinforce your primary message by using "flag" phrases such as "Most importantly…" or "the key point is...". Repeating your point also emphasises the message, so keep coming back to it.

Speak in Personal Terms

Using personal anecdotes and descriptive examples to illustrate your point is the most effective way to communicate your message, and make it memorable. For example, which of the following statements is more likely to stay in your memory?

1) "World Eye Cancer Hope works in Africa, where many children die from this cancer because doctors don't know about it. Simple awareness can save the lives of many affected children in Africa".
2) The "World Eye Cancer Hope mission is inspired by a little girl from Africa called Rati, who died because her doctor didn't know about eye cancer in children. Simple awareness would have saved her life, and can save the lives of many other children".

Close Well

At the end of the interview: close with a firm handshake, and thank the interviewer for their time. Request a business card, so that you can keep their contact details for future reference. This will also help you to correctly spell their name and job title when you send a thank you note.

Thank You Note

Two or three days after the interview, send a very neatly handwritten or typed thank you note to the interviewer and media outlet Keep it short (just a few lines should be fine), expressing your appreciation for their time, interest, and support for awareness raising (or whatever your chosen message was). Sign the note with your first and last name, and provide your contact information (address, full telephone number and an e-mail address, if you have one).