

Guide to conducting media interviews

eular

fighting rheumatic & musculoskeletal
diseases together

Part 1. Background

1. What is the media?

The term covers the main means of mass communication: print, broadcasting (radio and television) and the internet.



Print

- **National newspapers** (broadsheet and tabloid – also published online)
- **Regional and local newspapers** (including free papers and magazines)
- **Monthly and weekly consumer magazines** aimed at specific audiences (e.g. men, women, health, sports etc.)
- **Trade publications** (e.g. magazines and newsletters for doctors, nurses, pharmacists etc.)



Internet

- **Online news** (newspapers, radio, TV) and **Online magazines**
- **Blogs**
- **YouTube**
- **Stories spread by social media** (e.g. Facebook, Twitter etc.)



Broadcast

- **Radio** (national, regional, local)
- **Television** (international e.g. BBC World Service, CNN etc. national, regional, local)



Newswires

There are also **Newswires**, e.g. Reuters, providing rolling news feeds for journalists.

Which is the right media for your story?

The media trades in stories: words, pictures and sound. Each publication, programme or online platform will have a **target audience**.

- **Monitor the various media** to get to know their character, interests and the type of material they publish / broadcast
 - Who are their readers, listeners, watchers, followers?
 - What type of stories do they publish / broadcast?
 - Which journalists write on which topics?
 - Do they need images?
- **Create a media list**, including the names of specific journalists / broadcast programmes / social media platforms with an interest in health and social matters that match the concerns of your organisation



Timing

News will be current and have short deadlines. Feature articles / programmes will have much longer lead times. Know:

- What are the lead times and deadlines for information to be received before the publication / broadcast is '*put to bed*', i.e. finalised before publication or broadcast. For example, weekly publications can be put to bed from one week to a month and monthlies from three to six months ahead of publication or broadcast
- What are your journalists key timings e.g.:
 - When do they decide what they are going to write about / broadcast?
 - When do they submit their stories?



What do journalists want?

- A unique angle – relevant to their audience
- Something new
- Something exclusive
- Something seasonal/unusual
 - Tie-in to something topical
 - Some sort of visual image/usable graphic
 - Good timing
 - To get their by-line published
- Comments from experts



What to remember about journalists and broadcasters

- They are very busy: deadlines are real and they get nervous, too
- They want a good story and are looking for facts
- They are under pressure
- They hate no call backs, no comment and stalling
- They are not out to get you, but they may ask unexpected questions

2. How your organisation can prepare

When a journalist or researcher for a radio or television programme is looking for the perspective of people with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) or an opinion on an issue affecting people with RMDs, they could come to your organisation.

Background information

It is important to be prepared for enquires and questions from journalists and broadcasters. Whether your organisation is planning to approach a journalist to 'sell-in' a story (PROactive media engagement), or to be prepared for an unexpected call from a journalist (REactive media engagement), it is wise to have background information ready prepared. This should be concise and regularly reviewed and updated to ensure it is accurate, informative and still relevant, especially if there is anything controversial upcoming or in the news. Background information could include:

- Facts and figures, such as the number of people affected by RMDs in your country and any health economic data
- An explanation of RMDs and their impact
- Information on your organisation and the type of services you offer
- Short biographies of your key personnel / your designated media spokespeople
- Case studies based on people with inspiring stories to tell or whose stories illustrate key issues you want to raise
- Fact sheets

- Images or any relevant video footage – unedited footage (B-roll) can be very useful, as some programmes like to use this to cut into their own stories
- Any relevant materials produced by your organisation or other respected organisations that support your perspective

You can also prepare materials for use within your organisation, but not for external distribution. These will help you respond to journalist enquiries and ensure that all your media spokespeople have access to agreed key messages and that the information coming from your organisation is consistent. These materials can include:

- Agreed key messages about your organisation and any campaigns, or controversial issues etc
- A Question and Answer (Q&A) sheet [download a sample Q&A here](#)



To be fully prepared, consider how your organisation would answer the questions you would least like to be asked

2. How your organisation can prepare continued...

You can also prepare **statements or comments on key or controversial topics**. These can be on behalf of your organisation in general, or accredited statements from your CEO, medical director or members of your trustees etc. (Ensure these are signed off by the person who is accredited and regularly reviewed and updated).

The key messages and agreed answers you prepare should be shared with staff designated to speak to the media. Please ensure they are all familiar with the key messages and stick to them! (*See media spokespeople, Media Enquiry Protocol and template Q&A with some suggested questions and answers*).

Background materials should be concise – use bullet points where possible – less is more!

Media spokespeople

It is important to be prepared for enquires and questions from journalists and broadcasters.



Designated spokespeople representing an organisation should have authority and the knowledge or expertise to speak to the media

Spokespeople should be regularly briefed to ensure there is message consistency. Train them well ahead of any media activity – with a specialist media trainer or by practicing interviews with colleagues. Everyone in your organisation should be made aware that only the designated spokespeople should talk to journalists, know who they are and how they can be contacted. This helps to avoid inappropriate comments made by well-meaning but uninformed members of staff. Organisations can also develop a simple **media protocol** and **Question and Answer (Q&A) document**.

Media enquiry protocol

This document should be distributed to all staff who might pick up a call from a journalist, including helpline staff. It tells them how to handle media enquiries and where journalists and broadcast researchers should be directed – see a sample media enquiry protocol [here](#). It is essential that anyone answering phones in your organisation understands how to manage calls from the media.

2. How your organisation can prepare continued...

Developing key messages

A key message is a strong statement about an organisation's belief about itself or an issue about which the organisation takes a stand.

Key messages must convey - in a few words - the most important points you want to deliver to your target audiences, e.g people with RMDs, the general public, mothers, doctors etc. This could include:

- Facts and figures, why your point is important to your target audience
- What you want them to think, feel, say or do differently as a result of hearing your key message

Try to focus on three key messages per topic / audience and their supporting points

- Keep sentences short and use stand-alone sentences – they reduce the likelihood of being taken out of context
- Repeating key messages in interviews helps ensure that they are heard and remembered

Key Message Tips:

- Stick to your key messaging – keep it CLEAR, CONCISE, COMPLETE and CORRECT
- Use simple words, avoid jargon or buzzwords
- Avoid qualifiers such as “I think,” “I believe,” “I feel,” and “I hope” – it makes the spokesperson sound uncertain
- Be judicious about using the word “but” as it can set the stage for a negative impact, even if the first part of the sentence is positive. It can make the second part sound like an excuse. i.e. “Our government supports initiatives to promote healthy eating and active living, but...



Developing key messages and the answers to difficult questions is a good way for you and your organisation to consider your position, perspectives and values

3. Contacting the media

Target audiences

Different media are aimed at various groups - from the general public to policy makers, medical specialists, or people with RMDs. These are referred to as **target audiences**.

Remember that policy makers and medical experts also read publications and watch broadcast programmes aimed at the general public.



Research and preparation

- **Realistic placement** analysis – it is often better to target a few appropriate journalists or broadcasters than to mass target
- Identify and offer **appropriate spokespeople**, who have received some training or briefing in advance
- Find out **how far in advance** of publication or broadcast journalists like to receive information
- Find out the **timing of planning meetings**, but avoid making calls on publication days!
- Decide your **key messages** in advance
- Have a clear **story to pitch**
- Have a **news hook** ready to interest the journalist
- Develop **memorable pitch words**, tailored written messaging and verbal communication
- Ensure **messaging is succinct**
- Have **photography/images or background video footage** available
- Have **relevant facts and figures** to hand to support your key messages
- Make sure you or a colleague will **be contactable to respond to journalists** once a news release has been distributed
- **Ensure everyone in your organisation knows** who your media spokespeople are so calls from journalists can be appropriately directed

3. Contacting the media continued...



Developing a news release (also known as a media or press release)

When writing press releases or emails to journalists / broadcast researchers; the shorter the better. National journalists can receive at least 200 emails a day. Think about what will make them read your email over the other 199. Tell the 'who', 'what', 'where', 'when', 'why'.

- Decide your key messages in advance (up to three)
- Have a clear story to pitch and a news hook ready to interest the journalist
- Be as brief and to the point as possible
- Respond promptly and directly to calls and questions
- Make sure you or a colleague are contactable at all reasonable times during a media campaign



Being proactive / becoming a resource

Building relationships with target journalists means you will have their attention when you need it and feel more confident when they approach you with a story.

Contacting journalists or broadcast researchers directly helps to:

- Generate and maximise media coverage
- Build journalist relationships



Don't just contact journalists when you have a story to sell, keep up a dialogue with those you trust and are empathetic with your cause

- Alert journalists to issues that might become a story in the future so they can follow them from the beginning
- Call journalists you have a relationship with to 'sound out' a story, ask which aspects might be of interest to them and what additional information could make it more interesting
- Become the 'go to' resource for journalists seeking trusted information and comment

Part 2. Conducting media interviews

1. Being approached by a journalist

If you are a designated spokesperson for your organisation you should be prepared to speak to journalists, who may contact you at any time. They may be looking for:

- General information about rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) and come to your organisation for comment or specific information
- Information about a specific campaign or event that your organisation is running
- A response to a topical issue

If you don't feel you have the right expertise to answer specific questions, suggest you find out or pass the query to an appropriate colleague – but make sure you do so and respond to the journalist promptly.

When approached by a journalist or broadcast researcher:

- Clarify:
 - Who they are; the name of publication or programme they are working for; their deadline; their target audience

- If they are a staff journalist employed by a specific publication, or a freelance journalist commissioned to place a piece with a specific publication, or a speculative freelance journalist looking to place an idea/article with any publication that might take it
- Their contact details
- What triggered their call (e.g. they've received a press release/read an article/seen new data)
- What do they already know about the subject? Have they spoken to anyone else?
- What information are they looking for?

Based on the above information, decide whether you are the right person to speak to them. If you're not sure, or you do not feel confident you have the information they require to hand, do not be afraid to offer to call them back.

Bridging: side stepping or blocking phrases

You may be asked questions you do not want to answer directly, in which case you can use a bridging phrase to side step or block the question. Bridging phrases allow you to acknowledge the question, but to take control of the situation and move the interview to a point on your agenda.

1. Being approached by a journalist continued...



Side stepping phrases include:

- That's a very interesting question, but the important point is...
- I understand why people think that, yet...
- There will always be people who take that view, however...
- I think the question here is really...
- Of course we take people's concerns seriously, but...
- On the contrary...
- That's a common misunderstanding of the position...
- Of course we consider these things seriously...
- It might prove more helpful to look at it this way...



Blocking phrases include:

- There is no question of that...
- Absolutely not...
- Not at all...
- I think I have addressed that question as best I can for the moment...
- We will be dealing with that issue when we meet with people individually...
- It is not appropriate to pre-empt any decision on that by (the government or whoever)...

2. Preparing for an interview

Going ahead with an interview

Good preparation is essential. You may not be given long between the first contact and your interview, so keep your core media information up to date. This is an opportunity to showcase your organisation and its work, or to promote your cause or campaign

- **Review** the type of information you have been asked for and prepare your answers
 - Decide on the key messages you want to put across
- **Take time** to think about what you are being asked and who your information may be passed to
- **Find a quiet place** where you won't be overheard or interrupted
- **Arrange to call the journalist back** if necessary or appropriate
- **Agree how long is needed for the interview** and stick to it

#1

Before the start of an interview, ask what is the first question you will be asked

- **If you don't know the answer**, don't improvise
- **Paint pictures** and provide stories (case studies) relating to real people with RMDs who are in relevant situations
- **Put it in context** – how common is the condition
- **Review your key points** at the end of the interview
- **Keep notes** on the conversation and record it with a dictaphone/mobile phone if possible

2. Preparing for an interview continued...

Interview essentials

(For press, radio or television and other key audiences, e.g. staff or public briefings)

Do's:



- **Do review the type of information you have been asked for** - prepare your answers
- **Do ask what the first question will be** – this gives time to prepare your answer, but you may not always be told!
- **Do keep information factual** – do not speculate
- **Do acknowledge and then use questions to bridge to your key messages**
 - An interview is about delivering packages of information that meet your agenda
 - Try 'dangling' a new piece of information
- **Do try to leave the reader, listener or viewer with something new** they did not know about RMDs or your organisation before your interview

Don'ts:



- **Do not use jargon** – it alienates audiences – keep your message simple
- **Do not pretend** to know an answer
- **Do not offer personal opinions or try and attribute** personal opinions or comments to others, including your organisation
- **Do not speculate or stray outside your area of expertise**
 - Say if you don't know an answer, but offer to find the answer or an expert to comment
- **Do not repeat negative, or inflammatory words or phrases put to you by the interviewer**
- **Do not treat an interview, or a pre- or post-interview chat, as a conversation**
 - Nothing is ever 'off the record' whatever a journalist or researcher may say!

3. Tips for managing press interviews

Print interviews can take place **in person** or, commonly, **by telephone**. They normally take longer than other types of interview.



Telephone interviews

Telephone interviews are more difficult to manage as you cannot see and assess the interviewer's reaction. Speak slowly and clearly, ask the journalist if they understand what you are saying and do not be afraid to repeat your key messages.

- **Your expression and mood will be reflected through your voice**, so if you are confident or smiling, or anxious or defensive, this will come through to the person you are talking to

Before you agree to an interview

Check the following:

- **Find out who is calling and what newspaper or publication they work for** - remember that calls can be from anyone
 - If in any doubt, check their identity by telephoning back on the main landline of the newspaper or publication offices. They could be a freelance journalist working for a number of publications
 - Ask them to email the query from their work email address
 - If you are not ready to take the call, tell them that you are currently busy and organise another time for the call. Be firm!
- **Find out what has triggered their call**
 - Why have they contacted you?
 - Who have they already spoken to?
- **What is the journalist's level of knowledge about the story?**
- **What** information does he/she have that he/she can email or fax to you?
- **Who** will be reading the article?
- **If it is a telephone interview, find somewhere quiet to speak** without interruption
- **Write down in advance key points** you wish to convey during the interview
- **Agree how long you are available** and stick to it

3. Tips for managing press interviews continued...



During the interview

- **Take notes** on what they require and what they think they know, but never offer a comment or opinion
- Remember to use the interview as an opportunity to convey your **key messages**. It may be useful to have them written down in front of you
- **Do not wander away from the subject**. Keep the key points in front of you
- Try to **identify the source of any third party information** by gentle questioning
- The journalist may be **recording what you say**, so never go '*off-message*'
- **You can also record the interview or any conversation** you have with the media. If you cannot, then take notes on the questions asked and your replies for your records



Face-to-face interview

Remember you are representing your organisation **so consider what you will wear and what perception this will give the journalist.**

- **Remain friendly, but professional at all times** and do not be lulled into a false sense of security where you might be tempted to say something off the record
- **Build a rapport with key journalists** who you could contact in the future

4. Tips for managing radio interviews

Radio is a very intimate medium – listeners often have personal relationships with programmes and presenters.

Before you agree to the Interview


Find out about the programme or news item to which you have been invited to contribute:

- Will it be live or recorded?
- Who is the potential audience?
- Who else is being interviewed?
- Are they planning to run a whole interview or just take a clip/soundbite for a news item?
- Where will the interview take place? In a studio? By phone? In your office or workplace?

Preparation

- Decide key messages to match the likely audience
- Think of anecdotes and soundbites to illustrate your messages. Rehearse them
- You may have notes with you - short bullet points to prompt key messages or statistics - but never read from them!
- Make sure you are not wearing clothes which rustle, jewellery which clinks and empty your pockets of loose change

Speak slowly and clearly, using simple language. Use examples to illustrate what you are saying. This will make it easier for the listener to relate to the point you are making.



Keep your answers concise and put your key messages at the start of your answer. Don't worry if you repeat a point to ensure it is understood and remembered

General interview delivery

- Don't go too fast – be positive and authoritative
- Remember to smile, if appropriate to the subject
- Be energetic and enthusiastic
- Remember you're speaking to one person (the listener), not a crowd
- Listen out for the words "and finally" which an interviewer often uses before the last question. This is your final chance to get your message across again
- Don't get up to leave straight away – the microphone may still be on
- Don't say anything inappropriate immediately following the interview, such as, "Phew, I'm glad that's over!" – the microphone may still be on
- Don't suddenly move into or back from the microphone - sound levels will vary
- Don't be concerned if the interviewer is looking around the studio and not at you
- Don't rustle papers, tap pens or drum fingers

4. Tips for managing radio interviews continued...

To help overcome nerves

- If you feel your mouth is going dry, bite the tongue to encourage saliva flow
- Stretch and breathe deeply to relieve tension
- Test your voice by speaking a few words to someone – or yourself – before you go on air
- Ask for a glass of water – but keep sipping quiet


Face-to-face at a radio station

This type of interview will normally be broadcast live, but may be recorded for later broadcast.

You will be talking directly to the programme presenter in their studio. You will be wearing headphones and there will be a microphone to speak into. The sound engineer will test for sound before the broadcast goes live, but there may be very little time between you going into the studio and going live on air, so make sure you have all your thoughts in place.

If it is a commercial station, or the programme mixes music with interviews, your piece may be interspersed between advertisements or playing music. This can feel disruptive and you may be cut off from completing what you have to say.

If your interview is going to be recorded it can be a lot longer than what is eventually broadcast. The presenter will be looking for soundbites. Taking edited sections of what you have said could distort your intended meaning. Use stand-alone sentences where possible.



If you are speaking on a regional radio station, try and include a local fact or figure, if you can

Interviews with regional and local radio stations 'down the line' in a studio

When you have a campaign or you are launching something of interest to the general public, you may be offered the opportunity to take part in a series of 'down the line' interviews with regional and local radio programmes. These will generally have an interest in health issues and are normally set up by a specialist company for a fee, and will take place in a studio owned by the company.

The interviews will be scheduled over a two to four hour period. Some will be broadcast live and others recorded for future broadcast.

4. Tips for managing radio interviews continued...



Interviews from other locations

Interviews can also be conducted live or recorded from other locations. These can include:

- Via telephone in your office or home
 - Standing up during a telephone interview can make you feel more alert/ in control
- The journalist may record an interview with you using a recording device – this could be conducted anywhere where there is a quiet space
 - Remember that if the interview is being recorded and you make a mistake, you can ask to start that answer again
- In a separate studio – for example, an interview with a national radio station could be recorded in the studio of a local station close to you, or in a mobile studio
- From an outside broadcast van

5. Tips for managing television interviews

Television interviews can feel pressurised - you have to be aware of your language, your body and your overall appearance. Movements and reactions can be exaggerated in a studio with strong lights, cameras and many people in the background. It is also difficult to walk away from television interview – so be prepared!



Before you agree to appear on a programme, check the following:

- **What is the programme?**
 - If possible watch a couple of episodes before agreeing to the interview, as this will give you an idea of the usual type of interview
 - What is the normal tone of the programme: controversial, chatty, informative etc.?
- **Who watches the programme?**
 - Find out what triggered the story – why have they contacted you?
- **Who else will be interviewed?**
- **What is the focus of the interview?**
 - Are you confident about being interviewed around the subject, or would you be better recommending someone else?
- **Where will the interview take place?**
 - In a studio with the interviewer?
 - In a studio local to you where you will be linked to the interviewer?
- **Will the interview be live, or recorded?**



What should you wear?

Television interviews are physical and intellectual performances. The audience will often take away more from your appearance or tone of voice than your message. Consider what impact your appearance will have – look tidy and choose simple, appropriate clothes.

- Avoid reds, bright whites, sparkles, checks and stripes
- Avoid too much jewellery or anything that might reflect off the lights, rustle, or jangle
- Some studios may offer help with hair and make-up, but if you are doing this yourself focus on what you are comfortable wearing ensuring you have a matt foundation or powder to combat shine under hot lights
- You might find it helpful to practice talking in front of a mirror to check your appearance, facial expressions and body language.

5. Tips for managing television interviews continued...

At the studio

The first time you go to a television studio it can be a bit intimidating: often a large open space with multiple sets. There will usually be several cameras, lights, which can make the space quite hot, sound technicians and a floor manager on the set. The director and other team members will be stationed in a separate space. There may be monitors on the set so the presenter can see what is being shot.

Before the interview


When you arrive you may be required to go into 'hair and make-up', or a quick 'touch up' with powder to tone down any shine on your face when you are on set. This applies to men as well as women! Do not be afraid to ask for powder on set, if you feel you need it.

You will usually be asked to wait in 'the Green Room', with other guests until you are asked to go onto the set. While you are waiting, warm up your voice, mentally review your key messages and rehearse before your interview.

On set

Depending on whether the programme is live or being recorded, you may be asked to go on set whilst everything is being set up, or be called down immediately before you go on air. If possible:

- Check where you will be sitting. If the chair is too low, see if it can be changed
- **Ask the interviewer for their first question and prepare your answer**



Nothing is ever 'off the record' and this includes any conversations you may have before or after the interview

- If you are asked to wear an ear piece, check it is comfortable, if not tell someone and ask for a different one
- Check what type of microphone you will be using. You may be given a clip on lapel microphone with a battery pack that needs to be attached to the back of you. This is normally attached to your waistband
- Be very careful what you say once you have the microphone fitted – once it is switched on it will pick up everything you say and do!

The floor manager will count down the time to the commencement of the recording, so that the presenter knows when to start the interview. The floor manager will also indicate when the interview needs to be concluded. Cameras may move around during the recording. The camera recording a shot will show a red light. Try not to be distracted by what is going on around you, but focus on the interviewer.

5. Tips for managing television interviews continued...

Being filmed at another location

You may be interviewed at your office, at a press conference or an outside location.

- At your workplace, take control of your environment.
 - Choose a quiet meeting room, rather than your office
 - Make sure you won't be interrupted by unexpected visitors, or phones ringing
 - Check the space where you are being filmed is uncluttered by computers with messy wires etc.

If you live a long way from the television station, you may be asked to conduct your interview from a small studio in a local television station, where you will appear on the screen with the live interviewer. You may not be able to see your interviewer, but just to hear their questions. Imagine the camera is the person interviewing you and react to it in the same way as you would if you were face to face with the interviewer.

Acknowledge what you agree with by nodding



During an interview

Be aware of your body language:

- Sit up straight and lean forwards so you look alert and interested. Leaning back can make interviewees appear defensive/ arrogant. If the seat has wheels, be careful not to swing it
- Small gestures make you look animated and persuasive. They also lubricate your voice. Your voice will be 100 % more expressive if you use gestures. Start your interviews with your hands relaxed and slightly apart – try to gesture in your first response
- Keep your eyes on the interviewer. Eye contact is important for face to face interviews – it shows you have nothing to hide, and watching the interviewer's face may give you important clues about their interest in your response
- Don't look down and away – this can look as if you have something to hide
- Beware of nodding in response to negative statements by the interviewer – it looks as though you agree with them

5. Tips for managing television interviews continued...

If you tend to talk too quickly in interviews or presentations, the following techniques can help you control your pace:

- Give yourself breathing time, take a quiet, deep breath before you speak – this will help calm you and also give you a few valuable seconds to think about your response
- Use repetition – it gives your audience a second chance to hear what you said, and your voice naturally slows down as you repeat the words
- Use small gestures – counting off on your hands can help punctuate your voice
- Make a conscious effort to sound all the syllables in words. Clearly pronounce the ends of your words, as it forces you to slow down. Practise this several times before you do an interview so that you become comfortable with it

Always be prepared for the unexpected

You might be feeling relaxed because your interview is going so well, or think it is almost over. Or you may have been called up by a journalist out of the blue. **Always be prepared to answer a question you are not expecting.** This ranges from something in the news that day, cuts to health budgets, a proposed law that will affect people with disabilities, a new treatment for rheumatic diseases, or something potentially controversial a journalist has found out about your organisation.

If you are asked to comment on something in this situation and do not know the answer or you feel threatened, respond politely and say, for example, you are unable to answer this question as you do not have the information at your fingertips, or that you are currently investigating the situation etc.

Never say:
'No comment'!



SAMPLE Media Enquiry Protocol

If you receive a call from a journalist or broadcast researcher, please direct it to a designated media spokesperson within our organisation. Only designated spokespeople must represent our organisation when responding to or contacting the media, to help ensure that any information or comments are factual, accurate and represent the current and agreed views of our organisation.

We ask all members of staff, other than designated media spokespeople, not to respond to questions, or to comment on situations either on behalf of the organisation or from a personal perspective, without prior permission from the organisation.

If you receive an enquiry from the media, or someone you suspect may be from the media, please follow the steps below:

- 1. Ask the journalist or broadcast researcher for** their name, contact number, the publication, broadcast station and/or programme they are working with (some may be freelance), the nature of their enquiry and if they have a critical deadline
- 2. State that you cannot answer their enquiry, but ask them to 'hold' while you see if the appropriate spokesperson is available to do so**
- 3. Do not put the journalist or broadcast researcher directly through to the media spokesperson, but put them on 'hold'**
- 4. Inform the appropriate media spokesperson about the call**

- If the spokesperson is available and willing to speak, put the call through
- If they need time to prepare, go back to the journalist and tell them the person they need to speak to is not available and will call them back as soon as possible

5. If there is no one appropriate available to speak to them, tell them someone will call them back as soon as possible

- If, for example, the question would best be answered by a medical adviser, but they work elsewhere, pass the enquiry to your director or CEO

6. Take a note of the call

7. Ensure the enquiry reaches the appropriate dedicated media spokesperson straight away by:

- Sending an email and/or text message/ find the person and pass on the message
- Leaving a note on their desk, if you know they will be returning to it soon

8. Follow-up to see that the message has been received and dealt with appropriately

See list of dedicated spokespeople

SAMPLE Media Enquiry Protocol

Dedicated media spokespeople for

NAME OF ORGANISATION

This should be made available with the protocol, so anyone in the organisation who answers a call from a journalist or broadcast researcher is aware of the most appropriate dedicated media spokesperson to handle the call, if there is more than one spokesperson.

NAME:

POSITION IN ORGANISATION: (e.g. CEO, Medical Advisor etc.)

.....
TELEPHONE NUMBER / EXTENSION:

MOBILE PHONE NUMBER:

EMAIL ADDRESS:

SPECIALIST AREA OF EXPERTISE: (e.g. general / about your organisation and what it does, policy/ comment on what's in the news, medical/treatments etc)

.....
DO NOT HAND THIS INFORMATION OUT TO ANYONE OUTSIDE YOUR ORGANISATION!

Question and Answer document (Q&A)

A Q&A document should not only provide agreed answers, key messages and statements about your organisation, RMDs, treatments and care, but also answers to the questions you would least like to be asked! It should be marked CONFIDENTIAL and only shared with those who need to know.

Below are some of the types of questions you might be asked and which you can prepare your own answers. We have provided one sample answer as an example:

About rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs)

Q: What are RMDs?

A:

Q: Who is affected by RMDs?

A:

Q: How many people in [country] / Europe / the world are affected by RMDs?

A:

Q: What is the cost of treating RMDs?

A:

About your organisation

Q: What does your organisation offer people with RMDs?

A:

Q: What campaigns are your organisation running and why?

A:

Q: There are other organisations representing people with RMDs in [COUNTRY], what do you offer that they don't?

A:

Q: How many paid staff / volunteers do you employ?

A:

Q: What other organisations do you collaborate with?

A:

Q: How is your organisation funded?

A:

Q: What is your relationship with the pharmaceutical industry?

A: We collaborate with a number of partners with shared interests and goals.

We welcome the funding we receive from our pharmaceutical partners, which helps support our work.

Our code of practice underpins our work with all our partners and we operate strictly within ethical guidelines for working with the pharmaceutical industry.

We believe that, while maintaining our independence, collaboration is the most effective means of achieving our aims and supporting people with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases in our country.

Question and Answer document (Q&A) continued...

About treatments and social care

Q: With limited healthcare budgets, why should the government cover the cost of expensive treatments for people with RMDs, rather than treating life threatening diseases like cancer, diabetes and asthma?

A:

Q: What is your organisation's position on biosimilars?

A:

Q: Is your organisation involved in research / clinical trials?

A:

Q: Do you have any programmes that help people with RMDs access social care?

A:

Q: Do you have any case studies available to speak to the media?

A:

DO NOT HAND THIS
INFORMATION OUT TO ANYONE
OUTSIDE YOUR ORGANISATION!