

Guide to conducting media interviews

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.

Guide to conducting media interviews

Part 2. Conducting media interviews

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)...