

MEDIA ACTIVITY AND PUBLIC RELATIONS POLICY®

DOCUMENT SUMMARY/KEY POINTS

- This policy is intended to:
 - Set guidelines for dealing with the media.
 - Protect the privacy of patient's families and staff.
 - Maintain courtesy and respect for all concerned.
 - Maximise the positive impact of Sydney Children's Hospitals Network (SCHN, the Network) and its hospitals, The Children's Hospital at Westmead (CHW) and Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick (SCH).
 - Ensure appropriate and consistent management of media enquiries, visits and requests.
 - Correct briefing of interviewees including staff, patients and families.
 - All media liaison including interviews and photography are undertaken with correct approval.

CHANGE SUMMARY

- New SCHN policy merging the site specific SCH and CHW media policy documents to ensure consistent, Network approach to media liaison.
- Replaces:
 - CHW Policy 09:8078-01:01 **Communicating with Media**
 - SCH document R.2.M.2 **Media Policy**

READ ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- All staff are to read and acknowledge they understand the contents of this document.

Approved by:	SCHN Policy, Procedure and Guideline Committee	
Date Effective:	1 st May 2016	Review Period: 3 years
Team Leader:	Public Relations Officer	Area/Dept: Public Relations Department

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1 Background

The Network's relationship with members of the media plays an important role in maintaining our reputation as leaders in paediatric health locally, nationally and internationally. Media liaison assists to;

- Develop our brands by raising our profile
- Communicating key health messages by sharing positive patient stories, research and initiatives, educating the community and sharing successes
- Portraying the Network, its hospitals and staff in a positive light, building morale and attracting new staff
- Profiling our work and events to help raise funds
- Manage any contentious issues that may negatively reflect on the Network, its hospitals, staff, patients or families.

Communicating with the media may involve direct contact with a journalist or indirect contact, for example, speaking at a conference or seminar.

The release of information about the Network, its hospitals, staff, patients or families must be coordinated through the Public Relations Departments located at Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick (SCH) and The Children's Hospital at Westmead (CHW). Media are not permitted on site to interview, film, photograph or record audio of staff, patients or their families without the approval and supervision of a public relations staff member or authorised representative.

2 Policy

2.1 Public Relations

All Health Services have a duty to provide meaningful, accurate and helpful advice to the community about important public health issues. Print, radio and television media are important vehicles to help distribute such information.

Public relations officers will manage all media enquiries and requests, on behalf of the Network. They will provide advice to staff, patients and families on how best to approach a media request and ensure the relevant approvals are sought via the Executive, NSW Ministry of Health and the NSW Minister for Health's office, where appropriate.

Public relations officers are available in the Public Relations Department at CHW and SCH during normal business hours; Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5.00pm. A public relations officer is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week for urgent media enquiries. The on-call public relations officer can be contacted at any time via either hospital's switchboard:

Contact information:

- The **Children's Hospital at Westmead**
Phone 9845 3364 or switch 9845 0000
- **Sydney Children's Hospital**, Randwick
Phone 9382 1983 or switch 9382 1111

2.2 Media Contact/Opportunities

2.2.1 Public comment

Public comment includes public speaking engagements, comments in the media, views expressed in *Letters to the Editor*, online (such as blogs) or in publications. This includes any public correspondence, written or verbal, where a staff member is representing SCHN, CHW, SCH, NETS, Children's Court Clinic or PSN. All contact with the media, whether direct or indirect, must be notified to the relevant Public Relations Department in the first instance. Staff must seek approval prior to any interaction with the media (either verbal or written). This can be obtained by contacting the Public Relations Department at CHW or SCH. If a staff member is contacted directly by a media representative, they must notify the relevant Public Relations Department immediately - prior to making comment or agreeing to the media request.

Although staff members have the right as private citizens to express personal views through public comment, they must not appear to make statements on behalf of either hospital, the Network, or other Network entities.

2.2.2 Expert opinion on health matters

Health care professionals have a responsibility to ensure that the public are properly informed on health matters within their area of expertise. When a request is made by the media for expert medical knowledge, clinicians should assist in providing information where appropriate, via the relevant public relations representative. When acting as an official spokesperson, the representative should be prepared to be named in all interviews or media requests for information.

2.2.3 Condition reports

The Public Relations Department may be contacted by the media requesting the medical status of a patient. It is common to receive this type of request when a patient has been injured in an accident or other newsworthy event such as a fire, helicopter retrieval, drowning etc.

All condition report requests directed to non public relations staff should be immediately directed to the relevant public relations representative.

The Public Relations Department is unable to release any information regarding a patient's condition, including de-identified condition updates, without first obtaining written or verbal consent from the patient's parent or guardian. This includes any personal identifying details such as name, age, home address, ward location and medical information.

General classification of a patient's condition is as follows:

- **Satisfactory** – the patient requires very little further medical treatment.
- **Stable** - the patient's condition is stable and controlled.
- **Serious but stable** - the patient's condition necessitates considerable medical and nursing support but is stable and controlled.
- **Serious** – the patient's condition necessitates considerable medical and nursing support.
- **Critical** – the patient requires intensive treatment and/or survival is doubtful.

2.2.4 Condition reports – FACs patients and NSW Police matters

No information regarding patients in the care of the Department of Family and Community Services (FACs) should be released without the express permission from the relevant FACs representative. This can be obtained via the Doctor in charge, hospital social worker or Child Protection Unit representative.

2.2.5 Condition reports – NSW Police matters

Careful consideration must be given prior to releasing any information on patients whose injuries may be under police investigation. The NSW Police Media Unit should be consulted prior to issuing information to media, to ensure that Network communication does not negatively impact on an active police investigation.

2.2.6 Condition reports – Deceased patients

SCHN cannot confirm that a patient is deceased. All condition report requests on patients who have died while in hospital should be referred to the NSW Police Media Unit. Where possible, journalists should only be referred to the NSW Police Media Unit once the bereaved family have been given the opportunity to notify their extended family and friends.

2.2.7 Medical research and scientific news

Medical research and information relating to clinical trials, the award of research grants and other scientific news is not often known to the Public Relations Department without the assistance of prior notification by researchers and doctors. In the case of research articles, researchers and doctors should send the article to the Public Relations Department once it has been accepted for publication (usually 4-8 months prior to publication) with the embargoed publication date. The Public Relations Department should be notified of clinical trial information once ethics approval has been given, and grant information sent through to the Department once the grant has been formally awarded. The Public Relations Department can then develop and launch a publicity plan to coincide with publication, trial recruitment or soon after a grant has been awarded.

2.2.8 Official Visitors

Official visitors include public officials, celebrities, sponsors and supporters. All official visitors must be notified to the Public Relations Department. It is the responsibility of the Public Relations Department to ensure the Chief Executive is formally notified if appropriate, that the visit is suitable to the hospital environment, that appropriate timetabling is maintained, any internal briefs are drafted and that any media accompanying the visit is managed according to policy.

2.2.9 'Off the record' comments

Staff should not make any 'off-the-record' comments to media as this technique is not usually successful. If staff are not prepared to be quoted, they should not make a statement.

2.2.10 Declining interviews or media requests

Staff, patients and families have a choice as to whether they participate in any media interview or request. The Public Relations Department are available to provide advice on how best to approach a media interview and have the right to decline any media request or terminate an interview at any time.

2.3 Media access to the Hospital

Media are not permitted into the Hospital unless accompanied by a member of the Public Relations Department or a nominated representative. Media should be escorted off the premises at the conclusion of the interview.

If a film crew, journalist or photographer arrives at a ward or department without prior approval and without a public relations representative, the Public Relations Department must be immediately notified. If after hours, both the on-call media officer and site security should be contacted to arrange for media to be escorted off hospital grounds. The on-call media officer can be contacted via the switchboard.

3 Procedure for Media Opportunities and Official Visits

3.1.1 Patient involvement in media

Prior to any patient being approached to participate in media activity, the patient's treating clinician must be contacted to ensure it is appropriate for their patient be included in media activity.

Once approved, the patient's parent or guardian must be consulted by a public relations representative who will outline full details of the media opportunity including type of media, date and time of visit, story angle and requirements of the patient/family. Written consent (SCHN Consent Form) must be obtained prior to a patient participating in a media opportunity. In some instances, such as an offsite interview for a discharged patient, verbal consent is adequate.

The Nursing Unit Manager must be notified and give permission for any media activity to take place on the ward. They must also grant permission for the patient to be taken off the ward for media related purposes.

The Public Relations representative must always remain with the patient during an interview or photo opportunity. Parents, clinical staff or Public Relations have the right to terminate an interview or photo shoot at any time, should they feel it is in the best interests of the patient or hospital.

3.1.2 Staff involvement in media

All requests for interviews with staff or official comment on behalf of the Hospital must come through the Public Relations Department. If the subject matter is deemed sensitive or contentious, a public relations representative will notify the executive team and where appropriate, the Chief Executive will be informed prior to a staff member being interviewed.

It is the responsibility of the Public Relations Department to obtain all pertinent information from the journalist or media outlet so a staff member can be appropriately briefed, prior to an interview taking place. This includes obtaining information on the type of media involved, story angle and any relevant background information that will make it possible for a staff member to make an informed comment on the issue. The Public Relations representative will liaise with staff and media to arrange a mutually convenient time for media activity to occur.

3.1.3 Media for visits

When media is present as part of a celebrity, donor or official visit, the Nursing Unit Manager of each participating ward must be consulted with to ensure it is appropriate for media to visit their ward. A public relations representative must outline the purpose of media to a patient's parent or guardian, prior to media activity taking place and obtain consent for media interviews, filming or photography

4 Additional Resources

Further information is available here:

- **Social Media Policy**
<http://chw.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/o/documents/policies/policies/2015-9000.pdf>
- 'Photographing and filming of patients' information brochure
- SCHN Media Consent Forms:
 - **Patient Consent form:**
http://chw.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/ou/public_relations/resources/forms/media_consent_patient.pdf
 - **Staff/Volunteer Consent form:**
http://chw.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/ou/public_relations/resources/forms/media_consent_staff_and_volunteers.pdf
- **Withdrawal of Consent form:**
http://chw.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/ou/public_relations/resources/forms/media_consent_withdrawal_of_consent.pdf

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