

Media Relations Policy

Background

The Society supports open and transparent dialogue with “the media” (see definitions).

Engaging with the media is a way for the Society to communicate to an external audience, for example through news items, position statements, views, or opinions. It also provides opportunities to promote the work of the Society and our members and highlight the contribution transfusion medicine makes to healthcare.

The Society’s reputation for independence, provision of expertise and advice is the foundation on which our credibility rests and is what underpins our stakeholder and other external relationships. This policy describes how we will manage our interactions with the media to minimise the likelihood of damage to the Society’s reputation. Identifying and managing reputational risks is an essential component of our organisational governance.

Who is this policy for?

The policy applies to all members and employees of the Society, volunteers, and contractors.

Definitions

In this policy, “the media” means the organisations or individuals disseminating news or other content using one or more of the following: print media (e.g. newspapers, magazines, journals, books), broadcast media (e.g. radio, television, cinema) or the internet (e.g. websites, social media, online forums, discussion boards, podcasts, digital media).

The Society may be asked to work with a variety of media employees, for example: journalists, photographers, researchers, advertising sales, editors, and producers. We may also engage with freelance journalists or bloggers.

Why might we be contacted by the media?

Reasons why the media may want to engage with the Society include:

- For information about the Society.
- For independent advice or expertise regarding transfusion medicine, pathology, or healthcare.
- For a response to comments made about the Society.
- For information relating to a press release or information from the Society.
- For comment on a topical issue for which the Society may have a view.

Media releases

Media releases are a way for the Society to reach out directly to the media. Used appropriately media releases provide opportunities to raise the profile and credibility of the Society. Media releases may be considered in the following situations:

- Promoting the work of the Society.
- Communicating significant or key achievements of the Society.

- Promoting meetings or other activities such as the annual BLOOD meeting or Society educational sessions.
- Commenting on topical issues or events of concern to the Society, its members, or stakeholders.

Who is responsible for media relations?

Council

All Society media communications must be authorised by Council.

The President

The President is the Society's official spokesperson. The President may delegate responsibility to act as spokesperson as necessary or appropriate.

Secretariat

All enquiries for media comment should be forwarded to the Secretariat. The Secretariat is responsible for co-ordinating media liaison and issuing any media releases which have been approved by Council.

In the absence of the ANZSBT Secretariat, enquiries should be forwarded to the President.

Members, volunteers, contractors

Any member, volunteer or contractor speaking on behalf of the Society must have Council approval.

Any members speaking to the media in a personal capacity must clearly state that they are not representing the Society and that their views in no way represent the views of the Society.

Initial dealings with the media

It is anticipated that the media will contact the Society when they need credible or reliable information. They may also reach out to individuals who have been identified as members of, or representing the Society

It is important to respond to approaches from the media but in doing so not to respond to any questions on the initial call or contact.

Any media directly contacting members, employees, volunteers, or contractors must be referred to the Secretariat as the nominated first point of contact for media requests.

It is important reporters, editors, and program directors are treated courteously. Their impression of individuals representing the Society likely influences their overall impression of the Society, and this may influence how and what they report about us.

Media response process

It is important that all responses are provided through the correct channels. Responses must appropriately reflect the views of the Society and be accurate, factually correct, and unambiguous.

Respondents must observe the Society's policies and any copyright, privacy, defamation, contempt of court, discrimination, harassment, and other applicable laws.

Required steps

1. Refer all requests for a media response to the Secretariat or in their absence the President or delegated spokesperson.

2. Obtain the contact details (name, company and/or publication, phone number and/or email address) of the person making the request). Ask what information is being sought.
3. Ask if the requestor requires a verbal or written response. If verbal, ask if they are willing to provide the question(s) in advance. It is important not to respond to any questions on the initial contact.
4. Determine the deadline for the response.
5. Advise the requestor that the Society will consider their invitation and a representative of the Society will respond.
6. Council will determine who will be authorised to respond.
7. Council (or the delegated spokesperson) will formulate a written response, the key message(s) or talking point(s) for a verbal response.
 - (i) If the Society already has an official position on the issue in question or has responded previously to a similar issue or topic.
 - (ii) If the Society has the required experience or background to make a comment? If we do not have, then an honest statement reflecting this should be made.
 - (iii) Comments should not attack, nor appear to undermine, generally accepted moral standards.
 - (iv) Comments should avoid the use of 'jargon'.
8. After approval and authorisation from Council, the President or delegated spokesperson will respond. The response must be made by the agreed deadline.
9. Media releases must be approved by Council before posting on the Society's website.

Confidentiality

We have a responsibility to our members, employees, and Council members to ensure that confidentiality is maintained

Unless information is already known to be in the public domain or we have the express permission of the person involved, no personal information or information that may cause an individual to be identified should be released.

We have similar responsibility to our sponsors and funders. Therefore, unless information is already known to be in the public domain or we have the express permission of our sponsors or funders, no information relating to contracts or funding streams should be released.

Adherence to applicable laws and standards of behaviour

We must maintain the privacy of all individuals, including members, employees, volunteers, contractors, and any other stakeholders. We must not share any personal details (like name, location, or image), or any information that may identify them, without their permission.

The Society's permission is required before posting any Society copyrighted information (including images).

Managing reputational damage

Despite our best intentions or carefully crafted messages, media exposure may result in unanticipated negative consequences for the Society and in the worst-case damage to its image or

reputation. In some cases, we may also experience unwanted attention due to our real or perceived association with other groups or organisations.

Response to potential reputational damage

1. Negative media coverage must be carefully managed to ensure any damage to the Society is limited.
2. The Society may choose to disassociate itself from the situation should this be the appropriate.
3. A spokesperson, normally the President, must be nominated when a negative situation has arisen. This role must be agreed upon by the ANZSBT Council. The nominated spokesperson will be the only person authorised to speak with the media for the duration of the crisis to ensure the media does not receive any inaccurate or mixed information.
4. If possible, seek to circulate a press statement as soon as possible before media outlets have begun to contact the Society. This will assist in taking the 'sting' out of the issue and allow the Society to reflect its position on the situation at the earliest opportunity.
5. Guidelines for directing media enquiries are included earlier in this policy.
6. When managing negative media exposure, particularly if mistakes or inappropriate behaviour are the cause, it is crucial to be open and honest in dealing with the consequences and take all reasonable steps to address the issue.
7. We should be as open as possible, within the bounds of confidentiality considerations. Whatever the situation, damage to the Society will increase if dishonest claims or statements are later uncovered.

What happens if you don't follow this policy?

If you don't follow the Media Relations Policy, you'll be in breach of your obligations under this policy or the Society's Code of Conduct. This may lead to disciplinary action, including but not limited to: formal censure, removal from office, committee or representative roles and in serious cases cancellation of membership, termination of employment, cancellation of contracts or voluntary roles.

Policy revision

This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if found to be necessary.

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