**ASHT Guide to Working with Your Local Media**

One of the missions of the American Society of Hand Therapists is to raise awareness of hand therapy. Many opportunities exist for you to share your personal success, patient accomplishments and news with the public through targeted outreach with your local media. This “how to” guide is designed to help you develop a press release and contact media strategically.

**One of the best ways to support ASHT’s  national campaign is through the use of your local media!**

Media and reporters in your community reach your desired audiences on a daily basis. Advertising can be effective for disseminating information through local media outlets, but it can be cost prohibitive. News articles, feature stories and interviews with local reporters allow you to provide information regarding your work while simultaneously building credibility because it is printed or broadcasted as a news item. This means calling or emailing targeted editors/reporters with your news. Do your research. Make only a few phone calls, and send 1-2 emails to the right editors/reporters.

The best contacts for community newspapers are editors or managing editors since they decide what gets printed. Specific beat reporters who cover definitive topics such as health, community, local businesses, personal health, etc. are also excellent points of contact.

Community and local newspapers are venues through which you can effectively notify the public regarding information on hand therapy. Depending on the city, a lot of community newspapers will accept the entire news release for publication. Call beforehand to see what format the editor likes to receive material (i.e., via fax, email or U.S. mail). Most often, the best way to contact media is to send out your news in the form of a news release via email or fax, then follow up with a phone call, although this will differ from story to story and newspaper to newspaper (see How to Write a Press Release)

This resource is designed to facilitate your media outreach efforts, including news release templates, instruction on how to write your media release and information you can provide to your local media regarding ASHT and your private practice.

**Writing the Press Release** (See How to Write a Press Release for more detailed information)

The following steps will help you develop a press release to submit to your community newspapers, interested reporters and writers.

Start by choosing a release or topic, if not from your own personal experiences and patients, you can also choose a topic from the ASHT Web site or work with a college to write one. Some examples;

* 􏰀  Living with Arthritis

 􏰀 Gardening Ergonomics

   􏰀 Holiday Shopping safety Tips

* 􏰀  Handheld electronics/ Tech-related injuries
* 􏰀  Pumpkin Carving  Safely
* 􏰀  Carpal Tunnel Syndrome
* 􏰀  Repetitive Stress Injuries
* 􏰀  Tennis & Golfers Elbow
* 􏰀  Video Game Thumb
* 􏰀  Cooking/Kitchen Hand Awareness and Safety
* 􏰀  Hand Therapy Awareness Week and Injury Prevention Week

**Personalize, Prepare and Modify the Release**

* Add your personal and facility contact information to the release, on the top right-hand side for easy identification and so that the reporter knows who and how to contact you for more information if needed.
* Indicate the date of the release. If a release is more than one page, indicate – MORE – at the bottom of the page.
* Make sure the release is double-spaced and utilizes 10-point font.
* If discussing a specific patient or patient case study, make sure to receive permission from the patient who had therapy and have them approve all quotes used in the release. It is always beneficial to have the ‘human-angle’ to the story and have specific patients who can talk on their hand therapy experience.

**Guidelines for working with your local media**

* **Research local media** Read your community newspapers, listen to area radio stations and watch the local TV news. Get to know who the reporters are at your local media that might cover your story. Try to tailor your story or idea to their publication or the beat they cover.
* **Know your audience:** You should only pitch stories and interviews to relevant publications and broadcast media that would be interested in your story.
* **Be proactive:** Call reporters to tell them you have a good story idea. Be professional and courteous. Follow up with them, especially if they are interested, or find out if there is someone else you should contact at their newspaper. One or two calls to follow up should be sufficient.
* **Be prepared:** Anticipate questions the reporter is going to ask you and prepare and become familiar with answers to each question. You may find it helpful to write out potential questions to help you prepare.
* **Stick to the facts:** Be honest. Focus on your personal experiences with patients and stay away from curative claims.
* **Celebrate your practice’s business:** Be sure to emphasize your position as a local hand therapist and member of the nationally recognized, American Society of Hand Therapists (ASHT).

**You are representing your own practice – so be CREDIBLE and PERSONABLE!**

* **Best foot forward:** When meeting media face-to-face, always make sure to introduce yourself to the reporter and any other key staff such as a camera operator or producer with a firm handshake and smile. This helps make an excellent first impression and sets a positive tone.
* **Build relationships:** Send a personal note to a reporter after a story has been printed or broadcast to thank the reporter for his/her time and interest. This is a good way to nurture a positive relationship.
* **Be a smart business promoter:** Make sure the reporter spells your name, title and ASHT correctly. Give the reporter your card. Mention your practice’s website and ASHT’s website to direct interested viewers/readers for more information and to find a local hand therapist in their area.
* **Know when to call in the big guns:** ASHT wants you to revel in your success but also wants you to recognize when you may need to contact ASHT’s public relations office:  o A crisis that could affect other hand therapists or ASHT as a whole o When the story has national potential o If the story calls for a wider organization perspective
* **Service with a smile:** Always ask if there’s anything else you can do for the reporter, and let them know you are more than happy to try and answer any questions they may have. Be sure to follow up in a timely manner with any information you promised.
* **Use common sense**: Above all, trust your gut instinct. If something doesn’t feel right, don’t do it. Stay positive and remember why you’re working with the media in the first place – you are an influential, successful hand therapist and you want to share your work with others!
* **Share your success: Send a copy of the article or tape of the broadcast interview to ASHT’s Public Relations department!** ASHT wants to celebrate your successes as a hand therapist, as well as any favorable news presence you generate.

**Be sure to know who to contact – You won’t waste time and you’ll see more results!**

* **Delivery, delivery, delivery:** Make sure you call first to see how an editor/reporter would like to receive information. Many prefer email. You should also see what kinds of stories the editor/reporter writes, as well as any interesting angles they may want to use when writing about your news story.
* **Go graphic:** If you have a graphic or photo that you would like to accompany the release, ask if they accept photos or graphics and in what format they need them to be in (i.e., JPEG, PDF or hard copies). You should also see if they have any email memory restrictions related to the size of photos or graphics.
* **Table for two:** If a reporter wants to conduct an interview with you, it’s good to meet them in person. You might suggest meeting for coffee, or another comfortable, personal venue. Remember, reporters are busy on lots of assignments. If meeting face-to-face isn’t possible, a phone call is acceptable.
* **Do your homework:** Try to review some of the reporter’s articles and previous interviews prior to your interview to gain a better understanding of the approach he or she is likely to take. This will help you be better prepared when conducting your own interview.
* **Set the date:** Find out from the reporter the date your story will run. Buy the newspaper from the newsstand or contact the circulation department to order copies. Do not ask the reporter to mail you a hard copy of the article.