

World Physical Therapy Day advice sheet 3

Guide to publicising activities

If you want to get publicity for an event or campaign associated with World Physical Therapy Day, simply sending out a press release may not get the results you want. Here are some pointers on what to do.

Step 1

Who do you want to get your message to?

Make sure you know exactly what you want to achieve from World Physical Therapy Day and who you want to get your message across to.

Step 2

Which media?

Work out which parts of the media you would most like to get coverage in. Don't be ambitious just for the sake of it. The target audience you identified in step 1 is the key to identifying which parts of the media you should contact. If you are trying to reach the general public, local and national newspapers and radio may be your best means to reaching large numbers.

If you want to reach managers or professionals, your best route may be getting publicity in professional magazines and newsletters, and making individual approaches. Politicians are harder to reach – individual approaches and getting publicity on national radio, television and newspapers is the best (but difficult) route.

Put some effort into researching all the possible media outlets for the audience you want to reach. If you have any contacts in the media, use them – approach them directly and get their advice on what your best route to getting publicity might be.

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Step 3

What's your story?

If you are going to approach anyone asking them to give coverage to your activity or campaign you will need to give them a “story” – a simply stated, key message, that sounds as if it will interest readers, viewers or listeners.

Few journalists devote time and space to an issue simply because you want them

to - there has to be something interesting or newsworthy in it. For example, the fact that physical therapists have a major impact on preventing and treating lifestyle conditions such as obesity will come as a surprise to many journalists. If you can convince them of this, and make any activity you are planning sound really interesting, you will be well on your way.

Things that often make subjects newsworthy to journalists are:

- a new survey
- a new report
- a compilation of interesting facts and figures
- the involvement of a celebrity or a politician
- strong quotes from a senior person
- real people talking about real experiences

Step 4

Approach the media

The most obvious way to approach the media is with a press release. There's a separate sheet on how to produce a press release in this toolkit, and also a press release template. But a press release is not the only way, or even necessarily the best, way to get publicity. Direct approaches to journalists by telephone or email can work well if you're very clear about the story you have to sell, and you don't take up too much of their time.

Certainly sending the media some written information about what you're doing is a good idea, and a press release is a good way of making sure it's concise and gets to the point. But if you are sending out an advance press release, make sure you do it well before any activities or launch you are planning. If you're sending out a press release reporting on something that's just happened, do it as soon as it's happened – otherwise what you've done will turn into old news.

Try and give the media everything they need. The quicker you respond to their requests, and the clearer the information you give them, the more chance you have of getting some publicity. We've produced some information in this toolkit about physical therapy that may make your life easier.

Step 5

Follow up

Don't think that your work is done when you've sent out a press release. It's a good idea to follow it up with a phone call or an email to see if the journalist has received it, and whether they're interested in covering it. But don't pester them. If they aren't interested, you can try persuading them – but don't keep at it, or annoy them, because it might jeopardise you getting publicity next time.

If you want further information, there is a WCPT Keynotes about getting publicity and dealing with the press, http://www.wcpt.org/common/docs/wcpt_keynote_press.pdf