

How to Use Free Media to Increase Subject Enrollment

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The Good News and Not-so-Good News

- Using the media to publicize your study = very effective and a good way to recruit participants.
- However, the media world is changing constantly – that's good but can be confusing.
- Such changes make it hard to know who is still in business and who is not.

What Exactly is Media?

- It can be advertising like a billboard or TV commercial.
- It can be a news story in your local paper or on the evening TV news broadcast.
- It can be a blog or other social media

What Types of Media are Free?

News stories in:

- newspapers
- Magazines
- TV news
- Radio news
- Internet news
- Blogs

What is the difference between advertising and free media?

- One is controlled (advertising or paid media) and one is not (free or earned media).
- In short you can buy your advertising message because your purchase controls the message. IRBs always review ads and can request changes.
- You cannot control a news story. A free news story is not an ad. News stories are not reviewed by IRBs, however press releases can be.
- Most important difference is that the public views *news stories as a credible source of information* (even though reporters sometimes get it wrong) whereas the *public is skeptical of advertisements*.

Why Use Free Media to Stimulate Subject Enrollment?

- The public views the news media as a reliable source of health information.
- The public is more likely to act upon research stories they hear about in the news media.
- A good news story can bring in new subjects and fill a study.
- Helps build TOMA for your site.
- No one has unlimited advertising dollars to fund recruitment.
- By using free media you can supplement your budget.

How Do You Get Started with Free Media?

- Make sure your website is current. It's the first place reporters go to when researching a potential story.
- Engage the help of your site's press office
- Work with your press office to develop a press release on your study.

What Exactly is a Press Release?

- A press release is a short synopsis of your study.
- It is written specifically for reporters.
- The most important parts of a press release:
 1. Contact info at the top
 2. A strong hook (opening lede)
 3. Compelling quotes and stats in the body
 4. Web page link
- Remember: Reporters will read this. The job of a press release is to interest a reporter in doing a story.

Tips for Sending Out a News Release

- **Best:** Have your PR person write and send it out. He/she has an established relationship with local media.
- If you send it out: Place the copy in the body of an email, never as an attachment. Before you send it to a reporter call the news desk and ask who handles health news. Then email the release. Follow up within a day by phone.
- Your IRB may need to review before it goes to the media.

Press Release Example

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For Immediate Release

May 10, 2007

Can an Omega-3 Fatty Acid Slow the Progression of Alzheimer's Disease? Researchers Launch Nationwide Trial

Nutritionists have long endorsed fish as part of a heart-healthy diet, and now some studies suggest that omega-3 fatty acids found in the oil of certain fish may also benefit the brain by lowering the risk of Alzheimer's disease. In order to test whether an omega-3 fatty acid can impact the progression of Alzheimer's disease, researchers supported by the National Institute on Aging (NIA), part of the National Institutes of Health, will evaluate one in a clinical trial, the gold standard for medical research.

The study will be conducted nationwide by the ***Alzheimer's Disease Cooperative Study (ADCS)***, a consortium of leading researchers supported by NIA and coordinated by the University of California, San Diego. The trial will take place at 51 sites across the United States and seeks 400 participants age 50 and older who have mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease. Joseph Quinn, M.D., associate professor of neurology at Oregon Health and Science University, is directing the study

Public Service Announcements

- These can look like print ads or can be an announcement that is aired on radio or TV. Needs IRB approval.
- Most major media reserve print space/air time to allow PSAs. It's their way of helping their communities. Some media are more generous than others. Never hurts to ask.
- Key point: Make the message **STRONG**.

Tie-Ins

- If your study starts close to a national health observance month (i.e. Sept = World AD Month; November = Nat'l AD Awareness & Nat'l Caregiver Month) pitch a story to your local media and mention your study during a news interview.
- Can tie into other disease months. For instance, February is Women's Heart Health Month, May honors stroke and older Americans.
- For more months:
www.healthfinder.gov/nho/nho.asp

Other Tactics

- Hold an event, such as a talk at a community center or health fair, to educate the public about AD.
- Send a notice to the health editors/calendars of your local media with details of the presentation.
- Write an Opinion Editorial (Op-Ed) or Letter to the Editor.
 - You don't need to be a Pulitzer Prize winning author to pen an OpEd.
 - Write about the importance of your study.
 - Use lots of stats of how your disease impacts the community nationally and locally and internationally if those stats are available.
 - Besides sending it to your local newspaper post it on your website and social networking websites.

Free TV Opps

- Most AM news programs are eager for guests.
- Contact the AM news producers for your local TV stations that offer AM news programs.
- Pitch your PI as an interviewee. (This is a good tactic during a specific health month.) During the interview the PI can mention the study. The news station might even put study contact info on screen if you give it to them ahead of time.

Public Service Broadcasting

- Check the website for your local tv and radio PBS stations for their programs.
- If you can't tell from the description, watch or listen to the shows that air health stories and determine if they are produced locally.
- Call the producer for the shows that are produced locally and pitch your PI as an interviewee. Your media office can help.

TPOs

- Send your news release to Third Party Organizations (TPOs) in your area with possible interest in your disease.
- Ask them to include it or a flyer in their next newsletter or on their website.
- Ask if you can make a presentation at their next meeting.
- Examples: National Medical Association chapter, AARP chapter, Calif Nurses Assoc, Rotary . . .

The Changing Face of Media

- Print newspapers and magazines are closing down. It is doubtful that print will disappear completely.
- Most print publications have a complementary website and will rely more heavily on the website. Some may charge for web viewing. (A few do that now.)
- Some major dailies are now available only online such as the Seattle Post-Intelligencer and Christian Science Monitor. Publications are sharing content with competitors in order to save paying duplicate reporting staff. e.g. Dallas Morning News & the Ft. Worth Star-Telegram.
- Competition between papers is waning due to outside competitors such as bloggers, TV news and websites.
- TV and radio are not exempt. Lots of cost cutting.

What Does This Mean to You?

- There is opportunity for health news stories.
- If you or your PR officer are going to pitch a reporter to do a story it must be **rock solid**. Have a strong case for why the reporter should do a story on your study.
- People still want to hear about important news and reporters still want to tell the public about what is relevant. **Only the news delivery method is changing, not the need.**
- Key: Make your study relevant. Make your study website relevant.

Final Thoughts

- Lots of media opportunities exist, both in traditional and new media.
- Use a variety of media venues to reach potential participants.
- Be focused and make your story compelling.
- The media is always looking for a good news story. Be one.

THANK YOU!

Have any questions?

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