

I. Email (using Dartmouth account) to set up interview appointment

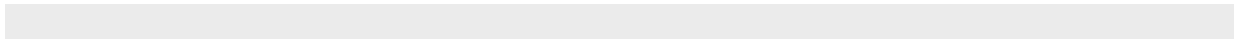
Dear X

My name is xxxxxx. I am writing to invite you to participate in a research project to study how Medical School media offices interact with researchers. This research project is funded by the National Cancer Institute as part of a larger project on improving the communication of science to the public.

I would like to set up time for a short telephone interview. As a former employee of the MedNews office at Dartmouth Medical School I know how busy you are: the interview should take no more than XX minutes to complete. Let me reassure you that all information collected will be kept confidential: the interview will NOT be taped, and no responses will be associated with any individual or individual institution in any reports. This project has been approved by the institutional review board at Dartmouth.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please email me and let me know when you would like to schedule our brief phone meeting. I am hoping to conduct these interviews by the end of May, so if I can book a call before then, it would be ideal. Please feel free to get ahold of me with any questions, via e-mail or by phone at 802-xxx-xxxx. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Thanks in advance,



Draft interview script.

Hi, my name is xxxxxx. Is this _____? [if not get him/her]. I am calling about the interview we scheduled by email. As I mentioned, we are conducting a research study on how Medical School media offices interact with researchers. This should take about 20 minutes of your time. Is this a good time?

****Let me remind you -- this call will NOT be taped, and no responses will be associated with any individual or individual institution in any reports.****

[*REMEMBER: keep them focused on press releases about medical research projects/publications]

First I'd like to ask some questions about your office.

1. Does your office write the press releases about medical research projects done at the medical school?
2. Do you write them for other parts of the institution (e.g., the medical center, academic affiliates)?
3. What is the official name of your office?

Next, I'd like to learn how decisions are made about doing press releases.

4. How do you decide whether or not to do a press release about a researcher's publications?
[*Follow-up: If they say something like "news-worthiness" ask what that means...if you are getting pabulum, exit!]
5. Do the researchers ever contact your office themselves to request that a press release be done? What about the administration?
6. Do you routinely do press releases about research presented at scientific meetings? If no, why not?
7. Is there a required number of press releases to do per month? If yes, Where does that requirement come from?
8. Who actually writes the press releases?

9. How many writers work in your office?
 10. About how much time do the writers typically have to write the release?
 11. What kind of background do writers typically have?
[PROMPT: e.g., PR, journalism, or marketing -- how about medical or science writing background?]
 12. Are the writers given guidance about the format of the press release – like a style manual? [PROMPT: e.g., number of words, reading level, tone]
 13. Are the writers given any orientation to medical research or scientific methods?
[If no....do you wish you were given such orientation? If yes, do you want more training?]
 14. Are the writers given any guidance about how to present study results in the press release. in general [PROMPT: e.g., about using or not using numbers]
 15. Are the writers given any guidance about how to present statistics or data in the press release?
- If they want an example.....
e.g., guidance about describing results in relative vs. absolute risk format -- for example saying "the drug reduces heart attack by 30%" vs. saying "the drug reduced the chance of heart attack from 6% to 4%"?
16. [IF #14 and #15 are no....ask: If training were available in how to present data or statistics, would you want it?]
 17. Do you routinely include any caveats about study interpretation in the press release?
(eg. FOR EXAMPLE, A CAVEAT ABOUT AN STUDY DONE WITH ANIMALS MIGHT SAY.... “because this study was done in animals we don't know if the findings will hold up when tested in humans”)
 18. Do you routinely note potential conflicts of interest on the part of the researchers in the press release? (eg, Dr. X, the principal investigator, holds the patent on this gene test)

Now I'd like to ask about what happens after the press release is written.

19. What happens after press releases are written? (i.e. who reviews the releases and for what (i.e. content or tone)?
20. [if not clear from #13]What is the role of the researcher in the press release?
[do they routinely vet or edit the press release?]
21. Does anyone outside your department edit or review the press releases
[NOTE: trying to get at whether there is any institutional review]

Finally, I want to ask a few questions about your assessment of the press release process...

22. How do you gauge the success of a press release about medical research?
[PROMPT: number of calls, media hits, etc.]
23. Do you regularly report the number of media hits press releases get? If yes, who do you report this to?
24. Is there institutional pressure to achieve media results (i.e., get media "hits"? Where does that pressure come from? (the authors, the dean?)
25. How closely do you work with the development office?
26. Have you ever had to pull back on or retract a press release? If so, why?
27. What kind of feedback (negative or positive e) have you received about the press releases from...
 - a. study authors
 - b. journalists
 - c. anyone else_____

THAT'S IT.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

Institution _____ PRID _____ CoderID _____

PR Title _____ Public release date _____

Is this press release about a presentation at a meeting? No Yes

[Click here if the study does not involve humans \(NONHUMAN coding scheme\)](#) (Or skip to page 3)

1a. Does the PR provide the study size? No Yes

1b. If yes, what is the N? _____

1c. If there is a small N (<30), does the press release contain a caveat?
 No Yes Not a small study

How is the primary outcome/result described (mark all that apply)

2a. No outcome/result mentioned No Yes

If yes, skip to Question 3

2b. In words? No Yes

2c. In relative numbers? No Yes

2d. In absolute numbers? No Yes

2e. In another numerical form? No Yes

3. Describe the overall direction of the study findings
(with regard to the primary exposure/intervention of interest).

- Good news/ Something helpful
- No difference or no effect
- Bad News/ Something harmful
- No Intervention (not applicable)

If the study involved an intervention, how were side effects/harms described? (mark all that apply)

4a. No side effects/harms mentioned No Yes No intervention

If yes, skip to question 5

4b. In words? No Yes

4c. In relative numbers? No Yes

4d. In absolute numbers? No Yes

4e. In another numerical form? No Yes

Does the PR use the term "significant"? (check all that apply)

5a. Does not use the term significant

No Yes

If yes, skip to Question 6

5b. Clearly in terms of statistical significance

No Yes

5c. Clearly in terms of clinical significance

No Yes

5d. Uses the term "significant" but context is ambiguous

No Yes

6. If the outcome is a surrogate marker, is there a caveat mentioned?

- Not mentioned
- Mentioned
- Explicit Warning
- Not a surrogate (not applicable)

7. Does the PR mention any flaws/caveats regarding study design/ conduction?

MUST STATE IN THE CONTEXT OF BEING A CAVEAT

Confounders

Not mentioned Mentioned Explicit Warning RCT (not applicable)

Uncontrolled

Not mentioned Mentioned Explicit Warning Controlled (not applicable)

Unpublished

Not mentioned Mentioned Explicit Warning Published (not applicable)

8. Are any study funding sources stated?

No Yes

9. Are there any statements about conflicts of interest?

- Stated No COI
- Stated Yes COI
- No statement

10a. Does the PR contain quote(s) or statements attributed to the investigator?

- No
- Yes

10b. Do any quotes seem to go beyond, hype or overstate the presented results?

- No
- Yes

11. Does the PR facilitate access to the full article? (beyond the journal title)

- No
- Yes - full citation
- Yes - electronic link to article

12. Overall, does the PR hype the study?

- No
- Yes

Non-Human Study

1. Does the PR provide study size (N)?
* the N that the results are about

No
 Yes

If yes, What is the study size?

How is the primary outcome/result described? (mark all that apply)

2a. No outcomes/results mentioned

No Yes

If yes, then skip to question 3

2b. In words?

No Yes

2c. In relative numbers?

No Yes

2d. In absolute numbers?

No Yes

2e. In another numerical form?

No Yes

3. Describe the overall direction of the study findings (with regard to the primary exposure/intervention of interest).

Good news/ Something helpful
 No difference or no effect
 Bad News/ Something harmful
 No Intervention (not applicable)

Does the PR use the term "significant"?

4a. Does not use the term significant

No Yes

If yes, skip to question 5

4b. Clearly in terms of statistical significance

No Yes

4c. Clearly in terms of clinical significance

No Yes

4d. Uses the term "significant" but context is ambiguous

No Yes

5. Does the PR claim that the finding will have human impact or is relevant to human health?
(check all that apply)

In the headline Yes, tentative Yes, strong No

In the text Yes, tentative Yes, strong No

In a quote Yes, tentative Yes, strong No

6. Does the PR mention any flaws/caveats regarding study design/conduction?
****MUST STATE IN THE CONTEXT OF BEING A CAVEAT****

Unpublished Not mentioned Mentioned Explicit Warning Published (not applicable)

Caution about relevance to humans Not mentioned Mentioned Explicit Warning relevant (not applicable)

7a. Are any study funding sources stated? No Yes

7b. Are there any statements about conflicts of interest?
 Stated No COI
 Stated Yes COI
 No statement

8a. Does the PR contain quotes or statements attributed to a study investigator? No Yes

8b. Do any quotes seem to go beyond, hype or overstate the presented results? No Yes

9. Does the PR facilitate access to the full article? (beyond the journal title)
 No
 Yes - full citation
 Yes - electronic link to article

10. Overall, does the PR hype the study? No Yes

