



# INSIDER'S MEDIA GUIDE

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## **Introduction**

This guide on media relations is designed to provide you with an insider's look at promoting your sleep medicine practice at the local level. By working with the media, you will drive awareness about sleep medicine and treatment, ultimately pulling new patients into your practice.

It is important that people in your local market make the connection that your practice is the place to go when they need solutions and expert knowledge for treating their snoring, sleep apnea and other sleep disorders.

Media relations outreach involves working with various media for the purpose of informing the public. Basically, it is *free* publicity for your practice through stories in newspapers, local magazines, television shows or radio programs.

This toolkit provides you the resources you need to perform media relations outreach that can make a difference in growing your practice.

### **5 Tips for Getting Media Coverage**

1. **Know the media inside and out.** Read the newspapers and magazines you want coverage in. Get to know the reporter's names. See if coverage of other businesses spurs ideas for you.
2. **Become a resource.** Call local reporters who may need your help on a story and let them know your expertise. A well-spoken, local sleep physician will be like gold to a personal health reporter.
3. **Build a relationship.** Invite your local personal health reporter to visit your office for a tour or take them to lunch.
4. **Take advantage of real news hooks.** Make sure reporters know about anything new happening at your practice – new hires and special events, etc.
5. **Help reporters localize a national story.** Stories in national media like the *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today* or the “Today Show” often get picked up in your local market. When appropriate, find ways to localize stories and offer to be a spokesperson for media.

## **Using the Toolkit**

In this toolkit you will find materials designed to help support your media outreach efforts at the local level. The materials are customizable and contain placeholders to signify where you should provide specific information.

### **What is a Press Release?**

A press release is a written communication directed at the news media to announce something as having news value. A press release is concise, with the most important information in the beginning so media will see it right away.

**Below, please find a description of each toolkit item, as well as a suggested timeframe for providing these materials to the media.** To use the materials, you will need to fill in each piece appropriately. Please insert information to the fill-in-the-blank areas as noted only. All words in red should be replaced with the correct information – for example, insert your city name where it reads **CITY**. All words in black are options you can choose to personalize your release – for example, replace **his/her** with “his” if you are a male practitioner. Please add your credentials and information about your experience and practice at the end of each customizable release.

- **Customizable AASM Membership Press Release**
  - Press release telling media about your new or existing AASM membership
  - Intended for newspapers and local business magazines; this can also be used for radio or television
  - Distribute release as soon as possible after becoming a member; follow-up calls to reporters or producers may help build interest
- **Customizable AASM Conference Press Release**
  - Press release with detailed information for the media on any sleep-related conferences or educational events that you may attend in the future, such as:
    - National Annual Meeting
    - Educational course or seminar
  - Intended for newspapers, local business magazines or radio
  - Distribute as soon as possible after event; follow-up calls to reporters or producers may help build interest
- **Customizable Sleep Apnea Evaluation Press Release**
  - Press release urging sleep apnea evaluation for those at risk
  - Intended for newspapers, consumer magazines, radio or television
  - Distribute as desired during the year to generate awareness of sleep apnea and drive patients to your office
    - Consider distributing on National Sleep Apnea Awareness Day (April 18), during Better Sleep Month (May) or sharing with specific media immediately after a sleep apnea-focused article appears

- **Customizable Media Phone Script**
  - This document includes a customizable phone script and voicemail message for use when pitching selected members of the media
  - Intended for newspapers, consumer magazines, radio or television
- **Customizable Media Pitch Email**
  - This document includes a customizable email for use when pitching selected members of the media
  - Intended for newspapers, consumer magazines, radio or television
- **Customizable Breaking News/Research Response Email**
  - This document includes a customizable email for use when issuing a response to timely sleep-related breaking news or new research to members of the media
  - Intended for newspapers, consumer magazines, radio or television
- **Customizable Primary Care Physician Letter**
  - This document includes a customizable letter that can be used to introduce yourself to area primary care physicians
  - This document is not a media-facing piece – it is specifically targeted to local physicians
  - Distribute this letter as soon as possible to local primary care physicians; follow up with a phone call to introduce yourself and begin cultivating a business relationship

Items below available only upon receipt of designation. Contact the national AASM office at [media@aasm.org](mailto:media@aasm.org) to obtain the following:

- **Customizable Accreditation Press Release**
  - Press release telling media about your sleep center receiving AASM accreditation
  - Intended for newspapers and local business magazines; this can also be used for radio or television
  - Distribute release as soon as possible after receiving accreditation; follow-up calls to reporters or producers may help build interest
  - **Available upon designation**

## **Identify Appropriate Media**

It is very important to reach out to the right people with your news. Consider all newspapers, magazines, television stations and radio stations in your area. Generating positive publicity requires that you know who your local media are, what they are looking for and how to deal with them personally.

Identify individuals at each newspaper, magazine, radio and TV station who can reach your patients and potential patients. Here's how to develop that target list:

### **Newspapers and Magazines**

Local **newspapers** have an inherent interest in community news. When reaching out to them, keep in mind that they likely have a limited staff on tight deadlines. Be considerate of time and offer to send information via email.

Local and regional **consumer magazines** are an appropriate target for a more in-depth article that can tell the story of a patient's treatment from beginning to end or share detailed tips on the process from diagnosis through treatment or recovery.

Alternately, local **business magazines** may be interested in news about your facility and staff including accreditation announcements, attendance at seminars and educational courses and new designations for staff members.

In all cases, color photography will be of interest to these publications.

Here are some tips for finding the best people at local newspapers and magazines:

- First, scour local newsstands for publications you may not know about. Weekly papers can be great vehicles for news and can help you reach a wider variety of people.
- Read the publications to get a sense of the types of stories they cover. Take note of the bylines (author's name) of relevant stories.
  - Look specifically for reporters and editors who cover health and local business stories.
- Call the newspaper or magazine to find contact information for reporters whose names appear in bylines of appropriate stories. Ask for the editors of the pages/sections in which these stories appear.

### **Television Stations**

When you have great visuals to share, television stations may be interested. There are three groups of people to keep in mind when working with television stations: the planning desk, the assignment desk and the producers. The **planning desk** is responsible for planning the news, usually 24 hours in advance, while the **assignment desk** serves as an "air traffic controller" of a newsroom by managing news crews and generating stories. The **producers** oversee and organize production and are usually assigned to one specific show or broadcast.

- To discuss broader story ideas without a fixed day/time, ask for a show producer.
- Depending on the size of the station, each show (morning, noon, evening and night) may have a different producer.
- You should work with the producer to determine ways you can fit in his/her specific show.

## **Radio Stations**

Radio stories should be concise and news- or tip-oriented. Visuals are not an option in radio, so be prepared to offer a high-energy spokesperson who can call in for a live interview or to provide a succinct sound bite.

- Research the biggest radio stations and shows in your area – including news stations, which report news around the clock, and talk shows, which can be a great outlet for discussing tips, trends and products.
  - Call the radio station in advance to find out if it produces its own news.
- Radio producers are usually assigned to a specific show, so if there is a show that focuses on or frequently discusses personal health, ask for the show producer, who is responsible for the making of the show as well as the content.

## **Contact the Media**

Now that you've found the right outlets and contacts and have reached out to them, here are some tips to work with the media to make sure they cover your story and convey all of your messages:

### **Making the First Call**

The first time you reach out to a journalist and introduce yourself:

- Ask if it is a good time for them to speak with you – and if it's not, arrange to talk later.
  - Avoid deadline times, which are typically after 3 p.m. for daily newspapers and 30 minutes prior to any newscast.
- Let them know that you have a specific story you are interested in discussing with them and that it would be a good fit for their section, show, publication, etc.
- Describe your story idea to them succinctly and explain how it would benefit their audience.
- Follow up with them through email, reiterating the details of your story idea, within two days of your conversation so you – and your story – remain top-of-mind.

### **Developing Relationships with Media**

- Establish a rapport with your priority media contacts – those who contribute to the most relevant outlets, sections or shows. Staying in contact with the media ensures that they view you as a reliable source of news and will help you in future news stories.
- Drop them notes to let them know when something is coming up and check in with them to see if they are working on anything with which you may be able to help. It's okay to be persistent – they rely on you to help them do their jobs.
- One of the most important rules of dealing with the media is to work with journalists, not against them. Remember to relate to them as professionals who are doing their jobs and do not buy into negative stereotypes.

### **Providing Information**

- Be responsive and respectful of their deadlines. Media often work on very short deadlines and may be working on more than one story at a time.
- Make sure all information is organized and easy for them to use.
- If you are unsure of the answer to a question, tell them you will check on it and get back to them – quickly, of course.

### **Becoming a Source**

- Media constantly look to experts in various fields who can provide commentary on various issues in response to current events.
- Send information on your office and a list of the subjects you can discuss. Be sure to include your phone numbers and hours you can be reached.
- Offer to meet with the editors and reporters who cover topics on which you can comment in order to get acquainted. Members of the media are more likely to contact individuals they know or feel comfortable with as a source.
- When contacted by the media, be sure to return calls promptly. Reporters work on very tight deadlines, and how quickly you get back to them often will determine if you are included in the story, as well as whether you will be contacted for future stories.

## **Media Messaging**

### **Key Messages:**

1. Board-certified sleep medicine physicians have the specialized training and expertise to diagnose and treat all sleep disorders.
2. At least 23.5 million adults in the U.S. have untreated obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), which involves the repetitive collapse of the upper airway during sleep.
3. The most effective treatment for OSA is continuous positive airway pressure – or CPAP.
4. Visit [SleepEducation.org](http://SleepEducation.org) to find a sleep physician or accredited sleep center in your area.

### **Key Statistics:**

1. According to the AASM, about 70 million Americans suffer from a sleep problem; among them, nearly 60 percent have a chronic disorder such as obstructive sleep apnea or insomnia.
2. Today, the AASM has more than 10,000 members.
3. The AASM accredited a sleep disorders center for the first time in 1977, and today there are more than 2,600 AASM accredited sleep centers.

### **Talking Points:**

1. **Board-certified sleep specialists have the proper training and expertise to diagnose and treat all sleep disorders.**
  - As the captain of the sleep team, a board-certified sleep medicine physician has received special training that can prevent serious life-threatening diseases and improve a patient's quality of life.
  - Board certification shows that a physician has a high level of dedication and a comprehensive understanding of the field of sleep medicine.
2. **At least 23.5 million adults in the U.S. have untreated obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), which involves the repetitive collapse of the upper airway during sleep.**
  - OSA is a serious sleep illness that is associated with an increased risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, depression and stroke.
    - It is estimated that 30 percent of people with high blood pressure also have OSA.
    - When left untreated, severe sleep apnea may increase your risk of death by three to four times, and it may increase your risk of dying from heart disease by five times.
    - Up to 80 percent of patients with Type 2 diabetes suffer from unrecognized OSA, and increasing severity of OSA is associated with worsening glucose control.
    - Adults with severe OSA are about two-and-a-half times more likely to develop depression.
    - Men with severe OSA are about three times more likely to have a stroke.



- The major risk factor for OSA is excess body weight.
- Other risk factors for OSA include:
  - Middle to older age
  - Being male
  - Menopause in women
  - Family members with sleep apnea
- A common warning sign for OSA is loud and frequent snoring, along with silent pauses in breathing that are followed by gasping or choking sounds.
  - Not everyone who snores has sleep apnea. However, when snoring is paired with choking, gasping or pauses in breathing during sleep, it's a more likely indicator of sleep apnea.
- Other warning signs of sleep apnea include:
  - Morning headaches
  - Excessive sleepiness
  - Trouble concentrating
  - Memory problems
  - General moodiness, irritability or depression.

### ***Snoring and Obstructive Sleep Apnea***

- Snoring is a sign that your airway is partially blocked. The sound is made as the flow of air causes tissue in the back of your throat to vibrate.
- Snoring can disrupt the sleep of both the person who snores and his or her bed partner.
- OSA occurs when the tongue and soft palate collapse onto the back of the throat, blocking the upper airway.
- People with OSA may stop breathing hundreds of times a night for anywhere from a few seconds to more than a minute.

### **3. The most effective treatment for OSA is continuous positive airway pressure – or CPAP.**

- CPAP provides a steady stream of air through a mask worn during sleep, keeping the airway open.
- Weight loss also may reduce sleep apnea severity in people with OSA. Behavioral strategies should be combined with CPAP therapy.
- Effective treatment of OSA, such as CPAP, improves quality of life by restoring healthy sleep, improving daytime alertness and concentration, increasing physical energy and reducing feelings of depression.

- Treating OSA also decreases the risk for other serious medical problems such as high blood pressure and heart attack.
- In patients with moderate-to-severe OSA, it is estimated that CPAP therapy reduces the 10-year risk of:
  - Motor vehicle collisions by 52 percent;
  - Heart attacks by 49 percent; and
  - Stroke by 31 percent.

**4. Visit [SleepEducation.org](http://SleepEducation.org) to find a board-certified sleep physician or AASM accredited sleep center in your area.**

- A diagnosis of sleep apnea must be established through objective testing by either an in-lab sleep study at a sleep center or a home sleep test ordered by a physician.
- To ensure that you receive an accurate diagnosis, sleep studies should be interpreted by a board-certified sleep medicine physician at an AASM-accredited sleep center.
- The sleep team at an AASM-accredited sleep disorders center works closely with patients and provides follow-up care to ensure that the selected treatment for sleep apnea provides optimal, long-term effectiveness.
- Sleep studies are covered by most private medical insurance plans and by Medicare.
- The easiest way to find a local, AASM-accredited sleep center is to use the searchable online directory at [www.SleepEducation.org](http://www.SleepEducation.org).