

MASTERING MEDIA INTERVIEWS TO PROMOTE CLIMATE AND HEALTH



INTRODUCTION

SPEAKING TO THE MEDIA IS AN IMPORTANT CHANNEL THAT HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS CAN USE TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE HEALTH IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENCOURAGE ACTION TO TACKLE THE CLIMATE CRISIS. THIS GUIDE GIVES YOU A QUICK AND PRACTICAL INTRODUCTION TO GIVING INTERVIEWS TO PREPARE YOU FOR FUTURE MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES.

WHY SHOULD YOU TALK TO THE MEDIA ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH AS A HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL?

Doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals are consistently regarded as some of the most trusted people in our society. At the same time, they see the health impacts of climate change first hand, whether in the aftermath of extreme weather events or in routine clinical practice. Furthermore, the healthcare sector is responsible for 4.4% of global net emissions, and has both the responsibility and impetus to take action. As the largest proportion of the healthcare workforce, healthcare professionals are well placed to encourage their colleagues and institutions to take action and enable healthcare to lead by example.





WORKING WITH JOURNALISTS

Journalists are:

- **Sceptical** - Don't expect them to swallow your messages
- **Inquisitive** – Be prepared for tough questions
- **Impatient** – So get to the point
- **Stressed** – Don't waste time with non-stories
- **Generalists, not experts** – Don't assume knowledge. Be clear. Simplify

JOURNALISTS WANT NEWS

What makes news:

- Information that's **important or of interest** to the journalist's audience
- **New and fresh** information
- **Conflict** and controversy, e.g. the European Commission proposes 70% reduction in particulate emissions. "Too much" says industry. "Too little" say green groups
- **Change**. No change, no news – unless change was expected.
- **Unusual, unexpected**. "Man bites dog" stories.
- **Impact**. How will it affect people – their lives, their children, their wallets, their security, their health? Make big stories real for people: 1.5% rise in temperature is difficult to grasp; your city getting flooded or malaria reappearing is much more relatable.
- **Proximity**. The closer the story, the bigger the interest.

What doesn't make news:

- Internal **process** and procedures, e.g. 'Health Care Without Harm Europe publishes strategic plan' or blow-by-blow accounts of COP meetings.
- **Weak messages** couched in woolly, vague, diplomatic language.
- **Over-complex** info stuffed with jargon.

Questions journalists ask

- What's new?
- Why does this matter?
- What does it change?
- How much will it cost?
- Give me an example
- So what?



INTERVIEW PREPARATION

- Only agree to an interview if you are **ready and prepared**. If you need more time, take more time.
- **Know your audience** and tailor your messages accordingly, e.g. What you say in a BILD interview should be very different from one with the Financial Times.
- **Take control**. Set out the rules of an interview from the start. Ask what the interview will be about and what media outlet it is for. When will it be published/broadcast? Is it live? Who is the journalist?
- **Be clear** what messages you want to get across. Ideally three, but focused on one big idea. Messages should be **clear, punchy, credible, distinct, simple, and repeated**. Above all they should stick. Remember Commission Vice President, Frans Timmermans, in the European Parliament: *“Let me be very clear – this is going to be bloody hard to do. It’s a tough job...But it can be done.”*
- Prepare **proof-points** to back up your assertions. They can be facts and figures but work the data into something meaningful and memorable, e.g. *“If the healthcare sector was a country, it would be the fifth largest emitter on the planet.”* Also, use soft evidence – vivid images, case studies, examples, personal experience.
- Provide the journalist with **news** or a **new angle on a story**. Also, a peg or hook like an upcoming COP conference or IPCC report.
- **Research the issue**. Rehearse with colleagues beforehand using a Q&A document. This should be a one-pager on each topical/controversial issue. It should contain key messages, data and soundbites.

KEY MESSAGES FOR INTERVIEW

THE INTERCONNECTION BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH

- **The climate crisis is a health crisis.** Extreme weather events, heat stress, poor air and water quality are just some of the climate change impacts that affect human health. They can lead to illness, injuries, fatalities, and mental health effects.
- **We must act now on climate change.** Its consequences are already visible and directly impact the human health as well as healthcare operations.
- **Healthcare must be prepared for and resilient to the impacts of climate change.** Our changing climate and extreme weather events not only impact human health, but also affect hospitals and healthcare systems operationally, financially, and structurally.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR HEALTHCARE AND BEYOND

- **Decarbonising healthcare** and promoting climate-smart practices will **protect both patients and healthcare.**
- Healthcare facilities throughout Europe are **already implementing climate-smart healthcare.** This is an opportunity for you to share examples of projects you're involved in.



INTERVIEW TIPS

- **Keep calm.** Don't rise to a journalist's provocations. Success is measured in terms of getting your messages across, keeping your cool and appearing open, friendly and human. Try not to get flustered or defensive. Rebut forcefully and squash rumours.
- **Engage.** Say it like you mean it. Be alert, enthusiastic and passionate but not arrogant or over-confident. Humility goes a long way. 'Just connect' – with journalists and readers/viewers. Show you care. Don't be boring!
- **Be succinct.** During the interview, answer questions clearly and concisely. Avoid rambling. When you have answered the question, stop.
- **Be clear.** Use clear, simple language. Avoid jargon, abbreviations and acronyms, such as 'morbidity', 'mitigation' and 'GHGs'. Also, corporate language, such as 'deliverables', 'stakeholders' and 'synergies'.
- **Be quotable.** Use short sentences, evocative words, strong opinions, contrast and repetition, e.g. "*Hospitals cannot heal if they are themselves damaging people's health.*"
- **Do** be honest/admit mistakes, challenge assertions, keep coming back to core messages.



RULES OF ATTRIBUTION

- **On the record** – You will be quoted by name and title.
- **Off the record** – You will not be quoted by name but may be quoted indirectly, e.g. *“It’s a slap in the face for patients and the planet,”* a Polish nurse and healthcare campaigner told Le Monde.
- **Background** – If you are willing to talk, but don’t want to be quoted in any form, e.g. ‘We understand doctors are disappointed with the government’s proposals.’

DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

1. **Try ABC** – **A**nswer the question, **b**ridge to a more comfortable area, and **c**onclude, e.g. *“That’s an interesting topic, but what’s more important is...”*
2. **Zoom out**: Asked about detail, give a wider picture. **Zoom in**: Asked about the big picture, go specific.
3. **Revert to core message** when flustered or at a loss how to answer.
4. **Simple questions** require simple answers.

TV DOS AND DON'TS

DO

- Turn your mobile phone off
- Try to relax
- Sit or stand upright
- Smile – unless the news is bad
- Make eye contact
- Accept make up
- Gesture – but not wildly
- Always assume you are live
- Wait for the microphone to be unclipped at the end

DON'T

- Cross your arms, put hands in pockets
- Speak too fast
- Nod all the time
- Fiddle with pens or keys
- Carry notes
- Wear contrasting colours, stripes, expensive watches
- Stare directly into the camera – unless it is a Zoom/Skype interview
- Speak too close to mic – especially on radio



YOUR VOICE CAN HELP CHANGE THE WORLD!

As a healthcare professional, you are a powerful advocate for action. By spreading the word via the media that the climate crisis is a public health crisis, and that healthcare and other sectors must take urgent action, you can protect both your patients and communities now and in the future.

If you are a healthcare professional who would like further support speaking to the media about climate change and health, please get in touch with Health Care Without Harm Europe at europa@hcwh.org.

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