

PHYSICIANS AND THE MEDIA

BACKGROUND

The Code of Conduct states:

“Responsibilities to Society

31. When expressing medical opinions for public consumption you:
- 31.1 will first communicate to colleagues, through recognized scientific channels, the results of any medical research, in order that those colleagues may establish an opinion of its merits before they are presented to the public.
- 31.2 When informing the public about services, you shall:
- 31.2.1 provide information which is factual, exact and verifiable;
- 31.2.2 not use superlative or comparative adjectives or descriptions regarding the quality of the services, products or personnel referred to in the advertising;
- 31.2.3 not use testimonials advocating for the personnel referred to in the advertisement;
- 31.2.4 not use unsuitable, false, misleading or deceptive information;
- 31.2.5 not promote one's services in a pressing and/or repetitive manner. This is soliciting and is inappropriate.
- ...
33. Accept a share of the profession's responsibility to society in matters relating to public health, health education, environmental protection, legislation affecting the health or well-being of the community, and the need for testimony at judicial proceedings.
- ...
37. Recognize a responsibility to give the generally held opinions of the profession when interpreting scientific knowledge to the public; when presenting an opinion that is contrary to the generally held opinion of the profession, so indicate.”

SCOPE

This guideline applies to all physician communications with the media.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Guiding Principle:** The guiding principle of communications with the public is to serve and to inform the public. Communications with the public shall not:
 - (a) contravene the Code of Conduct; or
 - (b) be undignified or offensive in nature, or bring the profession into disrepute.
2. **Solicitation:** Physicians shall not issue press releases or solicit interviews with the media where the primary purpose is the promotion of that physician's practice.

No. 115

3. ***Speaking at Public Meetings:*** Physicians speaking at a public meeting are exonerated of responsibility for any resultant publicity that is beyond that physician's control. It is recommended that a written copy of the physician's presentation be available whenever possible.
4. ***Public Statements:*** Physician, speaking at a public meeting or giving information to the media may give his/her qualifications, irrespective of whether the subject is one which is relevant to the physician's qualifications.
5. ***Professional Announcements:*** The physician should make all professional announcements according to the local custom of peers.

First Print	L&E	04-91
Revision	Exec	04-02

A guideline in practice generally recommended.