



BAPRAS

British Association of Plastic  
Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons

# Your Media Guide



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# Welcome to your Media Guide

This is the second edition of the BAPRAS media guidance for members.

Effectively communicating what we do as plastic surgeons and how we add value to patient care, safety and outcomes is very important to BAPRAS. This handbook has been updated to explain what communications help is available to you as a BAPRAS member and how you can support us in raising awareness of the work of the Association. By continuing to engage with the media we can reach more patients who might benefit from plastic surgery and highlight the breadth and value of our specialty to decision-makers.

This guide will help you share your extensive specialist knowledge in a media friendly way. Whatever your media background and experience, we hope that this handbook will be useful to you and ask that you follow the outlined protocol, in particular if BAPRAS might be referenced.

The communications team at BAPRAS looks forward to working with members to further raise awareness of the range of treatments, quality, professionalism and innovative thought regularly brought by you to patients across the UK and abroad.

**Chris Hill**

BAPRAS Communications Officer 2016-2020

# 1

## External communications at BAPRAS

### Why we need to communicate

The core aim of BAPRAS is to drive professional standards, education and innovation across all aspects of plastic surgery. Communicating with the public is critical to improving understanding of the breadth of plastic surgery, its collaborative and pioneering nature and the value it adds to patient safety, care and outcomes.

Our key target audiences include: current and potential members, the public, commissioners, health professionals, NHS managers, stakeholders, partners and policy makers. BAPRAS is always looking to consolidate its position as the trusted, authoritative voice on plastic surgery issues in the UK amongst these groups. The media helps us to reach all these audiences.

### How are we going about this?

- We have been working with Portland Communications since 2015 to help us with strategic planning and day-to-day media support
- We have an elected Communications Officer and an in-house Media Co-ordinator who liaise between BAPRAS, our individual members, our Officers, and Portland
- Back when we changed our name to BAPRAS, we developed long-term communication strategies informed by Attitudinal Survey research
- We develop an annual communications plan that sets out how we will target particular audiences.
- We identify what 'proactive' stories we will develop and promote, and agree a budget to deliver these alongside our reactive responses to media enquiries
- We review progress against the plan at the end of each year using objective measures where possible

## How you can help

The communications plan depends on our members to provide us with stories that will demonstrate the many facets of our specialty. To be effective, we need to co-ordinate our work to get the most from every opportunity. This proactive work requires time and careful planning; it can take several weeks to develop an idea into something that is both of interest to the media and will target the audience we want, thereby benefitting you, the specialty and the Association.

We also need people who can speak for the Association with authority; providing articulate and credible representation of the BAPRAS position. These opportunities tend to be 'reactive' - they arise in response to unpredictable events and demand quick responses. Providing consistent messages helps to build our position as the place to turn to if you want the authoritative view on UK plastic surgery.

This handbook is designed to help you work with us to achieve these aims. It will advise you on how to maximise media opportunities whilst avoiding pitfalls.

## How to get in touch

**You can contact the in-house Media Co-ordinator by emailing [emma.brighton@bapras.org.uk](mailto:emma.brighton@bapras.org.uk) or calling 0207 831 5161.**

They can advise you and put you in contact with the right people, whether in the Portland team or BAPRAS members with specific expertise. If you know of a plastic surgery story that is likely to be reported in your local area please let us know; we can often help promote it more widely and be ready to react if we receive direct calls (and we often do).

**If a journalist contacts you directly, please notify the Media Co-ordinator.**

## Why working with the media matters to BAPRAS

Working with the media is an essential part of BAPRAS' external communications activity. It enables the Association to reach a large percentage of its audiences in a cost effective way. The purpose could be anything from profiling advances in the speciality to lobbying Government to improve patient safety. BAPRAS has a strategic communications plan into which all media activity fits.

# 2

## Understanding how the media works

In order to support BAPRAS' media activity it is important to understand how the media works

The media exists to inform, entertain and influence opinion, as well as challenge and check those in power. However, ultimately, it also exists to be commercially successful and must provide engaging content for their audiences.

### A great story

The making of a great story is more than just something we feel passionately about and think people should know. A great story needs to have the right mix of newsworthiness, topicality and relevance to the audience.

The media is an entertainment industry, not a public information service. They are in the business of selling stories to their readers, listeners and viewers. If what we are trying to sell them will not be bought by their audiences, they will not be interested. Portland can advise on what makes a good story.

### Deadlines

One of the greatest challenges for the Comms team is responding to media deadlines. The news media in particular often need a response within an hour or so.

Media	Likely deadline
Newspaper news sections and broadcast news	From within the hour to the end of the day, journalists usually have calls in to numerous bodies and contacts on a 'first response gets quoted' basis
Newspaper features and weekend supplements	Usually no more than a few days maximum but they will often want an indication quite quickly that you can help, otherwise they will go elsewhere
Trade and consumer magazines	These tend to be weekly or monthly, so deadlines can be as much as a or as little as a day
Documentaries	Usually like to meet in person or talk over the phone at the research stage when pulling together the programme content. Deadlines are much more fluid but again they will want an indication quite quickly that you can help

Therefore, if you are contacted by one of the team to respond urgently, do please try to get back to them as soon as possible, or ask someone else to if you know you won't be available. If BAPRAS does not respond in time someone else will and we lose the opportunity to promote our Association and your work.

Documentary makers and monthly or trade magazines usually have longer lead times. However, they could still require a quick response to see if a story is worth pursuing or to be used instead for supplementary information and fact checking once a feature has been finished. We will always advise you on the deadline when they approach you for help.

It is worth remembering that deadlines work both ways. The greatest stories, if pitched to the media too late for them to cover, will not be picked up and this leads to frustration at both ends. For a national feature this can be as much as four weeks ahead of the publication date and for monthly magazines a minimum of three to four months is required. BAPRAS has a proactive media plan for the year which is worked out long in advance so that stories can be pitched to various media in time.

## Case studies

Direct testimonies from people who have had plastic surgery often provide a vital ingredient to a story (if not the story itself). News and feature writers, as well as programme makers, often make this a condition of getting a story covered so do consider this when you are thinking of something you want BAPRAS to promote. The communications team is keen to hear from members working with interesting patient case studies who would be willing to support our ongoing media work.

Specifically, patients:

- You have treated in the last two years
- Who highlight innovative plastic surgery treatment / techniques
- Who are articulate and confident

Information about latest research and treatment methods is critical to ensuring public recognition of the pioneering work of BAPRAS surgeons.

An initial request from you, your secretary or an NHS press office is probably the best way to approach patients but please be careful that they do not agree to do an interview because they feel beholden to you. Portland will follow up with the patient to check they understand the implications of taking part in a media interview and address any concerns they may have before putting them in touch with the journalist.

As a general rule, please do not approach a patient too soon after an operation. BAPRAS advises that patients are given time to recover and feel the benefits of their procedure before securing coverage.

## Relationship building

An essential part of effective media relations is building relationships with key journalists and titles and this is another reason why media contact needs to be coordinated through Portland. You may be approached by someone well known to Portland and they can advise accordingly on, for example, likely bias or interest areas. Conversely, you may have excellent contacts yourself that BAPRAS could benefit from. Please do let a member of the Comms team know either way.

# 3

## Media handling

### The role of the Media Co-ordinator and of Portland in media relations

BAPRAS has an in-house Media Co-ordinator who handles our media relations with support from our external team at Portland Communications. They are the first port of call for any media enquiry to the Association and act as a filter to determine whether media opportunities are worth pursuing or not.

Portland are responsible for delivering a media plan and communications strategy for the Association.

### Proactive vs reactive media handling

#### Reactive

BAPRAS receives on average five to 20 media enquiries each month. Around half of these reactive calls result in coverage for the Association and some lead on to additional future opportunities. Therefore, being able to offer a quick, authoritative and efficient press office service is vital to our work and relies on a speedy and considered response from members.

#### Proactive

The over-arching aim of the BAPRAS proactive media relations programme is:

- To position BAPRAS as the leading authority on plastic surgery

Underpinning this are two key objectives

- To increase awareness and understanding of the scope of plastic surgery amongst the general public
- To raise the profile of the professional specialty and innovation of plastic surgery amongst clinical audiences
- Upholding patient safety standards and encouraging proper practice

BAPRAS welcomes all suggestions for proactive activity as long as it meets these criteria and there is capacity to deliver it.

### BAPRAS media handling protocol



- Media calls are first received through the Media Co-ordinator or Portland



- Exact details of media request are investigated



- The team works with the Committee to decide whether the request is an opportunity that should be progressed<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>BAPRAS regularly receives calls asking for statistics on numbers of people undergoing cosmetic procedures, which we cannot help with as BAPRAS does not collect this data at the moment. We also decline to comment on procedures outside of our core work or to pass judgement on whether celebrities have had any plastic surgery done, as this would not achieve our core objective of increasing the understanding of the scope of plastic surgery.



- If yes, the Media Co-ordinator, with support from the Communications committee decides, if necessary, which member to contact for more information or if additional support is required
- The Media Co-ordinator will then make contact with you, either putting you directly in touch with the journalist or gathering information for them
- If the Media Co-ordinator asks you to speak to a journalist it will be as a BAPRAS member and plastic surgeon
- If the interview is on a topic that BAPRAS has an agreed line on, you will be briefed on this beforehand
- Please do not agree to take part in an interview as a spokesperson for the Association if you disagree with, or are uncertain of the BAPRAS line; our message must be unified
- Remember, not all interviews are oral - in some instances members are asked to supply written comments which can be sent to Portland via email for review or even assistance with drafting before they are sent to the journalist.
- Consider whether you need to let your Trust press office know about your media activity and any internal protocol you need to follow
- When you have completed your interview, please let the Media Co-ordinator know how it went and if any follow-up is required
- Portland will provide print/scanned copies of coverage where possible

## What to do if a journalist directly approaches you?

**If a journalist contacts you directly, please notify the Media Co-ordinator.**

BAPRAS will never put a journalist in touch with you without first making contact with you themselves to check you are available and willing to take part. If you are approached by a journalist and they want your help with an issue on which BAPRAS has an agreed position<sup>2</sup>, please ask them to call the Secretariat. The Media Co-ordinator will then assess the query, find out a bit more about the programme or publication, look into the journalist/publication's background if necessary and, if it's worth your time, come back to you.

The Media Co-ordinator and Portland can help liaise with the relevant press offices of your hospital trust or private practice etc. to handle any hospital or practice-specific enquiries. Furthermore, if you are personally involved in a potential crisis situation and require assistance from BAPRAS, please alert the Secretariat who will then brief Portland for support with media crisis management.

<sup>2</sup>At the time of printing this document, there is up-to-date positioning for BAPRAS in many areas of our influence including the regulation of plastic surgery, advice regarding how to choose a cosmetic surgeon, cosmetic tourism, advertising, professional standards, commissioning and more. Ask the Media Co-ordinator for more info.

# 4

## Media interview guidelines

### Ten golden rules for interviews

#### 1. You only have control over what you say, focus on that

- You cannot 'control' external environments and it is easy to be distracted. Focus on the one thing you can control: what you say

#### 2. Write down what you want to say before the interview

- Think about it, write it down, and look at it. This will also aid memory
- Make sure that you understand what you want from the interview
- Always include a call to action - what do you want the audience that is reading/listening to do?

#### 3. Identify 3 key messages, and keep returning to them

- Develop your thoughts into the key messages which underlie what you want to get across
- A successful interview ensures these messages are delivered, NOT that you have answered all the journalist's questions
- Don't assume the journalist will necessarily get to the questions you want to answer; ensure you get your points across in good time, providing the messages in soundbites that can be used wholesale when edited

#### 4. Ask yourself beforehand, do I believe in this?

- Make sure you not only believe what you are saying but that you identify the part of the story you find most compelling, and add some personal anecdotes
- Can you understand the facts behind the story and explain them if questioned?

#### 5. Make sure you understand the question 100% before answering

- Consider what the question means and what the underlying connotations are
- But also - understand how you can leverage it to reference your key messages
- If in doubt, ask the journalist to explain or repeat. This may also buy you time to compose yourself

#### 6. Don't speak like a corporate representative

- Be engaging and human, tell a story. Talk how you would normally and be yourself
- Use 1st and 2nd person language - i.e. you, us, we, I. This ensures it is a personal story that engages your audience

## 7. Use the greater knowledge you have to your advantage

- You are the expert on your job / BAPRAS so feel confident that you hold the greater knowledge
- Make sure you simplify things, rather than complicate
- Try to support the journalist through the interview and educate them
- Reference specific plastic surgery information they might not know
- Journalists work on several stories concurrently and may not have the understanding of the issue you do so be patient and help them

## 8. Don't assume all interviews are hostile

- Don't be intimidated by interviews. Journalists just need a story - it is up to you if that is positive or negative
- Don't think of it as 'something to get through' - this is an opportunity for you and for BAPRAS
- If you approach the interview negatively, this will come across in your answers
- Consider the potentially difficult questions and prepare an answer that is positive

## 9. If you don't want to answer, say so

- If information is proprietary or cannot be disclosed at this time, be honest
- Don't expose yourself to risk or to information that may later be used against you
- Know that you cannot always provide comment. When this happens bridge over to your key messages: "I can't tell you about that at this stage but what I can say is..."

## 10. Remember that journalists are human beings

- Build relationships, win them over, and establish a rapport. Say their name in your answer
- Remember the journalist is a conduit to your real audience so speak to them

## Bridging

**Bridging is the art of moving from the journalist's question to your answer. To do this:**

- Keep your key messages in front of mind
- Don't act as if the question hasn't been asked
- Stop when you have answered the question to your satisfaction
- If you really need time to think, ask the reporter to repeat the question
- If a difficult question is based on an assumption with which you disagree, challenge it
- Never repeat negative assumptions (this may be used as their headline)

**Some examples of bridging statements include:**

- Let me put all this in perspective by saying...
- What all this information tells me is...
- This is an important point because...
- With this in mind, if we look at the bigger picture...
- Before we continue, let me emphasise that...
- And what's most important to know is...

## Body language

**Consider your body language in face to face interviews:**

- Sit upright and not too stiffly and lean slightly forward in your chair. Sitting upright indicates confidence and ease. Leaning forward indicates interest and involvement
- Tilting your head slightly to one side indicates openness. Keeping it straight can indicate defensiveness or arrogance
- Mirroring the body language of the interviewer can establish rapport.
- Do not hide your hands under a table. This can look like you are hiding something
- If there's no table, rest your hands on your lap if it feels natural, otherwise gesticulate as you normally would
- Maintain eye contact to ensure trust
- Keep your hands away from your face. Touching your face indicates dishonesty and touching your neck or the back of your head indicates uncertainty.

## Tips for different media types

### TV

- Body language and how you will be seen on screen is important
- Consider what you wear - don't make your outfit a distraction
- Be engaging, positive and welcoming
- Assume you are always on camera

### Radio

- Raise the tempo (should almost be over exaggerated to compensate for the flattening effect of radio). Be passionate
- If it's pre-recorded, you may need to incorporate the question into your answer - ask if this will be the case
- Articulate the response within a story to make it more engaging
- It's even more important to use a 2nd person perspective to ensure the often distracted listener is engaged so say 'you' when speaking about the audience

### Print

- Consider sound-bites that can be easily lifted into the story
- If your interview is conducted over the phone, ensure you establish a good relationship with the interviewer
- Remember that whilst your interview will be cut down, anything you say can be used, so be measured in your responses

### Remember the simple things (quick summary of media skills)

- Ask for the first question if possible, this will help compose the start of the interview
- Set a confident tone
- Establish positive relationship
- Consider media format: print, radio, TV
- Consider who will read / see the interview
- Does the journalist have an agenda?
- Rationalise fears with confident statements
- 'Own' the interview with your messages
- Have your messages to hand
- Never lie!

# 5

## Making the most of social media

Whether you're planning a charity event or launching new research, social media is a cost-effective, instant way to create buzz around your activity.

To promote your activity and the work of BAPRAS through social media, please see below for 'Golden Rules' on how to use social media effectively.

### Ten Golden Rules for using social media

#### 1. Follow us!

BAPRAS has a profile on all main social media channels: Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. Please follow us and tag our accounts in any relevant news you want to promote. This will help streamline member communications.

#### 2. Use appropriate hashtags

The Twitter hashtag (#) is a powerful way to follow conversations on a topic of interest and a good way to create conversation. The hashtag collects posts and organises them into one stream. For example, using #breastreconstruction will help connect you to existing conversations and potential new followers around this issue. Your tweet could look like this:

*Delighted to announce new partnership with breast cancer charity  
@BreastCancerCare @BAPRASvoice  
#breastreconstruction #plasticsurgery*

#### 3. Represent quality opinion

Only share articles and comments from trusted sources, such as national press and trade outlets online. Avoid antagonistic or deliberately inflammatory comment, or comment from unknown or unclearly authored outlets, particularly if they reference data which can't be sourced.

#### 4. Active response etiquette

Regularly acknowledge new followers and thank people for retweets (RTs on Twitter), as this will help build a good relationship between you, BAPRAS and our key audiences.

#### 5. Honesty and respect

It is important to be as open and transparent as possible when dealing with comments or criticisms on social media. You should never try and conceal who you are or what your role is, and you should never try and pretend you are something you are not. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. If you make a mistake, admit it.

## 6. Stick to what you know

Don't get out of your depth talking about something you're not familiar with. If you find yourself trapped in a conversation that has strayed out of your comfort zone, stop and let people know. If answers are still needed, refer it upwards to the communications team.

## 7. Varied content

Combine a mixture of standard tweets, links to blogs, articles, videos and pictures, RTs and shared hashtags. Varying content will make BAPRAS appeal to a wider audience and look more engaged with the medium it's using.

## 8. Less is more

Only use one post to convey information (this is limited to 140 characters on Twitter). If this can't be done then Twitter is probably not the right format for communications. Make your content punchy so that it is more easily remembered.

## 9. Be yourself

Don't be afraid to let your personality shine through. The best online conversations should be a blend of relevant information and personal touches. As long as your personal touches don't conflict with the other Golden Rules, you'll be fine.

## 10. Be active

You are more likely to be taken seriously and maintain good relationships on Twitter if you ensure you have a fairly regular presence.

## Instagram

- Photos should be for informative purposes and not with the sole intention of glorifying cosmetic surgery
- Share only photos and videos that you've taken or have the right to share
- You own the content you post on Instagram and you must have the consent of anyone who features in your posts before you share them

- Remember to post authentic content, and don't post anything you've copied or collected from the Internet that you don't have the right to post
- Consider patient confidentiality as well as moral, ethical and psychological implications of the content you post and how this reflects on us

## Advertising Botox on social media

As of January 2020, new guidance from the Advertising Standards Agency (ASA) in conjunction with the MHRA states that any treatments involving Botulinum toxin injections (Botox) must not be directly or indirectly promoted to the public on social media. This includes references such as #Botox or 'anti-wrinkle injections' etc.

For further guidance please see the links below:

- [ASA enforcement notice](#)
- [MHRA 'Blue Guide' on the advertising and promotions of medicines in the UK](#)

## Social media support from BAPRAS

As well as sharing the latest news from BAPRAS, our accounts are also used on a daily basis to share wider news and stories of interest from the sector, including highlighting recent media coverage. Any suggestions for content or articles of interest to share via the BAPRAS social media accounts are welcome.

If you don't yet have any social media accounts or are simply unsure as to how to use yours to best effect, you can contact the BAPRAS Media Co-ordinator Emma Brighton ([emma.brighton@bapras.org.uk](mailto:emma.brighton@bapras.org.uk)) with details of any news or content that you'd like to communicate.

## Further resources

- [NHS - Your guide to using social media](#)
- [Instagram Community Guidelines](#)

## Contact numbers, further information

If you would like to discuss any of the above, please contact Emma Brighton in the Secretariat on **020 7831 5161**, or via email **[emma.brighton@bapras.org.uk](mailto:emma.brighton@bapras.org.uk)**

Or call Portland on **020 7554 1600** to talk to a member of the BAPRAS team. They also be contacted via email at **[bapras@portland-communications.com](mailto:bapras@portland-communications.com)**

