



Brachial Plexus Injury Awareness

TALKING UP AWARENESS: MEDIA GUIDELINES & TIPS

In an effort to take our message to the public, we are providing Awareness Week participants with seven ways to bring about brachial plexus injury awareness via the media. In addition, we've included some tips and guidelines for communication with the media. We would ask that you select one, two or more of our media goals and do your best to achieve them prior to or during Awareness Week.

SEVEN WAYS TO BRING ABOUT BRACHIAL PLEXUS INJURY AWARENESS:

(1) Press Release: In the *Awareness Handbook*, there is an *Official Press Release* for your use. This Official Press Release is a "ready-to-use" document. You can send it in with a personal letter, if you wish, that tells a bit about your own experience with brachial plexus injuries so that they know the press release is coming from a local person. Send a press release to each of your local papers and television stations two weeks before and then again a week before. For best results, follow-up with a phone call during Awareness Week. Do your best to send the press release to the appropriate reporter, either "Features" or "Medical."

(2) Letter to the Editor: In the *Awareness Handbook* is a sample of a *Letters to the Editor*. This is an easy way for you to make a difference this week. Not only are most *Letters to the Editor* published but thousands of people read the editorial section of papers each day.

(3) Event Story: Do you have a special Awareness Week event taking place? Let your community newspaper, radio or television station know about it! Come up with an angle! For instance, tell the reporter how many children and adults in your area are affected by this injury (that you are aware of). If they seem interested, make sure to have several families at the event so that the reporter has plenty of interview subjects. This works well in conjunction with #1, the *Official Press Release*.

(4) Editorial Board Visit: Schedule a meeting with the editor and/or health and medical reporter of your local paper. Bring another person who is affected by brachial plexus injuries—either an adult who has a brachial plexus injury or a parent of a child who is affected by a brachial plexus injury. Be prepared by taking an *Official Press Release* and any other documents from the *Awareness Handbook* that you think will be applicable or a copy of the *Outreach Awareness Special Issue*. Be sure to take photographs of your children but it is probably best to leave the kids at home for this visit. Inform them of injury statistics and use your emotion but

also provide current and timely issues parents are dealing with (i.e. insurance coverage, social security coverage, finding treatment and finding information about the injury itself). These are the technical issues papers may be interested in covering.

(5) Radio Public Service Announcements: We have several public service announcements for your use (see *Radio Public Service Announcements* sheet). These are best utilized by submitting them to your local radio station along with an *Official Press Release* and/or a personalized cover letter which explains the injury, the event and the importance of making their listeners aware of this issue. Be sure and follow-up with a phone call or try to schedule a time to deliver the service announcements by hand.

(6) Local Talk Radio: Many local radio stations have talk radio community programs. Many of these programs are constantly trying to fill airtime! Call the talk radio host and give him/her concise and unique background information about brachial plexus injuries. If you're successful, be prepared with facts and support data, particularly if it's a call-in show. Contact an Awareness Committee member if you need help gathering information for your interview.

(7) National Media: Consider writing a cover letter encouraging coverage of the brachial plexus injury subject. Personalize your letter and include an *Official Press Release* and a *Quick Fact Sheet*. Also, consider including a photo of your child or yourself, if injured, (realize your photo will probably not be returned). Include in your letter a reason they should be interested in this story. What segment of their audience would be interested in this story? How does it relate to other current events? What is unique or especially interesting or intriguing about this story? Don't be discouraged if you don't receive a response! It is our combined efforts that will someday be rewarded!

COMMUNICATING WITH MEDIA:

- Local media likes to feature community members with interesting stories, so be sure to clearly identify what makes you so interesting!
- In all of your attempts to seek media coverage, remember that a specific event, celebration or gathering is more likely to attract the media's attention as opposed to a request for a story covering brachial plexus issues in general.
- Professionalism will win you points. Before phoning or sending a letter, plan your words and your goals. Be specific, precise and very clear. Ask a friend or family member to review your words to receive outside feedback about clarity.
- A news release is known in the news business as a *hand-out*. It doesn't have to be perfect, but it must contain all the facts! Use simple sentences. Make the first paragraph a summary of what the release is about. It should be three or four sentences long and address: What? Why? Who? When? Where? How? (See the *Official Press Release*.)

- Every news organization has a *central receiver*, a person who screens the flow of incoming releases, calls and visits and determines which have news potential. Learn who the central receiver is and cultivate that person. Make an appointment to meet him or her professionally. Then, introduce yourself, state your business, and go. After you've made the initial contact, reach these people with simple messages by way of a news release. Email versions also must be simple. Graphics and attachments that may cause newsroom delays or disruptions will not win friends.
- When you want the news media to cover your special event, consider sending them an "editors advisory." If you have an advance news release (and you should) attach a copy to the advisory. The advisory is particularly valuable in soliciting television coverage. Include a brief description of what will happen and don't forget to include descriptions of possible visuals -- what there will be to photograph.

Sample Format for the Editors Advisory:

[your name & telephone number]

Editors Advisory

Event: Injured Children Gather for Picnic

Time: Sunday, MM DD, YYYY, 10:00 am to 5:00 pm

Place: Any picnic grounds, Any place, Any state

Who: Families dealing with brachial plexus injuries

- Honor their role -- include a title in every address. In general, use the following titles to address your releases, unless you know a particular organization uses a different title that would serve better: Daily newspapers: City Editor; Weekly newspaper: Editor; Shoppers: Editor; Magazines: Editor; Radio Stations: News Department; Television Stations: News Director.
- Don't try to save postage by putting more than one release in the same envelope either. Since different stories are likely to be assigned to different reporters, this may cause one release to be ignored. If you use email, the same principle applies: send separate releases separately.
- Timing: Most feature departments (such as health sections) and magazines have deadlines long before things appear in print. They need to receive releases well in advance.

Portions of this information was adapted from Gebbie Press at: www.gebbieinc.com. Used with the permission of Mark Gebbie.