

Canadian Ophthalmological Society Public Relations Toolkit



Canadian Ophthalmological Society
Société canadienne d'ophtalmologie
EYE PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS OF CANADA | MÉDECINS ET CHIRURGIENS OPHTALMOLOGISTES DU CANADA



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The Importance of Public Relations:

The role of an ophthalmologist has never been well understood by the Canadian public, except for those who have dealt with eye afflictions. The See the Possibilities campaign was developed to educate Canadians on the important role that ophthalmologists play in eye health care with compelling patient care and impact stories through a three-year campaign.

Why is the Media Important? When done effectively, working with the media provides a rewarding and cost-effective tool for promoting COS, positions on key issues and the value of Ophthalmology. These efforts can lead to new members, access to key stakeholders and decision makers, and increased visibility of the profession as a whole.

Media advocacy is a way to influence decision-makers through the media outlets that matter to them, such as newspapers, radio, blogs etc. Media advocacy is not just about getting your name or your organization's name into the press. It's about getting your issue into the press in a way that provokes new or different thinking amongst target decision-makers.

Media Process Overview and Best Practices

The Colony Project is a PR agency that has been working with COS for three years. As part of Colony's partnership with the COS, the agency manages all media relations activities and outreach. If any media reaches out to you directly to request an interview or statement on any given topic, reach out to Joel Baglole and the communications team at the COS. Joel can put you in touch with Colony who will help manage the details of the interview request, ensure you are prepared and comfortable with the key messages ahead of the interview, and also monitor for the article or interview in the news once the coverage goes live.

Contact information for The Colony Project:

Senior Account Director: Jessica Greasley, jessica.greasley@colonyproject.com or (416) 909-0871

Senior Account Manager: Candace Beres, candace.beres@colonyproject.com or (905) 536 -0311

Senior Account Executive: Kristi Iannuzzi, kristi.iannuzzi@colonyproject.com or (289) 242-1024

- **What to expect from an interview:**
 - Media interviews will often be conducted via phone, but sometimes there will be opportunities for an in-studio interview
 - Ahead of the interview, Colony works with the interviewer to request sample questions that will be asked during the interview to help prepare
 - When answering media questions, expect to be concise in your response as journalists are busy and often only have 5-10 minutes to get a few soundbites they'll use in their story

- Journalists are writers who need something to write about, often with a mission of making the world a better place so will come to the table with their own agenda of how they see the story unfolding. As a result, some journalists can look for the conflict in the story, even if it's sometimes disingenuous and are idealistic
- **What to remember during an interview:**
 - The goal of media interviews is to raise awareness about the practice of ophthalmology and the Canadian Ophthalmological Society
 - Ahead of the interview, Colony will provide a media briefing document that shares the interview details, information about the outlet, and potential Q&A. It's recommended that you keep the briefing document handy during the interview to easily reference key messages and other relevant information
 - Refer to & tie-in key messages whenever possible during the discussions with reporters and media contacts
 - Treat any interview opportunity like a natural conversation. Be yourself and be comfortable- you are the expert! The journalist is taking the time to speak with you because you know something that they are interested in learning about.
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PLEASE SEE APPENDIX for a sample media briefing document

Storytelling 101

Strategic communication processes build mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics. Generating positive publicity for your topic will positively elevate reputation and build local buzz. Below are some key ingredients that are important components of a story to get media interested in covering your event.

- Key Ingredients:
 - Interesting Visuals
 - New innovation/ new news
 - Local angle / human interest
 - Colourful quotes and engaging spokespeople
 - Interaction and engagement
 - Unique content

How to tell your story: If you have a compelling story idea that you think would resonate with your local media, the Colony and COS team would be happy to support you and build out the story. For example, do you have a patient with a remarkable recovery story or are you involved in a groundbreaking study on an eye disease? Please don't hesitate to reach out to Joel Baglole and the COS team at communications@cos-sco.ca and Kristi Iannuzzi at Kristi.Iannuzzi@colonyproject.com, so you can work together to bring your vision to life.

Media Tools

News Release The news release is the most common method of drawing media attention to a particular item of news. The most important aspect of a news release is the lead (first paragraph) which must contain the essential elements. The lead serves two purposes 1.) to provide the most important facts; and 2.) to gain the attention of readers, so they will want to know more. It should also incorporate the 5 W's of the story: Who? What? Why? When? Where?

Media "Pitch" Letter A media "pitch" letter is a suggested story idea that is submitted to individual journalists via email. It gives the reporter an idea for a story that they could write. If the journalist likes the idea and their editors approve, they then write a story for their media outlet based on the suggestion. Pitches tend to be shorter and more informal than press releases.

PLEASE SEE APPENDIX for an example of a media pitch letter.

Becoming a COS Physician Media Spokesperson

The media need experts to give an informed view about news stories. Each day, newspapers, radio and television channels contact the COS Communications Team to ask for a physician to provide expert comment on the day's health news agenda. By becoming one of our spokespeople you can help raise the profile of the COS, your provincial or sub-specialty association, and you also help ensure that an accurate depiction of your field is presented to the public.

If you are interested in learning more about becoming a COS physician media expert, please contact: Joel Baglole, Manager, Communications & Public Affairs Tel: 613.729.6779, ext. 236 Email: communications@cos-sco.ca.

Key Messages: Canadian Ophthalmological Society

Key messages are the core messages you want your target audience to hear and remember. They create meaning and headline the issues you want to discuss. They allow you to control communications, enhance relationships with your target audiences and are an important feature of a campaign. If you'd like to rehearse or practice these messages, the Colony team would be happy to chat further.

1. **Ophthalmologists specialize in eye and vision care and are the only eye care professionals who are medical doctors.**
 - a. Unlike optometrists and opticians, ophthalmologists must complete a four-year honours undergraduate university degree, four years of medical school followed by five years of residency training in ophthalmology, learning to treat medical and surgical eye diseases.
 - b. Ophthalmologists diagnose and treat all eye diseases, perform surgeries and prescribe eyeglasses and fit contact lenses to correct vision problems. Ophthalmologists can also diagnose and treat glaucoma, perform cataract and retina surgery and mitigate damage from macular degeneration.

- c. Ophthalmologists are the medical “quarterbacks” of the eye health team. They work collaboratively with the other eye O’s (opticians and optometrists) and other medical specialists to ensure optimal patient treatment and care.
 - d. Ophthalmologists are the primary point of care for eye emergencies or injuries, and there is always an ophthalmologist on call in hospitals.
 - e. Ophthalmologists are the future of eye care; many ophthalmologists are involved in scientific research on the causes and cures for eye diseases and vision disorders.
2. **The Canadian Ophthalmological Society (COS) is a national not-for-profit medical specialty organization and the recognized authority on eye and vision care in Canada.**
- a. COS is committed to ensuring the provision of optimal eye care to all Canadians by promoting excellence in ophthalmology and by providing services to support its members in practice.
 - b. As the national, recognized authority on eye and vision care in Canada, COS works collaboratively with government, other national and international specialty societies, our provincial partners and affiliates and other eye care professionals and patient groups to advocate for health policy in Canada in the area of eye and vision health.

Sample Q&A

Q: What is the COS? What does it do?

A: The Canadian Ophthalmological Society (COS) is a national not-for-profit medical specialty organization and the recognized authority on eye and vision care in Canada. As eye physicians and surgeons, COS is committed to ensuring the provision of optimal eye care to all Canadians by promoting excellence in ophthalmology and by providing services to support its members in practice.

As the national, recognized authority on eye and vision care in Canada, COS is seeing a growing need to educate Canadians on the different types of eye health practitioners and the unique training, education and skills of ophthalmologists.

Q: How is an ophthalmologist different from an optometrist or optician?

A: Ophthalmologists, optometrists, and opticians each play an important role in providing eye care to consumers. Ophthalmologists are medical doctors (eye MDs) who specialize in eye and vision care, they are also the primary point of care for eye emergencies or injuries. As the medical leaders, ophthalmologists are the “quarterback” of the eye health team. The other eye care professionals (optometrists and opticians) are not medical doctors.

Q: How do I know if I should see an ophthalmologist?

A: Every Canadian should book regular appointments for a routine eye exam with their optometrist. If an optometrist has a concern regarding your eye health, they will refer you to an ophthalmologist. Ophthalmologists are specialists who are trained to perform eye exams, diagnose and treat disease, prescribe medications, and perform eye surgery. They also write prescriptions for eyeglasses and contact lenses. Since ophthalmologists are the primary point of care for eye emergencies, one is always on-call 24 hours a day, every day at any Canadian hospital.

Q: What type of education does an ophthalmologist have to do?

A: Ophthalmologists must complete a four-year honours undergraduate university degree, four years of medical school, then five years of residency training in ophthalmology learning to treat medical and surgical eye diseases. Following this, many ophthalmologists undertake a further one or two years of intensive training to specialize in the management of certain types of eye disease.

Q: What are some of the skills or procedures an ophthalmologist is capable of performing?

A: An ophthalmologist diagnoses and treats all eye diseases, performs eye surgery and prescribes and fits eyeglasses and contact lenses to correct vision problems. Many ophthalmologists are also involved in scientific research on the causes and solutions for eye diseases and vision disorders.

Q: Why are ophthalmologists' billing rates so much higher than other doctors?

A: Ophthalmologists are expanding the services they offer in private clinics to offset lengthy waits for procedures through public hospitals. As a result, there are high costs associated with purchasing the required equipment to perform even basic procedures, which leads to high overhead costs to run and maintain fully staffed clinics.

Q: How many ophthalmologists are there in Canada?

A: Over 900 ophthalmologists and 200 ophthalmology residents are members of the COS.

APPENDIX

Media Pitch Sample

SUBJECT: Vision Health Month Study: Discrepancy between experiencing symptoms of potential eye disease and seeking treatment

Hi XX,

Hope all is well. In a national survey commissioned by the Canadian Ophthalmological Society (COS), a majority of Canadians experience symptoms of potential eye disease (59 percent) but only half seek treatment from a health care professional (54 per cent). This May for Vision Health Month, the COS wants to raise awareness and educate Canadians on the importance of having regular medical eye exams to help in the early detection of major eye diseases.

Early detection is key for effective treatment to preserve vision and prevent vision loss from common eye diseases like glaucoma, cataracts, age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and diabetic retinopathy. Canadians were found to have low awareness of AMD (51 per cent) which is the leading cause of vision loss in Canada, and diabetic retinopathy (41 per cent), which affects half a million Canadians. This is especially true in millennials whose awareness is lower than the national average and are less likely to see a physician (44 per cent) after experiencing symptoms.

INTERVIEW OPP: Speak with a local patient and ophthalmologist on what to look out for when

detecting common eye diseases:

- What are symptoms of common eye diseases?
- What are common eye diseases?
- Who is at greater risk for these diseases? Detection starts younger than you might think!
- What treatments are available for common eye diseases?
- A deep dive into regional and national statistics on Canadian behaviours on eye health

Please let me know if you are interested in speaking with an ophthalmologist or a Canadian living with a common eye disease for Vision Health Month in May. For more information and to hear patient stories, please visit SeeThePossibilities.ca.

Best,
XX

Media Briefing Document Sample

MEDIA RELATIONS / PR INTERVIEW BRIEFING BOOK

INTERVIEW WITH SIRIUS XM RADIO

Outlet: Sirius XM

Host: Jeff Samut

Date: Tuesday, July 9th

Time: 12:05 pm

Length: 10 minutes

Interview Type: Live-to-air radio interview

Dial-in number: 647-943-7649

Story Angle / Topic: Vision care tips for warmer weather and sunnier skies.

Summer is in full swing - the weather is warmer, the skies are filled with sunshine and the days are growing longer. With this change in season, we often start to think about our health through fitness or diet - but it's just as important to put a plan in place to protect and improve vision health.

During the summer months, there are a number of vision issues that become more prevalent amongst Canadians. These include but are not limited to dry eyes, sunburnt eyes, stye, swimmer's eye as well as allergies. The Canadian Ophthalmological Society wants Canadians to keep eye health top of mind this summer and protect themselves from these common ailments.

If interested, we'd love to put you in touch with a local ophthalmologist who can speak to this topic and share tips for your audience to keep in mind this summer, including:

- **How to keep dry eye away:** Hot, dry and windy conditions can irritate and cause dry eye. Canadians should consider wearing wrap-around sunglasses in these conditions to remain protected.

- **How to avoid a “sunburn of the eye”:** Most are unaware but eyes are susceptible to sun damage just as much as skin. Canadians should ensure that they’re always wearing eyewear that incorporates 100% UV protection to protect themselves from eye sunburn, known formally as photokeratitis.
- **How to prevent “swimmer’s eye”:** Pools are filled with chemicals that keep the water clean but can irritate our eyes. Canadians can maintain healthy eyes and vision by always wearing swim goggles when enjoying the pool this summer.

About the Interviewer: *Jeff Samut* is a radio veteran with more than 20 years experience, Jeff Sammut is the host of Canada Now, he goes from coast to coast across the country talking to Canadians about Canadians and the stories that affect us all, big and small.

About The Outlet: SiriusXM creates and offers commercial-free music; premier sports talk and live events; comedy; news; and exclusive talk and entertainment. SiriusXM is available in vehicles from every major car company and on smartphones and other connected devices as well as online at siriusxm.ca.

General Interview Overview / Tips:

- As a reminder, the goal of media interviews is to raise awareness for the Canadian Ophthalmological Society. We ask that you explicitly and naturally mention your involvement with The Canadian Ophthalmological Society during your interview and when speaking with media contacts.
 - For example: *“Through my membership with The Canadian Ophthalmological Society and my experience working in ophthalmology for XX years, I can”*
- Have this briefing document handy during your interview to easily reference key messages and other relevant information
- Refer to & tie in your key messages whenever possible during your discussions with reporters and media contacts
- Treat any interview opportunity like a natural conversation. Be yourself and be comfortable- you are the expert! The journalist is taking the time to speak with you because you know something that they are interested in learning about.

Media briefing document will also include key messages.