

The Clinical Researcher and the Media



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Principles and Practice of Clinical Research – January 8, 2008**



Which events in your study are most likely to prompt immediate calls from reporters?





- a. The new drug has no effect on controlling blood sugar levels over a long period.
- b. The new drug shows promise for controlling blood sugar levels over a long period.
- c. Three of your subjects drop out of the testing for different reasons.
- d. Two of your human subjects die while in your study.
- e. b and d





- **Big impact**
- **Novelty**
- **The unexpected**
- **Celebrity**
- **Published science**



- **Reliance on interviews**
- **Deadline pressure**
- **Quotes bring stories to life**
- **Expert sources carry credibility**
- **Hints of controversy**



- **Improves accuracy**
- **Creates favorable climate**
- **Stewardship of public resources**
- **Brings context to stories**



- **Research yields new knowledge and raises new questions**
- **Legitimate controversies exist**
- **Research questions take a long time to investigate**
- **Health messages can change, based on new knowledge**
- **Studies of large groups do not necessarily relate to an individual**



The best response for you to give when a reporter contacts you directly is:

- **“Sure, I can talk with you right now. What would you like to talk about?”**
- **“I’d be happy to talk with you, but I am not allowed.”**
- **“I’d be happy to talk with you. Would you coordinate this with my Communications Office? Here’s who you should call.”**



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**Before speaking with a reporter,
seek advice from your supervisor
and your IC Communications Office**

- **Previous experience with this reporter**
- **NIH position on issue**
- **Appropriateness of your participation**



- **On the Record:** A reporter can quote you directly, using your name and title.
- **Not for Attribution and On Background:** A reporter can use the information you give, including direct quotes, but you are not to be named. You may be identified as an NIH scientist, or a knowledgeable NIH source.
- **Off the Record:** A reporter cannot use your information in a story as coming from you; however, the reporter can use it in other ways such as getting another source to respond to your comment.



Despite the various ground rules, when talking to a reporter it is always best to be:

On the Record

- **Not for Attribution and On Background**
- **Off the Record**



- **Name and phone number?**
- **Newspaper? TV show? Radio?**
- **Deadline?**
- **Story line?**
- **What does the reporter want from you?**



- **Embargoes**
- **Freedom of Information Act**



FOIA provides individuals with a right to access to records in the possession of the federal government



All the items below that may be made available under FOIA:

Minutes of NIH Institution Review Boards

Your computer files

Document drafts

Your e-mail messages

Approved research protocols



- **Stem Cells**
- **Clinical Trials**
- **NIH Roadmap**
- **Advances**



Why

- **Media interest in medical research**
- **Obligation to the public**
- **Adds credibility**

How

- **Plain language**
- **On the record**
- **Ask for help**