



14 Bedford Row, London WC1R 4ED
Tel +44 (0)20 7306 6666
Web www.csp.org.uk

Information paper

How does CSP work to raise the profile of physiotherapy in the media?

issuing function Marketing and communications
date of issue October 2014

How does CSP work to raise the profile of physiotherapy in the media?

Introduction

The CSP has a small team of media professionals who work hard to raise the public profile of physiotherapy in the media, and to maintain the good reputation of the CSP.

The CSP does not currently use 'paid for' advertising to promote physiotherapy to the public, so media coverage is generated through the proactive creation of news stories, or by responding to media requests for information, interviews or comments. The current affairs/ news agenda is always busy, with journalists focussed on the big issues of the day; so gaining positive media coverage about physiotherapy requires considerable creativity, plus a skilled understanding of what journalists are looking for. All staff in the CSP PR team are professional, trained journalists with considerable additional experience in public relations.

Q. How do you ensure that clinical information or advice given to the media is sound?

A. When the CSP issues media statements or comments, any clinical content or advice will have been checked either by CSP professional staff (who are themselves physiotherapists) or by CSP members with the relevant expertise.

Q. Why does the CSP simplify clinical advice when it is given out via the media?

A. The audience for most of our advice is the general public. They are not clinical experts and have limited time to digest information. Translating complex clinical issues into more digestible information for a lay person is therefore important in spreading awareness of the benefits of physiotherapy, explaining how physiotherapy can help with a specific health condition or problem. Often a media interview may be less than two minutes in length, so messages have to be short and clear.

The CSP media team work using formally agreed and recognised clinical guidance. There are areas of practice where professional opinions do differ on the best approach, and there may not be current NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) guidance for example. In these infrequent instances, if a journalist is asking for information, then the CSP gives simple, general advice which has been checked with the CSP professional advice team, who are all physiotherapists.

Q. Why doesn't the CSP vet what all physiotherapists are saying to the media?

A. Journalists often contact physiotherapists directly to offer advice or give interviews in their own professional capacity, not necessarily on behalf of the CSP.

When an opportunity to give a media interview or comment has been created by the CSP media team, or has come through an approach by a journalist to the CSP, then every effort is made to brief the spokesperson and help them prepare to speak with the media.

Spokespeople can prepare, but obviously the CSP cannot control exactly what questions may be asked in an interview. Journalists are usually friendly and keen to help a CSP spokesperson give advice that is useful to their listeners/viewers.

Members should always seek advice and permission from the CSP media team before speaking 'on behalf of the CSP'.

We are happy to offer advice to other members who have an opportunity to take up media opportunities in a personal or professional capacity. But there is no requirement on members to seek permission from the CSP before agreeing to talk to the press or media in a personal or work related capacity.

Q. How does the CSP identify people to act as media spokespeople?

A. Where the CSP provides media spokespeople they will either be a member commenting within their scope of practice or they will have been briefed by relevant experts. Ideally we always try to identify spokespeople who have been trained to handle media interviews and have the skills required. Often requests for media interviews come at short notice, and a spokesperson may for example be asked get to a radio studio at an unsocial hour. We are very grateful to the members who do take on this role and help us make the most of these opportunities to promote the profession.

If you are interested in offering to be a CSP media spokesperson do please contact the CSP media team. We'd be happy to hear from you.

If the CSP is commenting on policy or practice then usually senior members of the CSP, such as the Chair or Vice-chair of Council, or expert staff members will act as spokespeople.

Where specific clinical knowledge is required we often ask the CSP professional networks to nominate a physiotherapist with the relevant expertise to act as a spokesperson.

We are often asked to suggest experts not as CSP spokespeople but to comment on new healthcare developments or to give generic advice. Sometimes physiotherapists working for the CSP will have the expertise required but often we

will call on the CSP professional networks to nominate physiotherapists or we will use members who have an established track record with the media.

We are currently considering setting up a register of experts, working with the professional networks and HEIs, so that we can to extend the range of experts the media can access. If you would like to be considered for inclusion please contact the CSP media team by email.

Q. What obligation is there on physios speaking to the media or using social media?

A. As regulated healthcare professionals physiotherapists are responsible for the advice they give in any setting. Giving advice via the media is no different. Your professional code of conduct applies when using any media.

If a physio is employed they will usually need their employer's consent before talking to the media about their work.

Physiotherapists need to be aware of their obligation to uphold their professional code of conduct, and ensure that the reputation of another health professional, or the profession as a whole is not damaged.

Social media now offers great opportunities to build relationships, share, influence and learn, but as with any other form of communication, you need to remain professional and aware of media laws at all times. The ease and speed with which you can post or comment in social media can make it easy to forget your responsibilities, but the rules around defamation, ethics and professionalism are no different.

It is advisable to be familiar with your responsibilities set out by your regulator and professional body:

- Health and Care Professions Council (<http://www.hcpc-uk.org>)
- Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (www.csp.org.uk/professionalism)

The HCPC requires that your social media activity meets four of their standards of conduct, performance and ethics:

- You must act in the best interests of service users
- You must respect the confidentiality of service users
- You must keep high standards of personal conduct
- You must behave with honesty and integrity and make sure that your behaviour does not damage the public's confidence in you or your profession.

The CSP advises members not to criticise individuals on social media or to comment in an adverse way on the practice or advice given by a fellow professional. Social

media is just as 'public' as broadcasting on TV. You may be voicing what you reasonably consider to be your opinion, but it is easy to be misinterpreted or overstep the mark, risking a libel claim or disciplinary action. Any post could be seen to be defamatory if you clearly identify someone and say something that could be interpreted as damaging to their reputation.

Q. I don't agree with some of the advice or views given by other physios in the media, what can I do about it?

A. There are legitimate differences of opinion within all health care professions and it is important that these are debated openly, proportionately, constructively and professionally.

iCSP provides a safe environment for such discussions.

If your concern relates to CSP policy, or advice by an official CSP spokesperson, please contact the CSP media team by email or phone to discuss your concerns.

The physiotherapy profession is held in high regard by the public. The CSP and members have worked hard to achieve this.

We advise members to use public media space like twitter in a constructive and professional way. It can be useful for sharing new information or innovative practice. Remember, your professional code of conduct applies when using any media.

Q. Can a CSP rep or committee member approach the media direct?

A. Anyone speaking on behalf of the CSP can only do so with the agreement of the CSP press office. This is to ensure that spokespeople are fully briefed and that we can coordinate media engagement.

Anyone holding office in the Society planning to speak to the media in any other capacity is advised to speak to the CSP press office. Again this is to ensure they are properly prepared.

Q. Is a CSP rep protected if they speak to the media?

A. CSP stewards and safety reps should always make clear in any statement to the press that they are speaking in this capacity, not as an employee. However, they should also always seek advice from the press office and their SNO before talking to the press or media, or, for example issuing a joint union press release, or making any kind of public statement (including via social media) on behalf of CSP members for a local campaign. There is no general right for stewards or other representatives to speak to the media.

Q. Can a CSP rep or committee member approach the media direct?

A. Anyone speaking on behalf of the CSP can only do so with the agreement of the CSP press office. This is to ensure that spokespeople are fully briefed and that we can coordinate media engagement.

Anyone holding office in the Society planning to speak to the media in any other capacity is advised to speak to the CSP press office. Again this is to ensure they are properly prepared and not 'ambushed' over CSP related issues.

Q. Why doesn't physiotherapy get the same profile in the media as nursing or medicine?

A. The high public awareness of the value and role of physiotherapy has been maintained through frequent and good quality media coverage proactively generated by the small professional media team at the CSP with the help of members.

Nursing and medicine are both much larger professions. This means that journalists are more likely to have day to day contact with doctors and nurses, they have more spokespeople and their professional bodies/trade unions have more resources to proactively engage journalists.

The CSP makes a lot of effort to raise the profile of the profession in the media. Our professional media team relies, however, on support from members. We'd like more members to be willing to become spokespeople, and also to help us find positive patient stories.

Other questions?

If you have any other queries please contact the CSP media team Jennie Edmondson, Becca Bryant, or Jon Ryan by email at: pressoffice@csp.org.uk, or the CSP Campaigns Director, Lynne Stockbridge at 'stockbridgel@csp.org.uk'.