

Sample Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Media Inquiries

SOP for Media Inquiries

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to outline the procedures that need to be followed on site and off site (within catchment areas and the community) with the media and management of any events that occur and are of concern.

2. Introduction

It is important that we have mechanisms for ensuring that there is effective communication with the media and community. Responsible persons have an obligation to ensure that the media and community receive accurate and relevant information about the study and the study procedures at all times.

3. Responsibility

Principal Investigator (PI)

Sub-investigator

Project Co-ordinators (PCs)

Community Educating Officer (CEO)

Reception staff

Any staff member who might be in contact with media

Communication with the Media:

- The primary media point person shall be the Site PI. In the absence of the Site PI, the back-up point persons shall be the study coordinators (clinical trial and socio-behavioral component).
- All study staff will refer media inquiries to the primary media point person (the Site PI) or in her absence, the back-up (study coordinators). For international media inquiries, the Site PI and study coordinator should contact XXX as well as the PI and clinical monitors.

4. Equipment And Materials

Internal documents (not to be distributed outside the study team and Community Advisory Board [CAB]):

- Internal Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about the study
- Tips on how to deal with the media
- Media Call Log Sheet
- Media Visit Log Sheet

External documents (documents that can be distributed to the community):

- Backgrounder on trial
- Frequently Asked Questions about clinical trials

5. Procedures

5.1. Media-Initiated Telephone Calls or Visits

- 5.1.1. When a caller or unexpected visitor asks to speak with someone about the trial, determine whether the person is a member of the media. Ask: "May I have your name and the name of your organization? What is the reason for your call? What is your phone number and your e-mail address?"
- 5.1.2. If the person is from the media, request and write down all the information you can get on the Media Call Log Sheet. Tell the caller that the site PI would be the best person for him or her to talk to. Make sure you have the reporter's phone number and inform him or her that you or the PI will call back shortly (to give the PI time to prepare). The PI should then be reached and should consider whether to accept doing an interview. (In some cases, it may be best to postpone or decline an interview. In some cases, it would be a mistake not to accept an interview. Seek advice if in doubt.)

Call the reporter back to schedule or decline the interview.
- 5.1.3. If the PI is unavailable, connect the reporter to the PI's designee while informing the designee that you are doing so. The PI or spokesperson should always have background information on the reporter's request and consider the advisability of discussing the trial at that time before scheduling the interview. If the reporter is unknown to the spokesperson, inquire among colleagues about the reporter's reputation for fairness, or Google the reporter's name to get a sense of his or her knowledge of research, accuracy and tone, and attitudes toward HIV prevention trials. If the reporter has a reputation for inaccuracy, it is best to conduct the interview by e-mail so that quotes cannot be distorted. The PI or spokesperson can say, "I'm busy at the moment but would be happy to answer questions if you send them to me by e-mail."
- 5.1.4. If all the people responsible for media communication are unavailable, please take a message on the Media Call Log Sheet. Ask "When do you need this by?" and assure the reporter that the appropriate person will call back quickly with a response to the request, one way or the other. Inform the media person when he or she should expect to hear from the PI or designee. If the media person is a visitor, schedule an appointment and say that you will call to confirm or reschedule after you have talked to the PI. Be respectful of the reporter's deadline.
- 5.1.5. Call the PI immediately and inform her of the media interest, the topic, and any necessary action. If the PI does not answer, leave a message and call a designee.
- 5.1.6. Send an e-mail copying the PI, the SBC site specialist, the clinical monitors, and the communications point person to inform them of this contact from the media.
- 5.1.7. If the media call or visit needs to be responded to, the PI or designee should return the call within 24 hours and in time for the reporter to meet his or her deadline, whether accepting or declining the interview.
- 5.1.8. Document what has been done (such as call to PI, or e-mails) and the responses received from the PI or designee on the Media Call Log Sheet.

5.2. On-Site Media Visits

- 5.2.1. If an unexpected visitor asks to speak with someone about the trial, follow the steps outlined in section 6.1.
- 5.2.2. If the person is from the media, seat him or her in the staff dining area and inform all staff in the

area that a reporter is visiting. Assign someone to ensure that that the visitor does not communicate with anybody while waiting and does not take photographs of participants without permission. Because of the need to protect the confidentiality of study participants, the reporter must not tour the center during hours of operation.

5.3. Communicating with the Media Off Site

In instances where the community outreach team or any other staff are involved in activities within the community and there are media people present, the following must be done:

- 5.3.1. The preferred procedure is to invite the media staff to visit the center and meet with the PI. If this is not possible, and if the person responsible has received media training, he or she can answer the reporter's questions.
- 5.3.2. If the person responsible is not media trained, he or she must set up an appointment for the reporter to visit the site for full information from the people trained in communicating with the media.
- 5.3.3. Record all necessary details about the reporter: full name, name of the organization, contact details, and the topic of interest or angle of the story.
- 5.3.4. Inform the PI immediately of the media interest, the topic, and any necessary action.
- 5.3.5. Send an e-mail copying the PI to inform him or her of this contact with the media.
- 5.3.6. If the media contact needs to be responded to, the PI or designee should return the call within 24 hours and in time for the reporter to meet his or her deadline.
- 5.3.7. If the media person is persistent about asking you for information, ensure that you give the correct information and do not answer more than what is asked. Get all contact information; ask if this is going to be published, and where and when. Write down everything you say to the reporter media for the records and inform the PI as soon as possible.

5.4. Media Training and Responsibilities

- 5.4.1. People responsible for the above-mentioned procedures need to be adequately trained and frequently updated in media relations and communications. The training will be prepared in advance with the trial sponsor.
- 5.4.2. It is the responsibility of the CEO who is conducting community education or community meetings to know who is in the audience and whether the media is represented at the community meetings or education sessions.
- 5.4.3. It is also the responsibility of the CEO who conducted the community meeting or education session to notify the PC or PI about any media personnel who were present, to record what was said, and to assist in follow-up, including finding out when the information will be published or broadcast and obtaining copies of published articles.
- 5.4.4. Before publication or broadcast, the PI or designee should contact the reporter to offer assistance and any clarification that might be necessary and to reinforce key messages. Also, the PI or spokesperson should follow up by e-mail to clarify in writing any information that the reporter appeared to have difficulty understanding, or to emphasize an important point that may have been missed. The PI or spokesperson should also offer to review a reporter's draft story for technical accuracy to ensure that factual information is disseminated.
- 5.4.5. It is the responsibility of the PI and PC to inform the sponsor about the above-mentioned activities.
- 5.4.6. It is also staff's responsibility to update the FAQs used for community education.

6. Acknowledgment Of Reading And Comprehension Of A Document

SOP Title: Media Communication For X Trial

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