**Dos & Don'ts of Interviewing**

**DO keep answers short.** You may do a television interview for 30 minutes, but the average soundbite is 10 to 20 seconds long, so be clear and concise.

**DO communicate your messages.** Answer questions, but don’t be distracted from communicating your messages.

**DO use firsthand examples and descriptive language.** Communicating personal experiences can be dramatic and powerful. Use them as often as possible. Describe an experience with a patient or explain what influenced your position on an issue. Put statistics in meaningful terms, such as "two thirds" instead of "more than 60 percent".

**DO use common terms.** Keep the audience in mind, and speak in terms familiar to them. Avoid medical jargon, such as "prophylaxis," and "present to the emergency department". Don’t use questionable humor (self-effacing humor is best), profanity, or any kind of derogatory language.

**DO pause before answering.** Take a brief moment to consider your response. Even for radio and television, this pause will seem thoughtful and natural.

**DO answer the questions.** It's best to answer even tough questions, or your credibility with the audience may be damaged. But remember, you're not obligated to agree to the interviewer’s statements, and your mission is to deliver your messages.

**DO take the high ground.** Always respond in a positive way, and turn negative questions or comments into positive statements. Reporters often will ask a negative question or plant a buzzword in a question to get you to repeat it, if only in denial. This makes for colorful quotes. Always respond by answering with positive statements and replacing objectionable words with more acceptable terms. For example:

**DO question facts, if necessary.** If confronted with findings or statistics you’re not familiar with or you believe may be incorrect, say, "I'm not familiar with those statistics so I really can't comment on that matter" or "based on [cite other statistics], the most important thing to remember is [statement that communicates your message]". If asked, for example, about a report you haven’t read, be sure and say so, but use the question as an opportunity to communicate your messages.

**DO use body language effectively.** Studies show that voice inflection and body language are even more important than the words themselves when it comes to how messages are received.

**DON'T ramble.** Reporters often wait before asking their next question to encourage you to keep talking. Deliver your message concisely then stop talking and wait for the next question. Become comfortable with silence.

**DON'T discuss hypothetical situations or unfamiliar matters.** If asked about a situation or case of which you have incomplete information, or about a hypothetical situation, respond by discussing the issue instead. Say, "I can't respond to hypothetical situations, but if you’re asking about the issue of [state the issue], it’s clear that [state your message]".

**DON'T argue or interrupt.** You don't have to agree, but don’t argue either. And don't interrupt. Other guests are another matter. You may need to jump in when another guest is talking to correct misinformation or to comment.

**DON’T lose your temper.** You can tell a reporter you prefer not to comment (explain why), but never get angry. In taped interviews especially, viewers may see only your angry response and not hear the question that prompted it.

**DON'T lie or bluff.** If you don't know an answer, say so. You can damage your credibility by speculating incorrectly. If you should know the answer but don't, offer to research the answer, and then be sure to follow up.