

How to schedule and prepare for a TV appearance

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The idea of being on camera for most of us is anxiety-provoking, unless you are the rare bird that likes to mug up for the camera. The vast majority of us have a fear of public speaking, but much of this fear can be dissolved with practice and preparation. What follows are some practical tips for the dermatologist in how to get and stay involved with the media.

Dr. Palm



What do media outlets look for in an 'ideal' medical expert?

Here is the collective response from myself, and a host of experts including the following panel:

- Leslie Marcus, producer at CBC nationally-syndicated show "The Doctors"
- Alexis DelChiaro, TV anchor and host of "Today in L.A."
- Marsheila De Van, communication specialist & consultant
- **Bretton Holmes, president of Holmes World Media, Inc. — PR specialist**
- Jeff Fischer, managing partner of LMA Worldwide

1. Concise communicator

- Convey information in simple, relatable terms;
- Use layman's terms and avoid medical jargon when speaking to the interviewer;
- Avoid "medical jargon" and too much medical jargon — think of explaining this to a non-expert and find easy to understand analogies for complex topics.

2. Clear communicator

- Try to answer a question with a succinct "sound bite." This is typically accomplished in one to three sentences.
- Avoid the "knowledge curse" such as rambling on and providing excessive information. This loses the audience and creates difficulties for the anchor and editing team.
- Vary your vocal intonation. Use changes and variations in voice, pitch, and volume to create vocal dynamics and maintain the attention of your audience.

3. Endearing personality

- Be yourself and let your personality shine through.
- Producers and booking agents are looking for medical experts that make a connection to the viewing audience. Having charisma, a good sense of humor, and engaging with the on-air talent all weigh in your favor.

4. Expertise and reliability

- TV stations want to engage the leading experts in their field. However, a ho-hum, dull expert will be trumped by a more dynamic guest.
- Remember that you are the expert! By far you are the individual in the room or on the show that has the most information on the topic at hand so share it willingly and confidently.
- Being readily available, even at the last minute, solidifies the relationship between an expert and the media.

5. Visual aids and props

- Nothing is more boring than staring at two people talk. Dermatology is inherently a visual field so use this quality to your advantage.
- Engage the many tools we use in our practices such as a dermatoscope, laser devices, or sunscreen bottles to engage the viewing audience and create visual interest.

Next: How do you book and prepare for a TV appearance?

How to book and prepare for a TV appearance

Being selected for an on-air segment can be tricky. Many successful physicians use professional help, i.e., a PR agency. These specialists' job is to make and maintain connections with the media and put you in front of them.

However, with some persistence, a dermatologist can successfully engage the media. Dedication and time are needed. Continual, varied and frequent communication with booking agents, producers, anchors, and reporters are required, and gaining these contacts take time. Short, brief emails are helpful, as are press releases and electronic links to recent video coverage of your self.

Preparation is key for a successful outcome during a TV interview. Get all of the specifics on the interview:

- What type of interview is it?
- What is the length of the interview?
- Who is interviewing me?
- What questions will be asked?
- How do I fit into the story and how am I likely to appear in it?
- What should I bring to the interview (patient, props/visuals, white coat)?
- When and where should I arrive?
- What are the wardrobe/makeup expectations?

Next: How do you act on camera?

How do I act on camera?

The following tips are generalized but serve the majority of media interactions.

- Breathe ... and have fun!
- Look at the interviewer, not the camera.
- Do not interrupt the interviewer and answer in a complete but succinct manner.
- Infuse your own personality into the interview.
- Be expressive and you may use hand gestures, but keep them safely within a rectangle formed from your shoulders to your waist.
- Make effective use of visual aids — you may need to simultaneously demonstrate a procedure while explaining it.
- If things don't go according to plans, wing it. Stay calm, cool and collected.

Next: How do you salvage an interview going south?

What happens if the interview is going poorly?

It is rare that an interviewer is adversarial — the vast majority of anchors and reporters want a great story and this relies on the cooperation of the interviewee (you).

If you are caught in a situation in which the interviewer is mean-spirited, off-topic, or leading you into uncomfortable territory, remember a few simple tips.

- Pivot the topic back to your key message — you can redirect this during your response to their question.
- Ask for clarification of their question by repeating it back to them
- If you do not know the answer to the question, say that. Do not try to make an educated guess.
- Address the interviewer by their first name if a negative attack occurs
- Stay calm and do not get angry, respond in a polite manner.

Next: Best practices for follow up

Follow-up after an on-camera appearance

It is important to always be respectful to the media. Here is an abbreviated list of best practices for follow-up following a media appearance:

- Thank the interviewer for their time and thank all staff.
- Send follow-up correspondence such as a short email to the segment producer thanking them for the opportunity. Try to weave in an additional story item for future appearances.
- Obtain clips from the media appearance to build out the press section of your website or YouTube channel. These clips can also serve as portions of your sizzle reel if you trying to capture the attention of regional or national outlets.

More on how to be media savvy:

- [Media training 101: Teaming with reporters and giving them what they need](#)
- [How to benefit from media exposure](#)
- [Become a resource for your local media outlets](#)



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