

# Beating the Media Crush During a Crisis

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Upon completion of the activity, participants should be able to

- ▶ Identify the role of the media relations during a crisis
- ▶ Describe steps needed to ensure internal communication during a crisis
- ▶ Explore strategies for preparing staff to communicate with external media outlets
- ▶ Discuss tactics for managing external communication and media requests during a crisis

# Internal Communication

# Planning

- ▶ Planning started a month before 1<sup>st</sup> patient
- ▶ Communication team included in leadership meeting
- ▶ Honest, open and transparent with staff
- ▶ Parallel with external communications
- ▶ Information to staff before reading online or seeing it on the news

# Patient Arrival

- ▶ Before patient left Africa, four important communication pieces
- ▶ Letter to patients
- ▶ Q & A document distributed
- ▶ Memo emailed from leadership
- ▶ Management talking points
- ▶ Updates in internal newsletters and weekly emails

# Results

- ▶ Favorable internal response
- ▶ Sense of pride in organization
- ▶ Patient confidentiality
- ▶ No one asking to be transferred
- ▶ Hospital volumes at all-time highs
- ▶ What is internal is external

# External Communication

# Brief Overview

- ▶ Cared For Three Patients With Ebola



- ▶ Hundreds of interview requests
- ▶ Nearly 60,000 mentions online, on-air and in print
- ▶ Print and broadcast audience approaching 1 billion people



# Brief Overview

- ▶ National and local networks camped out on campus for days at a time
- ▶ Intense media rush happening virtually around the clock for weeks



# Brief Overview

- ▶ Two days before the arrival of our first patient, Dr. Rick Sacra, we made a decision that was crucial to the success of our communication plan:

# Brief Overview

- ▶ A singular point of contact for ALL things related to Ebola



# Crisis Communication History

- ▶ Culture of “proactivity” is key to success
- ▶ If that isn’t your way, the cultural revolution must start now
- ▶ Leadership involves us in crucial communication decisions
- ▶ They don’t just involve us, they take our advice
- ▶ Because leadership trusts us, others do as well
- ▶ Internal communication informed others I was sole contact



# Preparing Your People

- ▶ Culture again, is key
- ▶ Virtually all of our experts had already done extensive media interviews
- ▶ Infectious diseases specialists have been in front of cameras for years
- ▶ A TV station with a large viewing audience calls and asks to interview someone about hand washing – we say yes

# Preparing Your People

- ▶ A TV station with virtually no viewing audience calls and asks our lab to test cell phones for strange bacteria, we say yes
- ▶ A newspaper calls and asks to see our disinfecting robot we say yes
- ▶ A radio station calls to interview someone about STDs, we say yes

# Selecting The Best Spokesperson

- ▶ It takes the entire team – media burnout is very real
- ▶ Know your team's strengths and areas of expertise
- ▶ Recruit as many people as possible
- ▶ Requests will be relentless, you must prioritize quickly
- ▶ The best spokesperson isn't always the head of the department

# Prioritizing The Flood Of Requests

- ▶ Calls, texts and emails come by the dozens
- ▶ Triage their importance with a running list of who, what and when
- ▶ Have an established list of who is available
- ▶ Firm grasp of technology to execute your plan
- ▶ Don't forget local media

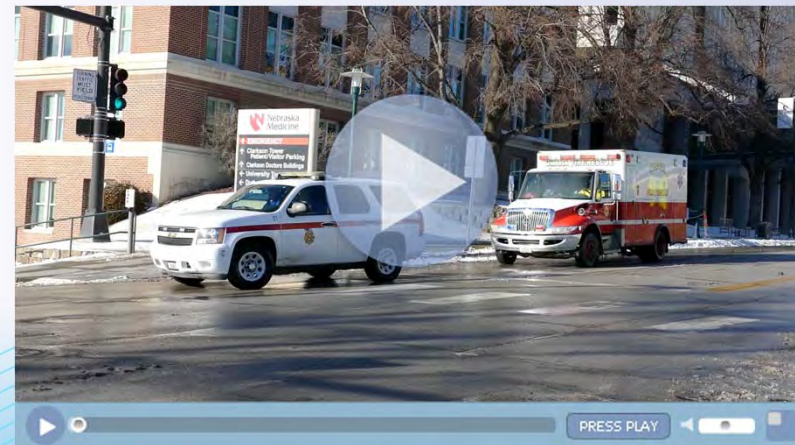
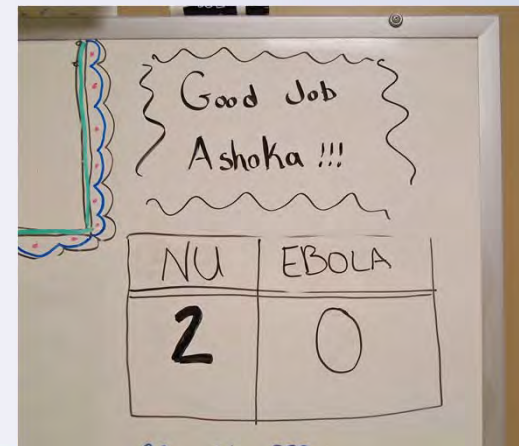


# What Your Experts Need To Know

- ▶ Proactivity is a must
- ▶ Saying “no comment today” is not an option
- ▶ Putting your head in the sand is the worst possible option
- ▶ You **MUST BE AVAILABLE** and willing to provide updated information according to the daily media appetite

# What Do Journalists Want?

- ▶ ANYTHING new
- ▶ Readily available content
- ▶ Anything that seems like insider information
- ▶ Exclusive interviews



# Answering The Tough Questions

- ▶ Physical and emotional closeness to experts is important
- ▶ It's ok to say "I don't know."
- ▶ It's ok to say "I can't share that information right now."
- ▶ Culture of transparency establishes goodwill



# Creating The Right Messages

- ▶ Contingency plans are a must
- ▶ Not just close to experts, but close to patients/families
- ▶ Rapid vetting of messages among team members
- ▶ Frequency/relevance of messaging



# Tips For Mock Interviews

- ▶ Think like a reporter
- ▶ Brevity is beautiful
- ▶ Compassion is king
- ▶ Practice sessions

# How To Fail In The Spotlight

- ▶ Start crafting the message when the questions come
- ▶ Have no one available to answer questions
- ▶ Omit important details in media releases
- ▶ Fail to respond in a timely fashion

# Take-Home Points

- ▶ Create a culture of proactivity and prepare your people
- ▶ Open, honest, and transparent communication internally and externally is key
- ▶ Identify a singular point of contact for all external communications
- ▶ Communicate who that point of contact is to internal staff and the media
- ▶ Select the best spokesperson for the job
- ▶ Be available and able to provide daily media updates