PUBLIC RELATIONS GUIDELINES

Now that you have purchased your new Cutera Aesthetic System, how will you share the news and draw more patients through your door? The answer is PUBLIC RELATIONS.

By getting the word out to the public about this great new service, you can gain visibility in your community and increase patient awareness – ultimately leading to more business.

Following is an outline or “how to” guide to help your practice and new Cutera procedures get noticed in your community.

What is Public Relations and how does it work?

People get confused about the difference between public relations and advertising. They are both meant to reach the public with your message, but public relations influences the public without any paid advertising dollars. Your creativity and determination are very often the only limits to your PR efforts. When an article or news piece is written that mentions your practice, the public reads this as an endorsement by the publication. One single sentence from the pen of a respected beauty editor or journalist means more to the consumer than any advertisement ever will. **Unlike advertising, PR is:**

- Free editorial space
- Perceived as “fact”
- Attention grabbing
- Unbiased
- Third party
- Filtered by the media
- Subtle
- Newsworthy enough to merit space

DETERMINING PUBLIC RELATIONS POSITIONING

Since public relations is “subtle,” your approach doesn’t always have to be direct like an ad. In the absence of advertising imagery, public relations can create a very powerful message for your practice through the news media.
CREATING YOUR OWN PR PROGRAM

Every day, most people read the paper, watch TV and listen to the radio. All of these “media outlets” are a great source of information. Think about your commute to work or the drive across town – you’re pretty much a captive listener – particularly to news pieces or interviews. As they relate to public relations, these media outlets are a great source for your positive public relations message. Media relations – the art of delivering your message to the media – is one of the most effective public relations tools.

You may not be aware that most of what you read in the newspaper, what you see on television and what you hear on the radio is a result of public relations activities. Editors, producers and news directors rely on public relations professionals for valuable, newsworthy information.

Even if you think you have great information to share with the public, keep in mind you’re competing for coverage with all other companies and organizations in your area who feel just as strongly that their “news” should be reported. The best way to secure media attention is to create materials and activities that will really stand out and separate you from others in your area.

Following are tips on media relations tools you can use to go after and secure media coverage for your clinic. These tools include:

- Press releases
- Media advisories
- Media lists
- Photography

Press Releases

The press release is probably the most commonly used PR tool when working with the media. It’s a news piece used to announce the arrival of a hot new product or technology, a milestone accomplishment, special promotion, or any other news that would be of interest to the general public, such as trends for the season.

To help you get started, we’ve created a template release— all you have to do is fill in the blanks. This release should give you a good sense of what your future press releases should look like. Remember, you’re promoting your business, so be professional: check spelling, accuracy of stated facts, formatting, names, dates, etc.

Here are a few guidelines to think about for your materials.

When crafting your own press releases remember to:

1. Get to the point! Summarize the story in the first paragraph including the “who, what, where, why and how.” It’s so important that your information is written in a clear, concise and accurate manner. Reporters are usually crunched for time and often read only the first paragraph, so be sure to include the most pertinent information in the lead. Think about writing an interesting fact or statistic for the first line.

2. Start all releases with a “dateline” which includes the date, city and state.

3. Be sure to print “For Immediate Release” on the top of the release. If you’re sending out the release before you want the news to be announced, simply...
replace “For Immediate Release” with “For Release On” and include the date and time.

4. Put the release on your professional letterhead and include a contact name and phone number at the top for further information. Reporters will often call to confirm facts and figures, or may want to arrange an interview with you.

5. Double space copy so that it’s easy for journalists to read and edit. Try to keep press releases to a maximum of two or three pages.

6. Include before and after photos with the release. A dramatic photo is still worth a thousand words to demonstrate the effectiveness of your cosmetic procedures.

7. Can you relate your news to a larger story? Many times, reporters will avoid ‘soft news’ from a company if it’s too commercial. If you can tie in your news with a trend or a larger story, try to do so. You’ll have an increased chance of coverage if the news is relevant or timely. Some examples are anti-aging stories, new technology stories, getting in shape for summer stories, preparing for the holidays stories, etc.

**Media Advisories**

A media advisory is an invitation to the press to cover your clinic or cosmetic procedures. You can invite a news crew to come to your office for a demonstration of the procedure. Please note it is critical to have a willing patient – someone who has agreed to go on camera and speak to the media. Choose a patient who has already been treated and has good before and after photos. You should have before and after photos, demonstrating the progress the patient has made and then you can demonstrate the actual procedure being performed.

Follow these steps to create the ideal media advisory:

1. Keep the media advisory to one page. Detail the “who, what, where, when and why” in an outline form.

2. Television is a visual medium. Explain what the visual opportunities will be during the demonstration with the patient.

3. Follow up with journalists after sending out the media advisory. If they agree to do a segment, make sure to confirm the day before and even again the day of the demonstration. “Breaking news” often interrupts previously scheduled stories.

**Creating Media Lists**

The turn-over rate in the media is astounding! The reporter you contact one month may have left the next. An updated media list is so important if you want your news to be covered. By following these guidelines, you should be able to keep your lists as current and precise as possible.
1. Your media lists should include all types of media outlets – daily and weekly newspapers, consumer and trade magazines, and television and radio stations. So think about the different media outlets your patients (and potential patients) read, watch and listen to. These are the media contacts you need.

2. Be sure to call all local media outlets to inquire which reporter should receive the release and/or advisory. Be prepared to explain what you’re calling about in a short sentence. For example: “I’m calling about a brand new medical technology.” This information is not meant to put you on the spot, but rather to help get your news to the right person. Make sure you have the correct spelling, phone, fax and email.

3. Media list entries should include the following information:
   - Contact name
   - Title
   - Address
   - Phone/Fax number
   - Email addresses

4. Be sure to update your media list regularly.

5. Tailor your list accordingly for each mailing. Don’t send a medical technology story to the entertainment editor. In most cases, you should focus on medical/health editors, features editors, and lifestyle editors.

6. When sending materials, you should not send information to more than one media contact at the same publication or station. If this is necessary, include a note stating the name of the other people who also received the information.

7. When possible check with the editor/producer to find out how they prefer to receive information – e-mail, fax, phone or mail. Many tend to prefer e-mail these days, however, many television newsrooms still prefer faxes.
Lead Times

There are a variety of lead times for each type of media outlet. The lead time is the amount of time an outlet needs before production. For example, a national magazine like Glamour has a 3-4 month lead time. This means that if the month is January, the magazine is most likely working on its April issue. Here’s a general rule of thumb about lead times (but you should always try to ask a reporter what issue he or she is working on)

*M Moonthly magazines:*  3-6 months

*Daily papers:*  Non-breaking news, 3-4 weeks.
                  Business news, up to the day before print (if it’s a major story)

*Radio:*  1-2 weeks

*TV:*  1 month to get on the schedule;
       Always call the morning of your scheduled segment to re-confirm

Effective Photography

Again, photos are very effective in garnering coverage of new medical breakthroughs. Be sure to take before and after photos of a patient to submit to the media to generate interest. In addition to having print photos, they should be available digitally (j-peg 300 dpi at least).
General Rules of Media Contact

1. Don’t get discouraged if a reporter doesn’t have time to talk to you. Remember, you’re in competition with quite a few other companies and you may also be interrupting a reporter when he/she’s on deadline. Find out reporters’ deadlines and don’t call during crunch time. Ask reporters how they prefer to receive information – via e-mail, fax or mail and try to follow their wishes.

2. Give media a reasonable amount of notice before an event. Once you’ve sent your materials, it is appropriate to follow up by phone to offer additional information. However, don’t “hound” the reporter by calling too often or leaving multiple messages.

3. Do not fax press materials unless a reporter specifically requests information that way. A newspaper’s fax machine is overflowing with press material. Yours will get lost.

4. As a general rule, avoid calling daily newspapers after 3 p.m. This is usually their “deadline” time. Avoid calling weekly newspapers on Thursdays, as this is typically deadline day.

5. It is unprofessional to offer gifts or incentives to reporters. You can offer services or products for their professional review – you can invite the beauty editor or producer to try the procedure.

6. Provide a personal experience for beauty reporters by offering them a complimentary treatment so they can get firsthand experience. Be sure the reporter understands when she/he may expect to see results since some procedures (like skin rejuvenation) offer results over time.

7. Learn your media outlets. If you read the paper or listen to the radio, you will have a better understanding about what type of information will work and what won’t.

8. Establish a good working relationship with local news media contacts at newspapers, magazines, television and radio stations. As a result, you may be used as a reliable source on appropriate medical/health issues.

9. Return calls promptly
General Do’s and Don’t’s When Being Interviewed

Reporters who cover your story rely on an interview to give them the news they need to create their report. Reporters view you as a source of information for a story and rely on quotations and explanations of the topic during the course of the interview. The following tips can help you prepare:

1. **Do** give your main point first in a concise, positive, complete sentence. Just because there is “dead air,” you don’t have to say anything. Keep it short and simple.

2. **Do** tell the truth.

3. **Do** be accessible – reporters have deadlines. If a reporter is interested, make sure you call back as soon as possible. If you need to get back to him with more information, ask when he needs it by.

4. **Do** use the name of the procedure (i.e., the Titan Procedure, Laser Genesis) whenever possible so patients know what to ask for if they call.

5. **Try to keep your answers brief for radio or TV.** The media is looking for “soundbites” and if you go on for too long, they might not be able to find a good place to shorten your answer.

6. **Do** keep your composure. Remember that you know more about the your cosmetic procedures than they do. You’re the expert!

7. **Do** inject humor into your answers where appropriate.

8. **Do** thank the reporter after the interview.

9. **Do** inquire when the story will appear in print or on air. Be sure to send a thank you to the reporter once it appears.

10. **Don’t** say anything you don’t want printed – nothing is ever “off the record.”

11. **Don’t** ramble on or go off on a tangent.

12. **Don’t** say “no comment.” Instead, say “I don’t have that information right now” and offer to get back to them promptly with exactly what they need.