

## The art (and science) of writing a great press release to attract new patients

You've been invited to deliver a keynote address at an important conference. Your practice has been voted "Best Plastic Surgery." You've released a signature line of anti-aging skincare products. Of course you want people to know... but if you want to reach an audience beyond your subscriber list and social media followers, you'll need a press release.

You can hire a marketing agency to write press releases for you, but where's the challenge in that?

Press releases are deceptively simple, but not extremely difficult. They must be short, but not too short, or too long. They must contain exactly the right amount of information, no less and no more. Above all, they must attract the interest of news outlets, who may want more information about your announcement. A good press release will answer basic questions, but a great press release can result in an invitation.

More visibility for you means more new patients for your practice.

Every great press release needs a good headline. A dry statement of fact ("Local Plastic Surgeon Offers New Procedure") is boring, but short details that include your unique selling proposition ("Seoul's Best-Known Eyelid Specialist Becomes First to Offer New Treatment") make it clear to the reader why this news is worthy of their interest. If you are writing a press release for email, do this with the subject line as well. Also, keep in mind that press releases have their own unique format, different from other kinds of writing. There are many samples to be found on the internet; a quick search should return plenty of examples.

Don't keep the reader waiting – get to the point right away. Journalists are some of the busiest people in the world, and they don't have time to read past the first sentence if it doesn't catch their interest. All questions of who, what, where, when and why must be answered in the first paragraph. The rest of the press release (typically one page) is where you can include supporting information and details, such as numerical data or quotations from reputable authorities. People are more inclined to trust you when you show proof of your claims. Provide additional resources for people to learn more, such as hyperlinks links to relevant websites and images. And of course, don't forget to include your own contact information – phone number, email, website, social media accounts – or that of your designated public relations staff member.

It's always best to keep each paragraph short and focused on a single piece of information. Using headers to break the press release into sections is also a good strategy. Whatever you do, don't submit a single long, unbroken paragraph – no one wants to read that!

Finally, once you've written your press release, print it out (even if it will be sent electronically) and proofread it. You *are far less likely* to be able to catch as many errors if you read it directly from your computer screen; it's important to hold a copy in your hands in order to see it with fresh eyes. Have someone else read it, checking not just for errors but also for clarity and

accuracy. If you've delegated a staff member to write press releases, explain the importance of letting others read them carefully before sending them out.

If you have hired a marketing consultant, he or she should have a list of media contacts who will be interested in your press release, targeting different outlets depending on the subject. Or if you've designated one of your own practice's staff as a Media Contact, that person should also compile such a list, and stay in regular contact with each of them. Keeping this list organized and up to date is essential to making sure your press release eventually finds its way to the people who most want to read what you have to say.