

**VA**



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# Public Relations: Controlling the Narrative and Publicizing your Program

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# VA COMMERCIALS ON RESEARCH AND ITS ROLE

- *For more than 95 years, VA's Research and Development program has been improving the lives of Veterans and all Americans through health care discovery and innovation*
- *A majority of VA researchers also provide direct patient care within the VA system, giving them firsthand insight into Veterans' health needs*
- *VA Research fosters dynamic collaborations with its university partners, other federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, and private industry—thus furthering the program's impact on the health of Veterans and the nation*
- *VA researchers developed the pacemaker, pioneered liver transplants and developed the nicotine patch. The VA and its researchers provided key evidence demonstrating the link between smoking and lung cancer, used in the Surgeon General's landmark 1964 report.*
- *Through the years, three VA researchers have won the Nobel Prize for medicine (Andrew Schally; Rosalyn Yalow; Ferid Murad)*



## TIPS: AT THE “MACRO” LEVEL

- Work to build a relationship with your local public affairs team.
  - Keep them informed regularly of developments
  - Listen carefully to their feedback on what can sell to external audiences
  - Think about all the audiences that should know (hospital staff; Veterans; community groups)
  - Consider the many channels they may be able to use:
    - Print and broadcast
    - Social media
    - Internal and external newsletters, especially their local Veteran community
- Use illustrations/anecdotes to “humanize” and make your research concrete, even PAOs may need help to understand.
- Remember that they can help make sure the staff of the hospital knows about research and further extend the reach to Veterans using your VAMC.



# QUESTIONS

*For public affairs advice and assistance:*

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## TIPS: AT THE “MICRO” LEVEL

- Finding the right language:
  - Associated Press style vs. language for a scientific journal
  - Avoid jargon or technical language as much as possible.
  - Being concise and avoiding too much detail is key to public affairs products
- Understand media timelines (3 or 4 days may be too late)
- Invite your public affairs officer (PAO) to a meet with your staff and researchers to let them tell you how they work best.
- If your researchers get approached by the media, the procedure is to get the PAO involved **BEFORE** engaging.