



Media Matters! Tips on working with the media from Diane Cowen, Health Section Editor for the Houston Chronicle.

Accept (Some) Rejection and be Persistent: Don't take it personally if a reporter or editors says "Thanks, but no thanks." It doesn't mean your story can't ever be told. It just means that the timing isn't good. What an editor will assign to a reporter often depends on seasonal issues, what's in the news and what trends are capturing the imagination. If rejected, call that editor or reporter again in six months.

Provide Context: This is probably the biggest obstacle to a lesser-known illness such as PH. Cancer and heart disease, for example, get lots of attention. But don't let that get in your way. Don't just put your topic out there, sell your story by making it relevant to what's going on in the health care world. Provide context within larger topics and you might be able to get your foot in the door.

Be a News Consumer: If you don't know who to call at a newspaper or TV station, call the person on air or in a print byline whose work you admire. It's incredibly flattering to be a reporter who gets a call from someone who says "I really like the work you do and I'd be honored if you could tell my story, too."

Think of Angles: Don't just make a random call to an editor because you have a phone number. Look a newspaper over and think about how your story can fit into what they're already doing. Are you a local personality to be featured in a neighborhood news section? Are you part of an unfolding science-research story? Are you about personal health? Are you a senior citizen? Many papers have specific features, beats or sections devoted to these niches. Watch the paper and, over time, you'll figure out where your story could fall.

Be Confident: If you're a presidential candidate or a corrupt CEO, reporters are likely going to come at you with a full set of teeth. But that's not who YOU are. You're a regular person with a personal health story to tell. The kind of health and medical or feature writers who would interview you come into the process wanting you to do well. Remember that.

Be Yourself: Stay relaxed, provide honest answers and help fill in the blanks if you think a reporter hasn't asked enough questions. There's nothing wrong with saying "I have more information if you'd like to see or hear it." Most reporters will appreciate that you help us do our homework.

For more information about raising awareness with PHAware, contact Nathan at 301-565-3004 or Nathan@PHAssociation.org