MONTEFIORIE MEDICAL CENTER
The University Hospital for the
Albert Einstein College of Medicine

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

SUBJECT: MONTEFIORIE MEDIA POLICY
NUMBER: JP35.1

OWNER: PUBLIC RELATIONS

EFFECTIVE DATE: 12/1/72 (P-29)
SUPERSEDES: 5/21/85, 8/1/78

Policy:

It is Montefiore Medical Center policy that all news media requests and inquiries must be referred to, and be coordinated by, the Public Relations office, in order to:

- Increase general awareness, understanding and support for Montefiore Medical Center, its people, policies, programs and mission;
- Insure that information shared with the media is disseminated in an accurate, timely and consistent manner; and,
- Protect the confidentiality of patients and their families, and help preserve a professional medical environment.

When the media calls...

If the media, on any matter concerning the medical center, its staff, patients, services or programs, contacts a Montefiore associate, the reporter or caller should be referred to Public Relations before any statements are made. A member of the Public Relations staff (on call, 24/7) will work with appropriate contacts throughout the medical center (and with the associate if relevant) in preparing an appropriate response.

Should an associate speak at an off-site conference or event with media present, Public Relations should be alerted as soon as possible so the PR staff might help fact-check, track any resulting story and add value.

How can I contact someone in Public Relations?
The Public Relations office is located at 3411 Wayne Avenue, 1st floor, and usually is staffed from 7:30 AM to 7:00 PM, Monday through Friday. A public relations professional is available on call, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and can be reached after hours through the page operator at 718-920-8282 or 920-4011.
What about media calls to the Emergency Department?
After 5:00 PM on weekdays and on weekends, any media requests made directly to staff in the ED should be referred to either the Administrator-on-Call or the Administrative Duty Nurse, who will contact the Public Relations representative on-call.

If you see cameras or media on-site anywhere at MMC
It is MMC policy that a public relations representative must accompany members of the media at all times while inside the medical center. If you see unaccompanied reporters, TV cameras or photographers, please contact security immediately at extension 5668 with a description and location. Security will secure the premises and notify Public Relations. Nurse managers and others should restrict photography in the hospital by staff and/or visitors, as appropriate.

There are limits to what PR can say.
Information about a patient’s general condition, inpatient, outpatient, or emergency department may be released by Public Relations to the media only if the inquiry specifically identifies the patient by name. No information may be given if a request does not include a specific patient’s name or if the patient requests that the information not be released. This includes patients brought to the hospital by the police and fire departments.

Guidelines used by PR in relating patient conditions
As long as a patient has not requested that information be withheld, PR may release the patient’s one-word condition, based on a medical determination of one of the following:

- Undetermined. Patient is awaiting physician and/or assessment.
- Good. Vital signs are stable and within normal limits. Patient is conscious and comfortable. Indicators are excellent.
- Fair. Vital signs are stable and within normal limits. Patient is conscious, but may be uncomfortable. Indicators are favorable.
- Serious. Vital Signs may be unstable and not within normal limits. Patient is acutely ill. Indicators are questionable.
- Critical. Vital signs are unstable and not within normal limits. Patient may be unconscious. Indicators are unfavorable.
- Death. If a patient has not specifically prohibited information from being given out, the PR representative for MMC may respond to the media that the patient has died, but may not provide the media with the date, time or cause of death. Authorization must be obtained from a personal representative of the deceased before any additional information about a deceased patient may be released.
- Location. A patient’s location in the hospital will never be given to the media. The fact that the person has been treated and released or discharged may be released to the media, but only if the patient is asked for by name. We will never disclose when, or to where, a patient has been released.

Procedures for media consent forms
Photographs. Permission for the media to photograph a patient may be given only if:
1. the doctor considers that the patient’s condition will not be jeopardized;
2. the patient is willing to be photographed and gives permission in writing; and,
3. in the case of a minor, the parents or legal guardian give their written consent.

Interviews. Reporters may be permitted to interview a patient if:
1. the patient is willing to be interviewed; and,
2. in the physician’s opinion, the patient’s condition permits.
For all patients, permission to interview or photograph must be given by using the MMC Legal Department-approved media consent form before any questions are asked, or film, videotape or still cameras are used.

The bottom line
Although the media can be a valuable ally in telling important medical stories, the well being of our patients and the preservation of a professional medical environment at Montefiore Medical Center is paramount. It is the responsibility of the Office of Public Relations to insure that reporters’ requests will never be permitted to interrupt or interfere with the care of a patient or the safe operation of the medical center.