

Reliance on medical journals, deadlines can predict journalists' attitudes toward press releases

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Public relations professionals constantly look for ways to most effectively promote their messages to the media. Sun-A Park, a researcher at the University of Missouri School of Journalism surveyed more than 300 health journalists and found that those who cover strokes and stroke prevention tend to hold negative views of corporate pharmacy media relations, while those who regularly read medical journals tend to cover more stories based on corporate press releases. Park says one key factor influencing journalists' attitudes concerning corporate media press releases is the specific health topics they cover.

"Not many public relations campaigns are devoted to stroke and stroke prevention, which would help explain the low public recognition of strokes," Park said. "So health journalists who write about strokes are not accustomed to receiving public relations materials and thus are uncomfortable with the topic."

Park also found that the more frequently health journalists read other newspapers and medical journals, the more open they are to covering stories based on press releases. Park says if journalists already depend on other media sources to help decide what is newsworthy, this habit could extend to public relations press releases as well. She also thinks deadline pressure can play a role.

"Journalists are often under deadline pressure; and if they routinely read

medical journals for story ideas, they develop a willingness to use sources that help simplify complex and difficult health topics for a broad audience," Park said. "Thus, health journalists who read medical journals are more receptive to using corporate pharmacy press releases in order to meet deadlines and help general news audiences to better understand the information."

Park's study also revealed that [health journalists](#) who serve a metropolitan audience rather than those who serve national or small community audiences, are more likely to have positive attitudes toward corporate pharmacy media relations. Park recommends that corporate pharmacy public relations professionals target these specific journalists with their press releases in order to be most efficient and effective with their efforts.

More information: The study was published in *PRism*, a public relations journal.

Provided by University of Missouri-Columbia

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