

<b>Manual</b>	<b>CORPORATE POLICY AND PROCEDURE</b>		<b>POLICY</b>
Section	Communications & Public Affairs		
<b>Title</b>	MEDIA RELATIONS		
Issuing Body/ Prepared By	Chief, Communications & Public Affairs		
Approved by	Chief, Communications & Public Affairs		<b>Number:</b> COR-COMPA-A-5.20
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**[Incorporates former News Releases issued to the Media (5.20), Media Request for Patient Condition (5.30) and Media Relations (5.120)]**

**POLICY:**

All media inquiries are to be directed to the Communications & Public Affairs Department. This includes media requests for patient conditions, interviews, and on-site visits of any nature. Designated spokespersons will be assigned to respond to the media.

**DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSON**

The following individuals are the designated spokesperson for the following matters:

- Board/Governance Issues: Board Chair
- Corporate/Organization Issues: president / CEO or Chief, Communications & public Affairs
- Physician Issues: Chief of Professional Staff

The Communications & Public Affairs Department will also work with the specific department / program to respond to matters related to their areas of responsibility.

**NEWS RELEASES**

All news releases will be issued by the Bluewater Health – Communications & Public Affairs Department with the knowledge and approval of the President/CEO.

The appropriate spokesperson(s) will be identified for each news release issued and identified in writing. Media representatives, either in person or telephone calls, must be referred to those who have been identified as the appropriate spokesperson(s).

When a staff member wishes to contact the media regarding a story idea or special event at any of the three hospitals that form the alliance of the Bluewater health, he/she must consult with the Chief of Communications & Public Affairs, or the President/CEO.

**POLICY:**

Calls regarding enquiries about patients from the media should be directed to the Communications & Public Affairs Department, or if those department personnel are unavailable, calls should be directed to the Shift Manager or Charge Nurse of the unit where the patient is located.

After normal business hours, calls shall be directed to the Shift Manager or Charge Nurse of the unit where the patient is located.

**PROCEDURE:****General Guidelines**

In accordance with the Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA), November 2004, Bluewater Health cannot release patient information without the written consent of the patient, or the patient's substitute decision maker.

When a patient, or the patient's substitute decision maker is asked for consent to provide condition updates to media, this must be noted on the patient's chart, including: date consent denied/approved, time consent denied/approved, hospital staff signature.

Most often, accidents are a matter of public record. Police activities are public and therefore of potential interest to the media. Hospitals may provide the limited patient condition information (as identified under #7 below) to media concerning patients admitted as police/accident cases *with the consent of the patient, or the patient's substitute decision maker.*

The media must provide the patient's full name to obtain the information, They cannot receive any information without a name.

- 1) Establish the media representative's name, affiliation, and telephone number.
- 2) Give your full name, title and affiliation.
- 3) Follow legal and ethical obligations (pursuant to the Code of Conduct for Bluewater Health)
- 4) Be accurate, organized and courteous. If you don't know the answer to a question, inform the reporter that you will find out and call back as soon as possible. If you are not authorized to release certain information, say so.
- 5) If the patient is a prominent citizen, contact the Communications & Public Affairs Department so it can be determined how the patient or patient's family would like patient condition information to be released.
- 6) It is permissible to confirm whether a patient has been admitted, or treated and discharged, or transferred to another health facility (e.g. London Health Sciences Centre).

Key Contact:

References:

- 7) Can use the following condition descriptions:
- a. Good
    - vital signs are stable and within normal limits
    - patient is conscious and comfortable
    - prognosis is either good or excellent
  - b. Fair
    - vital signs within normal limits
    - patient is conscious and may be comfortable
    - may have minor complications
  - c. Serious
    - acutely ill with questionable prognosis
    - vital signs may be unstable or not within normal limits
  - d. Critical
    - questionable prognosis
    - there are major complications and death may be imminent

The **exceptions** are:

- a) No information may be provided without written consent of the patient, or the patient's substitute decision maker
- b) No information may be provided concerning victims of sexual assault
- c) No information may be provided concerning Mental Health patients
- d) No information may be provided without appropriate informed consent concerning persons who are mentally incapacitated

### **Attending Physician**

If the attending physician agrees, his/her name may be provided to media for the purpose of obtaining additional medical information only. It must not be provided without the personal consent of the physician.

### **Births and Deaths**

- Permission to announce any birth must first be obtained by the hospital from the mother.
- In non-police cases of death, the hospital or attending physician is responsible for notifying the next-of-kin (as indicated by the patient) of a patient's death. When this has been done, the hospital spokesperson, with the permission of the next-of-kin, may (if requested by the media) confirm the fact of death. The specific cause of death may not be divulged by the hospital.
- In cases where a death has been, or should be, reported to the Coroner (including deaths resulting from accidents), media enquiries as to the cause of death will be referred to the Coroner's Office.

Key Contact:

References:

**MEDIA ON HOSPITAL PROPERTY:**

MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES ARE REQUIRED TO CONTACT THE Communications & Public Affairs Department to make arrangements to visit any of the hospital sites. Members of the news media must be greeted and escorted by a Communications & Public Affairs Department staff member, or delegate when interviewing or photographing on the hospital premises. Media may make direct inquiries of doctors; however, if media representatives agree to meet doctors on hospital property, they must follow the protocol to make arrangements to visit the hospital sites through the Communications & Public Affairs Department.

**Interviews and Photographs:**

When media representatives request interviews or photographs with a patient on hospital property, Bluewater Health must first obtain written permission from the patient or the patient's substitute decision maker. Patient For #NP 82 C FE 06, Consent for Photographs / Audio and Visual Recording must be signed and kept in the patient's health record chart.

Key Contact:

References: