

UW Medicine Newswriting Guidelines

Communicating with the News Media

UW Medicine communicates with the news media through various digital channels:

- UW Medicine Newsroom website: newsroom.uw.edu/
- UW Medicine Newsroom Twitter : twitter.com/uwmnewsroom
- Email pitches
- News videos :
https://www.youtube.com/user/UWMedicineHealth/videos?view=0&sort=dd&shelf_id=4

We adhere to journalistic standards in our communications with the press, including:

- Accuracy
- Timeliness
- Objectivity
- Fairness
- Newsworthiness
- Clarity
- Consistency
- Reliability
- Public interest
- Transparency

UW Medicine Newsroom

What it is: The [UW Medicine Newsroom](https://newsroom.uw.edu/) is a website that serves as resource for reporters covering health, biomedical research, clinical care, patient stories, health policy, medical education, trending medical issues and other, related topics.

What it does: The Newsroom informs reporters about newsworthy developments at UW Medicine, features experts' commentary on emerging local, national and international health and medical news, and compiles news coverage about UW Medicine.

Who it serves: Journalists, including editors and producers at news media organizations, are the primary audience for the Newsroom. Because a number of members of the UW and UW Medicine community, the general public, elected officials, donors, patients, funding agencies, alumni, medical and scientific societies, business leaders and others are also interested in news emanating from UW Medicine, they are the secondary audience. The site serves UW Medicine by communicating its news to reporters and to this wider community. In so doing it helps foster UW Medicine's reputation, brand awareness, and public support.

UW Medicine Newsroom Content

The main Newsroom's main content types are:

- News releases
- Blog items
- News videos
- News images
- News coverage listings

UW Medicine News Release Editorial Guidelines

Purpose: News releases are created to encourage reporters to cover the story, and to provide the essential information in an interesting, understandable way.

Desk top references:

- Style book: [Associated Press Style Book](#)
- Dictionary: [Merriam-Webster](#)
- Writing guide: [Strunk & White Elements of Style](#)
- UW Medicine Brand Resources: [Editorial Guidelines](#)

News release tone and voice:

- Reportorial
- Informative, precise and accurate
- Concise
- Clear
- Imaginative expression if topic allows
- Straightforward
- Conversational, not academic or pedantic
- Omits jargon
- Objective
- Brief
- Follows standard language usage, spelling and grammar conventions, or breaks the rule intentionally, not sloppily, for a specific effect
- Logical flow and organized structure of information
- Draws in and sustains interest
- Anticipates and answers reporters' key, valid questions, is not coy about disclosable public information
- Quotes judiciously to bring in voice of sources, and their interesting or important comments
- Avoids vacuous, repetitive quotes in attempt to recognize each source
- No hype, institutional self-praise, flattery or flippancy
- Sticks to the point
- Discerning in conveying sensitive information in prepared statements, during a crisis or about patients

News release formatting and mechanics

Issuing instructions:

For immediate release Time Time Zone, Day, Date
Embargoed until Time Time Zone, Day, Date

Examples:

For immediate release 2 p.m. PDT, Wednesday, April 17
Embargoed until 12:01 a.m. PDT. Wednesday, April 17

Headline:

Headlines grab reporters' attention and give the gist of the news.
The tone of the headline should match the subject matter. It can be catchy, or serious, or intriguing or whatever is a good fit.
Headline is limited to 60 characters and spaces.
Use initial capital letter on first word and on proper words; otherwise use lower case
Use a verb or verbal.

Don't use colon constructions, such as:

My life in Des Moines: A study in contrasts

Don't ask a question to wiggle around the answer or to imply what you don't want to say outright:

Is the U.S. in talks with Canada only for the maple syrup?

Don't include obscure acronyms

Medic One transports OHCA patient

Subheadline:

Keep in mind that the subheadline also annotates the headline in the weekly roundup of news releases.

Don't repeat the information in the caption or in the lead.

The subheadline should be under 90 characters and spaces.

News release text:

No dateline.

Lead should briefly summarize the news. Don't start with background information and bury the lead.

Don't cram information into the lead sentence. You should be able to read it aloud in less than one breath. You can always put the details into following sentences.

Try to keep the news release under 600 words.

Do not put degrees after anyone's name. Use degrees after names only in a free-standing table, such as a list of award winners.

Do not use an honorific, such as Dr. or Rev., after the first reference.

Do not capitalize titles after a name.

No boilerplate. Instead, link the name of the organization to its website.

Include grant funding, including grant numbers, at the bottom of the page.

If your news release is about a research paper or report, include a link to the original work.

How to prevent errors in news releases

- Carefully proofread your copy
- Check your content with your sources for accuracy at the level of understanding of the general public.
- Double check all proper names, titles, dates and phone numbers.
- Watch out for these common blunders:

Run on sentences or sentences that are too long.

Sentences that don't stick to a single topic. Dashes should not be used change the subject midway before skipping back to an earlier thought.

Dangling and misplaced modifiers. Words ending in "ing" could be warnings to reword.

Commonly confused words: Led, lead. Breath, breathe.

Prosaic writing with no variation in sentence structure or length, or primer writing in short, choppy, sentences.

Weak quotes or quotes that nobody would believe anyone would say in a conversation.

UW Medicine Blog Editorial Guidelines

- Headlines less than 60 characters and spaces
- Subheadlines less than 90 characters and spaces

- Conversational, casual tone
- Can include personal insights and first-hand or observational experiences
- Can be looser in language, as long as it doesn't sound phony. Make sure you can carry it off.
- Know the difference between causal and sloppy writing. Some of the best casual writing comes from control over the language.
- Please check your facts for accuracy.
- Put your name and contact information at the bottom of the page.

UW Medicine Video Resource Guidelines

- Describe the video in about 75 words.
- If expert are commenting on work done elsewhere, say where the study was conducted and link to the study or reliable news report.
- Check your content for accuracy.

These are general guidelines. For specific questions on newswriting, copyediting, journalism standards, news images, grammar, plain English, and style, please check the suggested references, or consult with one of the UW Medicine media relations office news editors: mediarelations@uw.edu