

AMA Manual of Style

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Release of Information to the Public and Journal/Author Relations With the News Media

Annette Flanagin

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Item type: section

Most people understand science and technology less through direct experience than through the filter of journalism.... Journalists are, in effect, brokers, framing social reality and shaping the public consciousness about science. Dorothy Nelkin Public interest in matters of health and in news about medicine and health is substantial. A telephone survey of 1250 US adults concluded that the majority of citizens consider news coverage of science to be as important as coverage of crime, the economy, politics, sports, and entertainment. Many factors affect science journalism and the communication of scientific information to the public, including poor science literacy among the public;

Release of Information to the Public

Annette Flanagin

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In many ways, biomedical journals and their editors act as gatekeepers for the release of scientific information to their readers as well as to the public. However, conflicts often arise between journal editors (who have an ethical duty to ensure that the information they publish has been appropriately peer reviewed and assessed for quality) and scientists (who want to disseminate their findings as widely and quickly as possible) and between editors and news reporters (who want to deliver information about new scientific developments to their readers as quickly as possible). The announcement of “scientific breakthroughs” at press conferences or through

Expedited Publication and Release of Information Early Online

Annette Flanagin

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Many journals have policies to expedite the evaluation and publication of manuscripts deemed worthy of accelerated dissemination, including release of an article online ahead of its print publication. Editors should use consistent and orderly policies and procedures to identify manuscripts containing such information, expedite the editorial/peer review and publication process, and, if feasible, notify and provide controlled advance access to journalists. |

Embargo

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A news embargo is an agreement between journals and news reporters and their organizations not to report information contained in a manuscript that has been accepted but not yet published until a specified date and time in exchange for advance access to the information. Among medical journals, the embargo system may have been initiated by Morris Fishbein, MD, editor of JAMA between 1924 and 1949. As an example, the standard embargo date and time for JAMA is 3 pm central time on the day before the journal's cover date (issue publication date). Qualified journalists are given early access to the

Suggestions for Authors Interacting With the News Media

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The following recommendations are provided for interactions between authors and the news media.,, # Authors should abide by agreements with journals not to publicize their work while their manuscript describing their work is under consideration or awaiting publication by a journal. If authors have any questions about prior release of such information, they should contact the journal's editorial office., # Authors presenting research at clinical and scientific meetings may discuss their presentations with reporters but should refrain from distributing copies of their presentations, data, tables, or figures (see , Duplicate Publication)., # Authors should inform editors of previous news coverage

News Releases

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prepare the news releases, which are reviewed by the editors to ensure accuracy and objectivity. News releases of journal content should be under the authority of the editor, not the journal's publisher or owner (see also , Editorial Freedom and Integrity). News editors, writers, and producers receive hundreds of news releases a week. Thus, a news release must attract attention, but it also must conform to a familiar format and style .