

## Media Guidelines

### Introduction

As a public institution, Greenville Hospital System University Medical Center (GHS) has an obligation to keep the community informed by providing accurate and timely information to the news media. The following guidelines have been created so that a seamless, continuous and appropriate flow of pertinent information occurs between the hospital system and the community. All communication with the public and the news media will be conducted in compliance with federal and South Carolina law regarding patient confidentiality and will be consistent with the Freedom of Information Act.

### I. Release of information to the media and other members of the public

Anyone may solicit information about Greenville Hospital System, its facilities, programs and operations. The Public Relations office is the first point of contact for requests for interviews or photographs, routine patient condition inquiries during and after business hours and the development of news and feature stories. In every effort to proactively provide timely and accurate information, the following guidelines apply.

#### A. Solicited Information:

##### 1. *Requests for patient conditions*

The Public Relations office is responsible for releasing brief descriptions of condition on inpatients and Emergency Trauma Center patients. This information is released only when the patient's name is provided in full and a consent-to-treat form has been signed by the patient or a family member or verbal consent has been given. More information may be released on patients involved in matters of public record but will be done so only with the patient's permission. Patients can reserve the right to decline the release of information about their condition or admission to a GHS facility.

Patient conditions are given as follows:

- **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.
- **Still being evaluated.** Patient is most likely still in the Emergency Trauma Center and the physician has yet to make a final determination as to a condition.

- **Treated and released.** Patient was treated in the Emergency Trauma Center and released. Patient was not admitted.
- **Treated and transferred.** Patient was treated in the Emergency Trauma Center and transferred to another hospital.
- **Discharged.** Patient was admitted and has since been discharged.

#### *2. Requests for patient interviews and/or photographs*

A member of the Public Relations staff will handle all requests for patient and/or family interviews or photographs. If a request for an interview/photograph is made after business hours, the PR staff member on call must be contacted either by hospital staff or the news media. The PR staff, working with nursing staff attending to the patient or family in question, reserves the right to determine whether the interview would be in the best interest of the health of the patient in question. Staff may also ask family members who have agreed against the advice of hospital staff to speak with media to leave the patient care area or hospital grounds if hospital staff believes it will inhibit the patient's recovery.

#### *3. Patient consent*

Current and former patients who have agreed to interview/photograph with the media concerning treatment or recovery at a GHS facility must sign a patient consent form provided by PR staff. A copy may be placed in the patient's file; a copy is also kept on file in the Public Relations office.

#### *4. FOI requests*

All media requests filed under the Freedom of Information Act must be submitted to the Public Relations office. Final review of all FOI requests will be conducted by legal counsel. The PR staff will respond to the media regarding the status of the request within the 15 business days allowed by the law.

#### *5. Requests for expert/source interviews*

The Public Relations staff should be the first point of contact in reaching any GHS physicians, nurses, clinical specialists and other skilled professionals for interviews. PR staff will facilitate these interviews to help provide the most appropriate and knowledgeable source for an accurate story and timely interview. Hospital staff contacted directly by the news media should alert the Public Relations office before proceeding with an interview or before releasing any information.

## **II. Facilitation of news media visits to a GHS facility**

PR staff will accompany members of the news media when acting in an official capacity at a GHS facility, unless otherwise directed by the PR staff. Hospital staff members will alert the Public Relations office immediately if they identify a representative of the media in a GHS facility without PR staff approval. Security will be notified by PR staff of any planned visits by the media to a GHS facility.