

Promotional Recommendations to ASCRS Members

Dear ASCRS Member:

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, and the American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons (ASCRS) is proud to be a collaborating partner in the Month.

The Month provides you with the opportunity to raise awareness with patients and consumers in your local community about the importance of colorectal cancer screening, other prevention steps and appropriate treatment options and to build your practice. To help you do this, ASCRS is providing you with an abundance of materials that you can use with the media and your patients.

If you are affiliated with a hospital or university, you may wish to contact the organization's public relations department and ask them to undertake a media relations effort on the Month, using the attached press materials and you as an expert spokesperson.

The following instructions will guide you on how to use the materials appropriately.

Conducting Media Relations

By conducting a media relations effort in your local community, you can make colorectal cancer part of the news. This will help to raise awareness about the issue among the people in your practice area. Below are tactics you can use to spread the news about colorectal cancer screening, prevention and treatment, and the central role colorectal surgeons play, during Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month.

Develop Your Media List

To develop a media list, you will need to determine which reporters would be interested in receiving information about colorectal cancer and would be most likely to write or cover a story on the topic. To do this, you will need to create a database of media contacts called a "media list" that is made up of feature editors and healthcare reporters in your local area.

To create a database of media, begin by making a list of all of the news programs and newspapers in your community. Scour each program or paper to find out which reporters cover human interest or healthcare stories. These are the reporters you will want to call regarding your "news." If you live in an area with several major news outlets, call your local chamber of commerce to see if they can provide you with their media list. In most cases, they should be able to help you.

Once you have the names of the news outlets, the reporters, and their phone and fax numbers, you are ready to begin your media relations effort.

Distribute a Pitch Letter and Press Release

When you send a press release to the media, you are making them aware of potential news. Enclosed is the ASCRS press release on Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month that you can customize and send to your local media. To customize the release, simply fill in the blanks with information that pertains to your practice. This will help to make the news local and relevant to your local news outlets.

Once the release is customized, copy it onto your letterhead and send it out to the reporters on your media list. Be sure to include the enclosed cover "pitch" letter that briefly explains why the media should consider reporting on this topic and how you can be contacted for an interview. If applicable, provide the name of your assistant or office manager so that the media will always be able to speak with someone, even if you are not available at that precise moment.

Make Media Calls

Once you've distributed a press release, you should follow up with a phone call to each of the reporters on your list. You should prepare a loose script for yourself, outlining what you want to say. A good way to begin is by telling the reporter that you have a story his readers might be interested in, and asking the reporter if he has a few minutes to hear about it. Be brief and interesting, and always offer to follow up with written materials. Enclosed you will find a colorectal cancer fact sheet, an ASCRS Backgrounder, a Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month backgrounder, and other useful materials to use in this effort.

If the reporter you call is not interested in the story, politely ask him if the story might be appropriate for someone else at his news outlet. Always look for another opportunity before taking "no" for an answer.

Participate in an Interview

In addition to providing written materials, you should let the reporter know that you are an expert on the topic and available for interviews. Find out when the reporter would like to do the interview and make arrangements to either participate in the interview over the phone, or meet with the reporter.

In any interview, it will be important to communicate key messages about colorectal cancer screening and treatment, the month, and colorectal surgeons and the ASCRS.

Submit an Op-ed Piece

Many newspapers have an op-ed page, which provides local residents an opportunity to express an opinion about an important topic. Enclosed you will find an example of an op-ed piece on the Month that you can adapt for this purpose. Before adapting the piece, you should first look at the op-ed page in your local newspaper for instructions on what they accept and how to submit it. There is no guarantee that an op-ed piece will run, so it's important to make sure your piece is as interesting and poignant as possible.

Matte Releases

A matte release is a camera-ready news article that is formatted to be placed in a newspaper, exactly the way it appears. Matte releases most often are used by small weekly community newspapers with limited editorial staffs. Enclosed is a matte release that you can distribute to these newspapers. Before sending such a release, you should confirm that the newspaper accepts such a piece and to whom it should be sent.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

Radio public service announcements are another way to let people know about Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. They should be brief and include a phone number or Web address that people can use to get more information. Enclosed is a sample PSA that you can use.

PSAs should be distributed to the attention of public affairs directors at local radio stations. If you do not have the name of the public affairs director at a station, call the main telephone number and ask to speak to someone who can help you place a PSA. Once you have that person on the line, let them know you will be sending a PSA, and that you'd like it to run during the month of March.

Submit a Newsletter Article

Enclosed is a sample newsletter article that you can use. This article can be used in your hospital newsletter, your practice newsletter, or local health association newsletter.

Patient Education Events

A colorectal cancer patient education event can be a unique way to communicate directly with the patient/consumer audience. In addition, it can attract media attention to your practice, which will help to further spread the news about the importance of colorectal cancer screenings.

You can hold a patient education program about prevention and screening for colorectal cancer at your practice during the Month. Enclosed are examples of a media alert and a camera-ready ad that you can use to create awareness about your special event. To make your event a success, you should:

- Hold the event in the evening on a weeknight;
- Provide refreshments for attendees;
- Create a presentation that is informative and visually pleasing;
- Invite the media to attend;
- Follow up with those who attended by sending an appointment reminder card or thank you note.