We all know good public relations when we see it – the compelling story on the evening news that brings a timely health issue to life, the educational insight on a breaking clinical study in the daily newspaper, the feature on a health care profession in a national magazine, the useful tips and guidelines from a leading health care source online and in media nationwide, or even the difficult but balanced coverage of a health crisis situation that explains what happened and why and how it can be better managed next time in a reliable trade publication or national radio show.

How does this happen and why is PR so critical in getting any message out?

1. **Public relations is important** to the National Athletic Trainers’ Association to promote and protect the image of the association, its members and the profession at large. NATA, its staff, public relations agency, Board of Directors, committee chairs and members all have an integral role in communicating important messages and images of the profession. Keep in mind, our main goal is to educate the public and stakeholders about who we are and what we do. As the profession continues to grow and we move into emerging markets, public relations, or communicating the right editorial message to the right audience, is critical. The PR Committee and staff serve as a resource to the media. In addition to pitching stories to the media, we indemnify appropriate members to be interviewed and provide research and/or data for their stories. While often thought to be “free advertising” it is anything but that. Public relations requires a careful consideration of what we want to say; who will say it; how we proactively address editors and producers and others with our messages; and when we react to ensure proper dissemination of information or clarification (terminology) of the profession.

“Public relations” does not mean that we can “control” what editors or producers write or broadcast. We can only influence their thinking by sharing important information and offering the right resources and representatives to shed light on a particular story or issue. We cannot demand that a story run on page one of a paper or on a particular date or time. We can request this but it is ultimately up to the media to determine these details.

Because of the massive expense of advertising, NATA cannot purchase ads on a local OR national basis. This goes for the often requested Super Bowl ad, Sports Illustrated full page ad or other specific advertising that is often asked for by members. As a result, public relations becomes even more important – and is largely thought to be more credible than advertising – in getting the message
out. We rely on our members' grassroots efforts to educate local media and public, etc. about who we are and what we do.

2. Responsibilities and Roles:

- NATA’s PR manager serves as liaison between the PR committee and PR agency and helps to determine priorities for all public relations activities while also managing special projects and campaigns often in tandem with the agency.

- PR Manager works closely with Board Members, committee chairs and committee members, as well as the Journal of Athletic Training and Foundation, to best identify appropriate athletic trainer resources for timely interviews, bylined articles, association relationships and other programs that help to put a face on NATA and its proactive efforts across all athletic training arenas.

- PR Agency works closely with NATA on public relations and educational platforms as recommended to and ultimately directed by NATA. They work with media on a daily basis to respond to or suggest story ideas that keep athletic trainers/athletic training in the forefront of health news.

- Public Relations Committee: Serve as grassroots outreach resources for key national campaigns and a resource for local efforts by the membership. Members communicate back to NATA, local topics of interest or urgency where follow up may be necessary. They are the NATA communication link to the district and state PR committees including updates in district newsletters and Web sites

- State public relations efforts: Several states utilize local PR firms (with their own budgets) to assist with legislative and general public relations efforts for greater recognition and awareness on the grassroots level. NATA’s PR manager can be helpful in directing states to local agencies and providing resources for follow up.

3. Examples of Public Relations Activities:

- News Bureau: Implement ongoing news bureau of timely consumer and trade news efforts across key athletic training efforts (high schools, occupational or industrial settings, performing arts, etc.). Write press releases, bylined articles and maintain ongoing media contact (trade and consumer).

- Media Training: Working with members and other representatives to ensure they are well versed on particular health care topics when and if
they may be speaking to the media. This includes messages, but also attire, body language and general presentation skills.

- **Scientific News**: Work with the Pronouncements Committee and the *Journal of Athletic Training* to promote the latest breaking news and timely studies.
- **Crisis Communications**: Plan for crisis situations in the event that they occur and have key messages, press material and/or statements and athletic trainer representatives available for comment.
- **Relationship Building**: Establish partnerships and/or editorial relationships with key influencers and organizations including: The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, National Federation of State High School Associations, NCAA, Presidents’ Council on Physical Fitness, among others.
- **Promotion of Consensus, Position and Official Statements**
- **Association Partnerships**: Liaise with National Sportscasters and Sportswriters Association, including a sports medicine seminar and NATA excellence in sports medicine reporting award during group’s annual awards program.
- **Promote National Athletic Training Month** (to members, media, association partners and other key influencers)

- **Annual Meeting**: Manage public relations and press event activities at Annual Meeting
- **Opportunistic Activities**: Identify and implement opportunistic activities and special events, including joint projects with AAOS on youth, baby boomer, senior topics as they relate to musculoskeletal health and mobility. We have also jointly launched public service campaigns with AAOS on these topics and promoted to media.

**4. Terminology:**

Terminology – and specifically “athletic trainer” vs. “trainer” terminology has been a key public relations focus for the past several months and years. We CANNOT control the media’s use of the general word “trainer” when it does not relate to athletic training. We CAN encourage and correct media when they use proper terminology and/or confuse athletic trainers with other professions. When corrections are requested, we send correspondence, follow up by phone where appropriate and usually receive corrections immediately. Remember in your daily personal and professional life to always refer to yourselves as ATHLETIC TRAINERS. This is the first step to ensuring proper terminology in everything you do or say.

**5. Resources:**

- Who moved my cheese (very fitting in light of other professions encroaching on our area)
• Good to great (appropriate to improve any organization)
• Public relations for dummies