

## 'DIY' PUBLIC RELATIONS

# Hit the headlines

Our special report in the last issue showed how you can manage the media circus when the press get to hear you are treating a famous patient. But what if you do want to get something in the press? **Tingy Simoes** shares some useful tips on home-made PR

ACCORDING TO playwright and poet Oscar Wilde, the only thing worse than being talked about, is not being talked about.

In these belt-tightening times the instinct might be to quieten down with regards to publicity – but now is actually the time for consultants with businesses to really make themselves heard.

Increased competition means that customers (rather than 'patients' in the elective procedures arena) have more choice and will naturally choose the supplier whose offering they perceive promises the most satisfaction and the most value. The era of 'let the prospects come to me' is over.

Public relations in general may still have an image of spin-doctoring or possibly even sleaze – but the majority of private healthcare providers have come to respect how, in this media-led society, its power can help influence public opinion.

However, not everyone understands how PR actually works and, sadly, many unscrupulous agen-

cies out there offer a lot of 'doublespeak' and very little return.

Public relations is about more than simply being mentioned in magazines or appearing on the odd morning chat show.

It is about generating goodwill among a chosen audience. Ultimately, of course, it should result in more bodies through the door, but mostly it is a strong and effective exercise in name recognition, which – in turn – leads to more business.

## Define your style

Before launching a campaign, it is essential that we define what makes our particular private practice or clinic unique. Differentiation is key.

Are you family-oriented? Traditional or cutting-edge? Young or established? Multi-disciplined or specialised? To define the wording that describes you early on will allow communication with the press to be more efficient and will also influence your choice of outlets.

Materials you should have handy include team biographies, photos of spokespeople and facilities, factsheets about treatments and any new equipment or technology.

Then you really need to think about what the press would consider to be 'newsworthy'. What, these days, is worth writing about in a newspaper or consumer mag-

Local consultant launches groundbreaking treatment

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