

ASCP COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT:

Honing Your Media Skills



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- a. Tips and Suggestions

DEAR ASCP PARTNER COMMUNICATIONS TEAM:

On behalf of ASCP, thank you for all that you do to promote the medical laboratory profession and further the mission of ASCP! We realize that you and your laboratory have many stories to share with the public about the work you do, and ASCP's Communications team would like to offer you some tools to get that message out.

The contents of this toolkit are meant to help us all speak together with a clear, consistent voice about the great work being done, as well as provide you with easy-to-use resources that your staff and members can utilize as needed. Materials in this kit include:

- How to define your key messages;
- Identifying your target audience;
- Building relationships with your local media;
- Developing outreach tactics;
- A press release template to use to encourage reporters to cover an event;
- Sample blog post and online web language for your website;
- Sample social media language that can be used for X (formerly known as Twitter) and Facebook

Examples of stories you may want to pitch to your media include the annual Medical Laboratory Professionals Week (aka, Lab Week) and how your lab is celebrating, and the ASCP 40 Under Forty recognition program if someone within your laboratory receives this honor. Each of these examples provides you with a news “hook” to use as a launchpad from which you can provide more information about the overall role you and your colleagues play in providing high-quality patient care.

You will also want to reach out to your laboratory or health system's marketing/communications department to work with experts who can support your efforts. ASCP is also here to support you, and we encourage you to really think about the myriad activities taking place in your laboratory that you might promote to the media in your area. The more opportunities we have to talk about the critical work of the medical laboratory, the more we raise the visibility of the pathology and medical laboratory profession.

We look forward to our continued collective work on this important effort. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact ASCP's Communications team.

WHAT MAKES A STORY NEWSWORTHY?

What does the media want? The secret to securing news coverage of an activity lies in understanding what the media are seeking: How will your story or event impact the audience? Is it timely? Does it involve prominent people? Is the story unique? Is there a human-interest angle?

Once you have identified these qualities the next step is to develop your media strategy. Start by identifying your target audience. This is critical to developing an effective media plan and knowing where you want to place the story. If a member of your laboratory team has received a major award, you may want to share this information internally, within your health system so that his or her colleagues will know and can recognize your laboratory team member. You may also want to announce this recognition to your local media. Likewise, if you are celebrating Lab Week, this is a prime opportunity to reach out to your local media to let them know of your health system's weeklong activities. Additionally, you can develop activities around this such as sending a laboratory professional to a local school to speak with students about what laboratory professionals do and the role they play in patient care. In other words, promote the profession. So, you can leverage an event to convey a broader message.

You will also want to identify who are the appropriate media contacts to reach out to. It helps if you have already developed relationships with local or regional journalists. You should make sure to reach out to individuals who write about the topics you want to pitch to them.

KEY MESSAGES AND TALKING POINTS

Key messages are short, succinct, and compelling soundbites that state what you are doing, why you are doing it, why it is important, how it differentiates you/your organization, and how it will impact the audience. It's essentially an "elevator pitch" with three to five bullet points that are intended to capture your audience's interest.

Below are examples of key messages or "talking points" for ASCP members who participate in the ASCP Ambassador program, interacting with high school, college, and medical students to promote careers in laboratory medicine and pathology.

What is the Medical Laboratory Profession?

- The **medical laboratory profession** focuses on leveraging diagnostic tests performed on the body's blood, urine, or tissue samples to obtain critical data used **to identify diseases, infections and disorders**.
- **Data** from medical laboratory tests **provide critical insights** at every stage of care, from screening and diagnosis to treatment and successful health management.
- The field comprises medical laboratories and their employees; diagnostic tests, analyzers and support tools; and professional medical associations such as the American Society for Clinical Pathology (ASCP), which represents the entire medical laboratory community including medical laboratory professionals and pathologists.

Significant Impact to the U.S. Economy and Healthcare System:

- Medical laboratory diagnostics is a vital U.S. industry, **comprising more than 330,000 jobs across 174,000 labs**, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- As of September 2023, the national average salary for U.S. medical laboratory scientists is **\$68,049 per year**, according to job site ZipRecruiter.
- Medical laboratory professionals represent a **wide variety of disciplines**, including immunology, blood banking, toxicology, hematology, molecular diagnostics, microbiology, phlebotomy, and reproductive medicine.
- **Millions of diagnostic tests are performed each year** on patient specimens across the United States.
- Approximately **70% of medical decision making** is influenced by medical laboratory test results.

Employment Shortage: ASCP Vacancy Survey

- The American Society for Clinical Pathology's (ASCP) **Medical Laboratory Professional Vacancy Survey** shows that, on a national average, there is a **7%–8% gap between job vacancies in this field and qualified medical laboratory personnel available to fill them**. This gap is more acute in certain regions of the United States, as well as in specific areas of laboratory diagnostics.
- **Demand for medical laboratory professionals** in the United States has risen dramatically as Baby Boomers retire and require more medical laboratory services.
- Survey respondents indicate that **laboratory program closures and limited availability of programs available** in colleges and universities lead to difficulties in finding qualified medical laboratory professionals.
- Lack of awareness of the medical laboratory profession contributes to the shortage of well-trained and qualified laboratory personnel.

ASCP Foundation Addresses Workforce Shortage via Scholarships, Grants, and Fellowships

- The ASCP Foundation provides **financial support to outstanding pathology residents** to help them expand their knowledge, skills, and professional network, and it assists clinical laboratory students through scholarships for books and tuition.
- The Foundation also provides **grants to Directors of Medical Laboratory programs** to support the purchase of education-related materials and other training program resources, and it also provides **fellowships to students and pathology residents and fellows** to expand their experience and knowledge.

Career Resources

- ASCP spearheads additional programs tied to **education about careers in the medical laboratory** to teachers, career counselors and students in middle school, high school, and junior college. These programs include **ASCP Career Ambassadors** who make presentations about these careers to high school students; **ASCP Local Representatives** who advocate for the profession and attend career fairs; and exhibits at the **National Science Teachers Association** and **American School Counselors Association**.

PRESS RELEASES:

A press release is an easy way to announce your event and encourage reporters to cover your event. The press release is primarily intended for the media. However, it can also be repurposed to provide content for your website, newsletter articles or member communications.

The key messages can help you construct your release, and below are some ideas and a draft to help you get started. Work with your institution's public relations department to ensure your messages are aligned with those of the overall institution. Plus, your public relations department probably already has significant media contacts and can assist you in pitching your release.

Format:

Press releases are typically no more than two pages, and follow a standard format that includes the following:

- Contact person for the media
- Date of release
- A short headline, which can be followed by a slightly longer sub-headline
- The city and state the release is originating from
- At least one quote from an organizational leader
- Your organization's boilerplate, or mission statement at the end

Dissemination:

An important part of any press release is your distribution strategy to ensure it reaches your target audiences. Key distribution channels include:

- Your organization's website
- X and Facebook accounts, with links back to your release
- A press release distribution service, such as PRWeb or PRLeap
- Pitching to local/trade reporters. A good way to get your release picked up is to identify reporters who cover topics related to your specialty or list and reference a recent story they covered and how your release relates to it.

TEMPLATE PRESS RELEASE

Contact: [NAME]
[PHONE]
[EMAIL]

For Immediate Release

Forty High-Achieving Pathologists and Laboratory Professionals Honored for Professional Excellence

ASCP 2023 40 Under Forty Program Recognizes Future Generation of Laboratory Leaders

Chicago/July 11, 2023— _____ (NAME) of _____ (Town, State) is among 40 high-achieving pathologists, pathology residents, and medical laboratory professionals under age 40 who have just been named to the prestigious ASCP 2023 40 Under Forty list.

ASCP's 40 Under Forty program shines the spotlight on 40 highly accomplished pathologists, pathology residents, and laboratory professionals under age 40 who have made significant contributions to the profession and stand out as the future of laboratory leadership. The 40 Under Forty recognition has made a powerful impact on all of its honorees, ranging from pronounced recognition within their organization to exciting media attention.

"ASCP's 40 Under Forty program is an opportunity to recognize the next generation of pathology and medical laboratory leaders from around the globe," said ASCP President Marsha Kinney, MD, MASCP. "By providing support and encouragement to these young professionals, we aim to strengthen the medical laboratory workforce during this period of historic change in healthcare delivery. We are very fortunate to have such a talented group of individuals – they will help to shape the future of patient care."

The 40 honorees will each have the opportunity to share their knowledge about topics pertinent to pathology and laboratory medicine. You can follow them on X, Facebook and Instagram with the hashtag #ASCP40UnderForty2023.

In a few weeks, ASCP will select the top five individuals from the 40 honorees, who will each receive free registration to attend ASCP 2023 Annual Meeting in Long Beach, CA. where they will be formally recognized. In addition, the winners will receive free enrollment in Lab Management University, University of Pathology Informatics or Leadership Institute.

These certificate programs have been developed by ASCP in conjunction with ASCP partner organizations, including the American Pathology Foundation and the Association for Pathology Informatics.

The 2023 ASCP 40 Under Forty applicants were asked to submit a resume and a personal statement on how they see themselves as an innovator in health care, or how they are contributing to leading innovations within the profession. The selection committee included two individuals each from the ASCP Pathology Council, Resident Council, and Council of Laboratory Professionals, as well as past 40 Under Forty honorees.

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About ASCP

Founded in 1922 in Chicago, ASCP is a medical professional society with more than 100,000 member board-certified anatomic and clinical pathologists, pathology residents and fellows, laboratory professionals, and students. ASCP provides excellence in education, certification, and advocacy on behalf of patients, pathologists, and laboratory professionals. To learn more, visit www.ascp.org. Follow us on X at www.twitter.com/ascp_chicago and connect with us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ASCP.Chicago.

DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS TIPS:

Social media is a useful tool to foster connections to members, increase outreach, spread information about your activities.

Choose the platform that works best for your audience. Do they primarily use Facebook? X? LinkedIn? Determine the channel that works best for your members and update frequently. Social media is 24/7, all year long. As such, it is critical to update your content regularly. At a minimum, post at least once a week. Three times a week is ideal varying your message to maintain interest.

X (formerly known as Twitter)

- Use the event's hashtag when posting about the campaign.
- Mention and repost @ASCP posts on X. Engaging with us makes your profile more credible and legitimate.
- Use hashtags. They make your content more searchable.

Sample Posts:

To help you get started with X, below is a collection of sample template posts your team can utilize to talk about your activity.

- We're working with @ASCP and #ASP2024LabWeek to talk about the variety of wonderful careers that exist in the medical laboratory. [LINK]
- Do you know that about 70 percent of the data in your medical record is generated by testing conducted in the laboratory? We're working with @ASCP to help create more awareness about the important work of medical laboratory professionals to promote quality patient care. #ASCP2024Lab Week [LINK]
- [SPECIALTY SOCIETY] sends medical laboratory professionals to present hands-on experiments in local schools as part of @ASCP #ASCP2024LabWeek [LINK]

FACEBOOK

- If you have not already, "friend" or "like" the ASCP fan page: [LINK]
- Tag ASCP in your posts about ASCP 2024 Lab Week (by adding @ in front of "ASCP" in posts).
- Share the short, template Facebook posts included below on your organization's Facebook page about your work on the campaign.
- Cross-promote. Add your blog feed to your Facebook page via the Notes application.

Sample Facebook posts:

To help you get started with Facebook, below is a collection of sample template posts your team can utilize to talk about your Lab Week involvement.

- [ORGANIZATION] is working with ASCP as part of #ASCP2024LabWeek to help promote careers in the medical laboratory to students from elementary and high school to college. Here in [City, State] we're [one sentence about involvement.] Check out more: [LINK]
- We're working with ASCP's #ASCP2024LabWeek initiative to elevate awareness about the critical work of the medical laboratory in promoting quality patient care. Find out more at [LINK]
- Do you know that approximately 70 percent of the data in your medical records are generated by tests conducted in the medical laboratory? Check out how our medical laboratory professionals are partnering with ASCP's #ASCP2024LabWeek initiative to encourage young people to explore careers in the medical laboratory. Learn more: [LINK]

LINKEDIN

- Be concise. Generally, readers are more prone to skip your post entirely if it is too drawn out. Post in the clearest, shortest form possible.
- Consider your audience. Remember that your readers are comprised of diverse backgrounds. Also consider the platforms. Facebook users may not want the same type of information as on X or LinkedIn.