Section 3: Media and Marketing Outreach

Contents

Promoting Agency Research, Tools, and Resources ..........3-1

Overview and Key Contacts .................................................3-1

Media and Marketing Strategies ...........................................3-2

  Media Outreach and Response ......................................3-2
  Press Releases ..........................................................3-2
  Media Interviews .......................................................3-3

Marketing Outreach .........................................................3-3

  Marketing Plans .........................................................3-4
  Electronic Newsletter .................................................3-4
  Listservs .................................................................3-4
  Journal Article Tracking ...........................................3-4

Audio/Video Production and Clearance ................................3-4

  Public Service Announcements ..................................3-4
  Online Videos ..........................................................3-5
  Social Media .............................................................3-5

Webinars ..............................................................................3-5

Partnerships ........................................................................3-6

Impact Case Studies ..............................................................3-6

Additional Information ..........................................................3-7

Appendixes

  Appendix 3-A. Clearance Process for AHRQ and Third Party Press Releases
  Appendix 3-B. Clearance Process for Media Interviews
Promoting Agency Research, Tools, and Resources

AHRQ’s Office of Communications and Knowledge Transfer (OCKT) works to promote the research, tools, and resources developed and funded by the Agency. We also can help grantees and contractors promote the findings of their AHRQ-funded research through many channels, all of which are discussed below. OCKT has been successful in working with AHRQ program staff, grantees, and contractors to promote findings to the media and to transfer knowledge based on the research to appropriate audiences in the health care community.

Overview and Key Contacts

This section provides an overview of the activities that OCKT uses to promote the Agency and its mission. The tactics OCKT uses are designed to promote the Agency’s strategic goals to the public and to AHRQ stakeholders, including clinicians, policymakers, health systems, and State and local governments. We use a wide range of targeted techniques to reach the appropriate audience.

Social marketing research clearly indicates that messages need to be delivered multiple times using different vehicles for audiences to focus on and understand them. For example, commercial product campaigns usually involve print and broadcast advertising as well as product placement and other techniques.

Another key to effective dissemination and awareness building is sustainability. It is not sufficient to promote a message or product one time and assume that it has struck a chord with an audience. OCKT takes every opportunity and venue to promote messages and products to the appropriate audience, and we try to integrate messages so that they build on each other and are used over time.

Our most basic message is the Agency’s mission: Improving the quality, safety, efficiency, and effectiveness of health care for all Americans. OCKT reinforces the mission in every tactic and activity that we pursue, and we work with the Agency’s offices and centers and their respective contractors to ensure that the Agency and our mission are reflected appropriately in the materials, articles, and products that are developed on behalf of AHRQ.

OCKT also works to promote the Agency as a resource for reporters, the public, and health care decisionmakers. To that end, we promote the expertise of AHRQ staff and the knowledge and evidence that we develop. Our goal is to create “repeat customers” who seek us out for their health care information needs in addition to introducing AHRQ to new audiences.

To help streamline our work, OCKT works closely with the Agency’s various portfolios and has designated strategic planners to work with AHRQ’s offices and centers to deliver high-quality marketing and dissemination strategies. Contractors and grantees should feel free to contact these strategic planners on marketing and media-related questions (and should courtesy copy their project officer or task order officer as well). The strategic planners and media relations and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Press Office liaison are listed below:

- Patient Safety: Farah Englert, farah.englert@ahrq.hhs.gov
- Health IT: Kristie Kiser, kristie.kiser@ahrq.hhs.gov
- Effective Health Care: Bruce Seeman, bruce.seeman@ahrq.hhs.gov
- Prevention and Care Management: Rachel Weinstein, rachel.weinstein@ahrq.hhs.gov
- Value: Farah Englert, farah.englert@ahrq.hhs.gov
- Media Relations and HHS Press Office Liaison: Alison Hunt, alison.hunt@ahrq.hhs.gov

**Media and Marketing Strategies**

OCKT’s media and marketing strategies can be divided into four categories: media outreach and response; marketing and partnership outreach; audio/video production and clearance; and social media. These categories are not exclusive, but they do provide a good structure for connecting the dots among all the activities OCKT pursues to promote AHRQ’s mission and messages. These categories are intended to overlap so that AHRQ reaches audiences with multiple vehicles.

**Media Outreach and Response**

OCKT invests a great deal of time and effort on media outreach and response. Media refer to the reporters who write about AHRQ research for print and online general daily and weekly newspapers, television and radio programs, trade associations, legislative publications, blogs, podcasts, educational press, and other types of articles. The media are an important audience and a critical conduit to the public, policymakers, and health professionals. As part of this effort, we work to build relationships with reporters so they know to come to AHRQ as an important resource for information.

**Press Releases**

OCKT assesses the newsworthiness of AHRQ-funded research and tools by asking several basic questions:

- Is it unique?
- Does it add value to the field?
- Will it help change the practice of health care?

For newsworthy findings and tools, OCKT staff members draft a press release and work with AHRQ subject matter experts and HHS press office colleagues to review and approve it. OCKT sends press releases to reporters via a major national newswire service that reaches some 1,500 print and broadcast media and through a media listserv of nearly 500 reporters who have requested to receive news bulletins from AHRQ. Press releases from AHRQ and other HHS agencies require clearance from the HHS Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs (ASPA). Press releases developed by AHRQ grantees and contractors must also be approved as part of an HHS “third party” release clearance process. Appendix 3-A has the steps in the AHRQ and third-party press release clearance process.
Third-party press releases that mention AHRQ or AHRQ products need to be approved by OCKT and program staff prior to being distributed to the media. Press releases that include quotes from Federal officials need further clearance from ASPA.

Email all third-party press releases to Alison Hunt in OCKT at alison.hunt@ahrq.hhs.gov for approval and HHS clearance, if necessary.

**Media Interviews**

OCKT sets up interviews for AHRQ subject matter experts in response to requests from reporters. OCKT also may contact reporters proactively to arrange interviews in publications that are appropriate to a specific message. In preparation for media interviews, OCKT obtains deadline information and questions from reporters and provides background information, talking points, and sample questions and answers for Agency experts to use in media interviews.

Interview requests from major media outlets, such as ABC News or the *New York Times*, require clearance from ASPA. Appendix 3-B has details on the media interview clearance process.

Per HHS Media Policy, only an HHS employee can speak to the media on behalf of his/her agency. Contractors, fellows (except Title 42 fellows), and other non-Federal employees employed by HHS cannot speak on behalf of the Agency. In instances where there are technical questions that require data or input from contractors, OCKT will help coordinate how the information is provided to the reporter. Review the HHS Guidelines on the Provision of Information to the News Media for additional information at http://www.hhs.gov/news/media_policy.html.

OCKT submits a nightly media report to ASPA by 4 p.m. ET Monday - Friday. The report includes a list of media requests that were fielded that day, including the name of the reporter, the media outlet, and the nature of the inquiry. Information for this report must be submitted to Alison Hunt by 3:30 p.m. to be included in that evening’s report. If you received a media request and were cleared by OCKT to conduct the interview, send an email to alison.hunt@ahrq.hhs.gov with information about the request and how it was handled.

Here is an example of an item for the ASPA nightly report:

> Jane Smith of *Health Care Executive Magazine* contacted AHRQ for information on the average out-of-pocket cost of health insurance for employees. We arranged for her to speak with AHRQ expert Steve Cohen.

**Marketing Outreach**

OCKT uses a variety of marketing and partnership tactics to convey messages to the public, policymakers, and professional audiences. Unlike the tactics in the media category, these tactics go directly to the audiences and not through a media intermediary. OCKT develops marketing plans that encompass different levels of effort and outreach to a range of audiences. OCKT works with partners and stakeholders to maximize marketing outreach and potential.
Marketing Plans
OCKT develops customized marketing plans to help convey key messages about significant AHRQ research and tools to specific targeted audiences. Marketing plans use a variety of OCKT communications tools, including newsletters, listservs, and social media, to reach target audiences. In addition, OCKT provides direct outreach to communications directors at identified stakeholders groups (e.g., the American Academy of Family Physicians and the National Association for Healthcare Quality) through tactics such as sample newsletter articles or tweets for them to use in to their own publications.

Electronic Newsletter
OCKT writes, edits, and distributes the weekly AHRQ Electronic Newsletter, which features news about important Agency activities and AHRQ-funded journal articles to nearly 90,000 subscribers. A typical e-newsletter article includes five to six sentences about the research or tool along with a link to the relevant section of the AHRQ Web site or a PubMed abstract for readers who want more details. The newsletter, which is designed to provide a quick snapshot of AHRQ news, is managed by Jeff Hardy in OCKT (jeff.hardy@ahrq.hhs.gov).

Listservs
The Agency uses GovDelivery listservs and currently has several dozen topic-specific listservs for subscribers interested in patient safety, prevention, health IT, and effective health care. Similar to short e-newsletter articles, the listserv postings typically include five to six sentences about the research or tool along with a link to the relevant section of the AHRQ Web site where the original source material can be found.

Journal Article Tracking
OCKT maintains a database for tracking journal article manuscripts that have been accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal and assessing their newsworthiness for possible press releases or further promotion to AHRQ audiences. Submissions to AHRQ’s journal tracking database should be made by sending the manuscript and information about anticipated publication date to JournalPublishing@ahrq.hhs.gov. Manuscript submissions may be made by AHRQ program staff, grantees, or contractors. Please allow 4-6 weeks for review, drafting, and clearance of any press releases or promotional materials. AHRQ always honors the journal embargo.

Audio/Video Production and Clearance
OCKT produces audio and video to augment outreach to various audiences. The office also encourages professional and advocacy organizations to post AHRQ audio and video on their Web sites when the topic is of particular relevance.

Public Service Announcements
OCKT has produced a number of audio and video public service announcements (PSAs) on important issues and messages derived from AHRQ research. The office can produce audio PSAs in both English and Spanish. PSAs are available on AHRQ’s Healthcare 411 at http://healthcare411.ahrq.gov/. Video content is available at http://www.youtube.com/AHRQHealthTV.
OCKT also works with large grocers and retailers, such as Safeway and Kmart, to produce PSAs on important health care messages that are broadcast to shoppers while they are in the store. For example, an in-store audio broadcast may invite consumers to visit the pharmacy to pick up a copy of an AHRQ brochure on medication safety.

**Online Videos**
OCKT creates and markets online videos. The office currently has several YouTube channels for various audiences where AHRQ videos can be viewed and shared. On occasion, OCKT has worked with program staff to create a longer format video for patients based on one or more AHRQ products. OCKT can manage all the scripting, production, editing, and captioning and develops and implements marketing plans to promote the video to the widest and most appropriate audience. The video also is made available on YouTube. OCKT works with outside groups to help disseminate video, along with the original AHRQ material. Examples of this are Staying Active and Healthy: Blood Thinners and Aprende a vivir (a Spanish-language telenovela series that educates patients about comparing treatment options for managing diabetes).

See Section 5, Audio and Video, for additional guidance on creating video, budgeting, timelines, and format.

Per HHS guidelines, all videos on YouTube must also be posted on a Federal Government Web site. Contractors and grantees who plan to develop videos should review the YouTube Video Guidance (See Section 4, Social Media) before beginning the project. Email questions to OCKT's social media team at socialmedia@ahrq.hhs.gov.

**Social Media**
As OCKT continues to expand the Agency’s social media presence, the goal is to ensure that social media outreach efforts by AHRQ staff and contractors are well coordinated and the Agency maintains the highest standards for its brand and messages.

Individuals who wish to use social media technologies as part of official AHRQ communications must follow standards and policies that govern information and information technology. Section 4, Social Media, has information on standards and policies that apply to the use of social media.

AHRQ staff and contractors should work with an OCKT representative to complete the AHRQ Social Media Checklist (Appendix 4-A) for any social media outreach. For general questions on social media, email socialmedia@ahrq.hhs.gov.

**Webinars**
OCKT can help facilitate webinars using WebEx, a Web-based media environment and network that allows users to:

- Conduct virtual meetings with remote attendees and integrated audio conferencing for up to 500 participants
- Provide online training (webinars and technical assistance sessions) for targeted user groups
- Handle real-time electronic collaborations with internal and external workgroups
Partnerships

Working with key stakeholder groups is a way to enhance the credibility and reach of AHRQ’s research and messages. Partnerships can also be a cost-effective way to reach outside organizations through enhanced “buy-in” of AHRQ-sponsored evidence.

OCKT considers the following factors when deciding to pursue partnerships with other organizations:

- Will the partnership help best reach the intended audiences?
- Which groups have the greatest influence and credibility with the intended audiences?
- Which organizations will be easiest to persuade to engage in a partnership and require the least amount of ongoing support?

Policies for working with for-profit partners include the following:

- AHRQ does not consider collaboration with corporations that endorse a specific commercial product, service, or enterprise.
- The AHRQ name and logo may be used only in conjunction with approved projects and only with the written permission of AHRQ. AHRQ retains the right to review all copy prior to approval of the use of the AHRQ name and logo.
- OCKT formally reviews each partnership proposal.
- No company will have an exclusive right to use the AHRQ name and logo, messages, or materials.
- AHRQ will not partner with companies that have any products, services, or promotional messages that conflict with AHRQ policies or programs; those that are currently in negotiation for a grant or contract with AHRQ; those that have any unresolved conflicts or disputes with AHRQ; or those for which establishing a partnership would create tension or conflict with another AHRQ partner or Federal program.

Questions about potential partnership agreements should be directed to Kristie Kiser in OCKT (kristie.kiser@ahrq.hhs.gov).

Impact Case Studies

OCKT is always looking for ways in which AHRQ-funded research, products, and tools have changed people’s lives, influenced clinical practice, improved policies, and affected patient outcomes. AHRQ Impact Case Studies describe AHRQ research findings in action and are used in testimony, budget documents, and speeches. Grantees or contractors whose AHRQ-funded research has had an impact on health care policy, clinical practice, or patient outcomes should
email impactcasestudies@ahrq.hhs.gov. AHRQ’s collection of case studies is available at http://www.ahrq.gov/policymakers/case-studies/index.html.

**Additional Information**

To discuss specific issues or obtain additional guidance on media and marketing outreach, contact:

Alison Hunt  
Media Relations and HHS Press Office Liaison  
Office of Communications and Knowledge Transfer  
Email: alison.hunt@ahrq.hhs.gov  
Phone: 301-427-1244