

KEEPING TABS ON THE MEDIA



Health and wellness is big news. From mainstream media through to TikTok, everyone has an opinion on what is good for you. Whether you are a manufacturer or a retailer, your clients and customers are seeing this content. Do you ever take a look at what is featured in the media and consider how it might impact your business or change how you communicate to your audience?

One of our daily tasks in Comms at the Health Food Manufacturers' Association is monitoring the media to see what is being talked about and how it is being presented. Today's media is fast moving, a story can take hold and spread with incredible speed or it can fizzle out as quickly as it arrived.

Using a press monitoring service, we get to see what is being talked about across all media including TV, radio, mainstream press, blogs, regional press, social media and more. With all mainstream newspapers having a large online presence, there is now far more coverage than there used to be. It is also added to 24 hours a day, so things change rapidly. We produce a media round up three times a week for members, highlighting relevant articles.

When we see an article that may be controversial or negative, we will



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flag it to be monitored. Often this simply means looking out for where else the story is appearing or if it has been picked up by another journalist who has taken it further. In around 98% of cases, what we have flagged as a potential issue, will fizzle out in 24 hours and not cause any damage to the industry or create the need for a comment.

However, having the system in place allows us to make ready and gather resources. We are able to call on our Scientific and Technical Advisors and other experts if a story creates a lot of negativity or presents inaccurate information. We will then issue a statement or release and speak directly to the journalist concerned, to allow a right of reply or have a comment added to the article.

With so much news being based online, there have been occasions when we have contacted the journalist and they have updated their article with correct information or a quote we have provided, straight away.

Sometimes we have advance warning that there is potentially damaging coverage due. For example, we were informed about the recent BBC Panorama programme covering the menopause. We knew supplements would be featured with a focus on claims and research around the products. Companies were

asked a number of questions that led us to believe they may take a very negative slant.

In advance, we prepared statements, liaised with brands that may be featured, and we were able to monitor press following the broadcast. As it was, the supplement section of the programme was fairly low key. The main thrust was the potential mis-prescribing of HRT from one clinic. Monitoring the following 48 hours showed that the focus was on HRT and no backlash towards supplements. Subsequently, there was no need for statements or comments, but it was good to know that the back-up was there for member companies and the industry, should we have needed it.

You may not see what goes on behind the scenes on a daily basis, but should we need to speak up for the integrity of the industry, we are ready and able to do so.



More info about the HFMA and membership, www.hfma.co.uk, tel. 0208 481 7100