

Summary of Media Coverage

AusBiotech 2006 Conference, Sydney, November 19-22

Preamble:

Media coverage for the AusBiotech conference this year was largely national, with daily reports appearing in *The Australian* as well as coverage on ABC Radio (including the flagship current affairs program, PM) and an extensive interview with Morning's Virginia Trioli.

However some opportunities were missed because the media consultant was not brought in until two weeks before the conference.

In that time, the consultant contacted over two dozen of the key speakers, seeking stories, news hooks etc and wrote seven releases including a media alert (which was sent out nationally via AAP a fortnight, one week before the conference and on the day it started) and backgrounders on:

- Functional foods
- Peter Corr
- Douglas Throckmorton
- Clinical Trial Opportunities Outside of the US and Europe
- Gregory Winter
- Stem Cells

These were targeted selectively at media including *The Australian Financial Review*; *The Australian (Business, General, Higher Education, Health)*; *The Age and Sydney Morning Herald Business*; *AAP Finance, Biotechnology News*; *The Daily Telegraph Business*; *Herald Sun Business*; *Courier Mail Business*, *ABC TV News*, *Channel Nine TV News*, *Inside Business*, *Lateline Business*, *Bloomberg TV*, *ABC Radio* (News and Current Affairs).

Coverage included the following:
27/11 *Australian Financial Review* - Big Deals Going Down in Biotech Sector (an overview of the conference)

22/11 *The Age Business* - Drug Makers Write Script for More Corporate Welfare

23/11 *The Australian Business* - Australian Biotechs in Bid to Beef Up Investment (overview of conference)

23/11 *The Australian Business* - Pharmaxis Drug on Fast Track to Market (incl mention of Alan Robertson winning AusBiotech award)

22/11 *The Australian Higher Education Section* - Science Comes First But Benefits Must Flow Both Ways (feature article on Gregory Winter)

21/11 *The Australian General Section* - Food Led Recovery (interview with Curtis Rempel re functional foods)

20/11 *The Australian General Section* - Investors Shun Stem Cell Research (interview with David Williams)

Daily reports in *Biotechnology News*

21/11 - extensive interview with Curtis Rempel on *ABC Radio's* Trioli program

24/11 - interview with Sir Gregory Winter on *ABC Radio's* PM program

The consultant also organised the Media Session which was very well attended. Senior Business and General Reporters presented including:

Beth Quinlivan, ex-*BRW* Biotechnology Reporter

Deb Smith, Science Editor for the *Sydney Morning Herald*

Henry Byrne, Biotech and Healthcare Reporter for *The Financial Review*

Chair - Nabila Ahmed, Biotechnology Reporter for *The Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald*

The consultant facilitated the attendance at the conference of both Nabila Ahmed from Fairfax and Kimina Lyall from *The Australian*. Both came from Melbourne and as are newly appointed biotech reporters they, in addition to filing from the conference, used the meeting to get to know key biotech players.

Recommendations:

Because of the lack of time available to the consultant this year a number of key opportunities were lost including coverage in weekend magazines, *ABC TV's 7:30 Report* and TV Business programs such as *Inside Business* and *Lateline Business*.

All these outlets work on long lead times to set up their programs (particularly when the stories being "sold" are features rather than news stories eg Winter) and they require significant pre planning. This also applied to an inability to find a speaker who could, with the consultant's assistance, write an opinion piece. This occurred last year with a key speaker writing a piece that was published in *The*

Australian Higher Education section on the last day of the conference.

In addition the inclusion of US based Dateline media consultants on a pro bono basis resulted in confusion for both media and attendees. This was particularly problematic in relation to dealing with Government press officers who were confused as to who was running the media for the conference - leading to some stories being lost and time wasted at critical times such as when the New Zealand Minister was speaking.

It is suggested that - for 2007 - a single media consultant be appointed to handle international and national media at least as early as June. This allows the consultant to approach all key speakers to determine who is happy to speak to the media, and to brief them as to what this will entail.

An earlier start will also mean that stories and news hooks that were possibly missed this time could be found and promoted to media with longer lead times. For instance the function foods issue would have made an excellent feature piece in *The Weekend Australian Magazine*.

Conclusion:

The AusBiotech Conference is becoming increasingly seen as the BIO meeting of the region. This is clear from not only the attendance but the calibre of people attending. It is also clear from the seniority of reporters attending the meeting and the coverage received particularly in *The Australian* and *The Financial Review*.

With greater planning for next year I believe that media coverage (both before the meeting which could boost attendance and during the meeting) would be extensive.

It was a pleasure working with the AusBiotech conference committee again and I look forward to Brisbane next year. Please feel free to contact me with any queries.

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