



# Advocacy Toolkit

## Using Traditional Media

### Write Letters-to-the Editor, Op-eds and Blogs

While social networking sites can seem to be the most used platform, don't forget about the ways in which traditional media (e.g., newspaper, television, radio) can further your advocacy goals. Print publications provide a host of opportunities for you to share your story and explain the needs of people with arthritis and their families. In letters-to-the editor, op-eds and blogs, you can call attention to important policy issues and educate the public. Submitting these pieces to a news outlet is easy, and when reporters craft a story, they will often pull directly from what you send them. When writing, remember to:

- Highlight your personal story.

Readers want to hear how arthritis has impacted *your* life.

- If possible, include elected officials' names.

State the names of your elected official, as well as where they stand on the issue you're covering. Constituency and political party offices keep records of articles that mention their elected official. And, if you've previously met with your elected official, this will help them remember your visit. If your story is published, share it with them.

- Add facts.

Content from the materials in this toolkit may support your letters, op-eds and blogs.

- Review submission guidelines.

Each media outlet is different. Be sure you understand word limits and submission processes before you begin developing your pieces. Verify the outlet's guidelines and contact info on their website.

If a reporter reaches out to you to request an interview, ACE can provide support. Contact us at [feedback@jointhehealth.org](mailto:feedback@jointhehealth.org)

### ***Letters to the editor***

These short commentaries (typically about 250 to 300 words) can be in support of or opposition to a newspaper editorial or detail your thoughts in relation to a recently published article. Consider these tips:

- Find something to respond to. Choose an article you'd like to comment on that's directly relevant to the arthritis community. Your letter can be in response to the article in general or a specific issue within it.
- Share your position. Be able to simply state that you agree, disagree or have something new to add.
- Establish yourself as credible. Note your experiences with arthritis to lend authority to your voice.

### **Example**

#### **Arthritis disease advocacy**

I have (type of inflammatory arthritis) and, with Arthritis Consumer Experts, just returned from meetings with my local elected officials. We had productive conversations about improving models of arthritis care and the need to maintain policies that allow patients access to high-quality, affordable care and the critical importance of increasing support for virtual care.

At present, there are no cures for arthritis, but we have hope and energy, both for living well with this disease today and preventing it for future generations. Being able to meet with the offices of my elected officials reaffirmed that my voice, as a patient, matters. I am grateful for the chance to advocate for these important issues, and I will continue to speak out on behalf of the arthritis community.

## ***Op-eds***

These pieces should be persuasive and detail your thoughts and expertise on a particular topic. They often focus on current events or issues relevant to a particular community. Op-eds usually are around 750 words. This framework can help guide your writing:

- Start with a hook. Find a current event or news story that makes your op-ed relevant and compelling. (You can do this in the first sentence.)
  - Examples: Yesterday a policy was implemented that...; September is Arthritis Awareness Month; Last week the Minister of Health gave a speech on...
- State the problem and how you'd fix it. What's the issue and what do you recommend to make it better?
- Be persuasive. Use evidence and your experiences with arthritis to convince the reader you have the right solution.
- Finish strong. Reiterate your proposal and issue a call to action.

Examples of calls to action:

- [Contact your elected officials](#)
- Sign up to join the [ACE email list](#) and receive communications about relevant policy issues.

## ***Blog posts***

You can publish blogs in many places, including online news publications, your own personal webpage and other websites. They're typically more informal than letters to the editor and op-eds and usually run about 500 words. As you compose your blog, remember to:

- Keep it personal. Use a compelling anecdote to illustrate the issue and attract readers.
- Use visuals. A picture really is worth a thousand words. Photos, images or graphics can bring your story to life. Cite the source if you didn't create the visual yourself.

- Make your case. Your experiences with arthritis can lend credibility to what you're saying.
- Incorporate a call to action. People should know what to do next after reading your blog. Examples:
  - [Contact your elected officials](#)
  - Sign up to join the [ACE email list](#) and receive communications about relevant policy issues.
- Ask others to share. Encourage readers to re-post your blog, especially on social media.

Example: [A long weekend with arthritis – By a young adult with RA.](#)