



RACP MEDIA & EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

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1. PURPOSE

The RACP Media & External Communications Policy (Media Policy) describes the protocols all College Fellows, trainees, non-Fellow Directors, and employees are advised to follow when representing The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP/the College) in the media in Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally.

This policy covers how the College responds to media enquiries and issues, the type of media issues the College comments on and the designated spokespeople for the College. The Policy also outlines the process for responding to media enquiries and other protocols to be adopted when undertaking external communication activities.

The purpose of this Media Policy is to ensure that the College presents a unified, informed, and consistent response to the wide range of health and medical issues with which the College is involved across Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally.

It is an underlying principle of the Media Policy that we have an **expert-led** media agenda. That is in most instances, a Fellow or trainee is to be the designated spokesperson representing the College to the media, except in exceptional circumstances such as a crisis or where College operations are impacted; in which case the RACP Chief Executive Officer (CEO), a designated staff member from the Marketing and Communications team, or retained public relations agency quoted as a spokesperson, or an Aotearoa New Zealand delegate may be best placed to comment.

2. APPLICABILITY

This Media Policy applies when:

- any Fellow or trainee of the College, including Directors, non-Fellow Directors, elected officials and members of committees, including State and Territory Committees and Aotearoa New Zealand, pre-approved spokespeople and working groups; or
- any employee, contractor or consultant of the College (together referred to as 'employees' in this Media Policy)

makes a statement to, or in the presence of, the media in circumstances where the person making the statement may reasonably be seen to be acting on behalf of the College or in an official College capacity.

This Media Policy covers contributions to print, radio, television, and online media such as interviews and commentary, media statements, letters and editorials. It includes representing the College when engaging in any social media or publicly available discussion forums such as blogs. Any external engagements, such as speeches or presentations, which may involve discussions relating to the College's policy, position or publications; or in which a Fellow or employee of the College seeks to represent the College publicly, are covered by this Media Policy.

This Media Policy does not cover circumstances in which a Fellow, trainee or employee contributes to a debate as an individual or on behalf of another organisation of which they are a representative, such as a Specialty Society.

In undertaking any activities that are outside the scope of the Media Policy, the individual Fellow, trainee or employee must not involve the College and must not bring the College into disrepute, in line with the Constitution of the College and the obligations that it places on Fellows and trainees as members of the College; and any relevant contract of employment between the RACP and an individual.

Specialty Societies engaging with the media on matters or issues unrelated to the RACP or RACP policy are outside the scope of this Media Policy.

3. RACP STATEMENT OF STRATEGIC INTENT

The RACP views its core purpose as containing several elements that contribute to Fellows, trainees, the community and the health sector more broadly. The RACP seeks to provide:

- physician training and the standard setting for sophisticated and complex healthcare of patients and addressing health needs in the population;
- Fellowship, collegiality, expertise and the mechanisms for Fellows to contribute to education, policy and advocacy;
- an on-the-job model of education for Fellows throughout the life of their career;
- a breadth of knowledge and skills in health for advocacy and to shape public policy; and
- a contemporary clinical education model.

The RACP wishes to be known by its stakeholders as:

- a deliverer of excellence in training of physicians;
- an important contributor to quality and equitable health status and healthcare in Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and the region;
- a respected professional body whose opinion and expertise is sought by government and others.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Purpose of Media & External Communications

The purpose of this Media Policy is to define the process to be followed in the event that the College, or a Fellow, trainee or employee is contacted for media comment, or if a Fellow or trainee wishes to comment on an issue.

As a primary authority and public face of physicians in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, the College has a great responsibility to ensure that the public can understand our positions and that our media responses are accurate, relevant and timely.

The College has an important responsibility to inform the public, via the media, on topics of concern or on issues where standards or procedures have been called into question.

The College is also responsible for ensuring that all disseminated information is accurate, consistent, and timely. This will be assisted by close engagement with all Fellows.

Fellows, trainees, and employees also expect the College to positively represent the profession in the media on a wide range of issues that affect physicians and their patients.

To assist with facilitating a coordinated and timely response or approach to the media, all communications with external audiences should be managed and coordinated with the assistance of the RACP Marketing and Communications team in Sydney, or the Aotearoa New Zealand Manager or Aotearoa New Zealand Communications staff, or their retained public relations agency, where appropriate.

The Marketing and Communications team includes communications staff located in Sydney and Aotearoa New Zealand with responsibility for whole of College communication, media and other related activities.

4.2 Benefits of Coordinated Media & External Communications

The College's Statement of Strategic Direction describes its purpose. One significant way the College reinforces its role and objectives to the public, and seeks to influence public opinion and perception, is through the media.

Successful management of the College's media issues ensures that the public profile and reputation of the College, its Fellows, and trainees are positively maintained, reinforced and enhanced.

5. PROTOCOLS AND GUIDELINES

5.1 Principles

In responding to the media, the College will adhere to the following principles. The College **does**:

- a) Comment on Federal and State Government health policy as it affects healthcare in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.
- b) Respond to comments made by allied health or other agencies.
- c) Comment on new medical research.

- d) Comment on clinical procedures.
- e) Comment on individual medical and clinical excellence.
- f) Profile and publicise College research.
- g) Profile and publicise the work of College committees, including State and Territory Committees and those in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- h) Comment on matters to which it has previously gone on record to discuss or matters in which it has a stated position that is publicly available for review/comment.
- i) Comment on matters which, in the opinion of the President, are of significant public interest.

The College does **not**:

- a) Comment on personal issues that concern a Fellow, non-Fellow Director, employee or trainee's remuneration, fees for service, competency or ability.
- b) Rate physicians.
- c) Rate hospitals.
- d) Comment on adverse events in the hospital setting if it is likely to have an impact on disciplinary or legal proceedings.
- e) Comment on individual clinical matters or give an opinion of medical cases that are before a court of law.
- f) Endorse individual medical products or techniques that have not been researched by credible practitioners.
- g) Comment in a defamatory or disparaging manner.

In line with the College Conflict of Interest Policy, the College or Fellows will not comment on a product or procedure that gives them a commercial advantage. This is subject to review by, and/or discretion of the President, or President-Elect, where a Fellow with a Conflict of Interest may be the most appropriate person to speak on a matter and where the Fellows' Conflict of Interest is clearly and unequivocally declared.

5.2 Media Spokespersons

The instances where the CEO (or Aotearoa New Zealand Manager where relevant) or a Marketing and Communications team member or retained public relations agency quoted only as a spokesperson, would speak on behalf of the College would only be in the exceptional circumstances of a crisis, or where the matter is more administrative or operational in nature, or when instructed by the President, or RACP Board (as below).

On matters specific to Aotearoa New Zealand, the RACP NZ President and/or President-elect is best placed to speak on behalf of the College, with assistance to be provided by the RACP Marketing and Communications team in Sydney, Aotearoa New Zealand communications staff or the College's retained public relations agency as required. The Aotearoa New Zealand Office will maintain a list of designated spokespeople in a range of subject areas relating to matters specific to Aotearoa New Zealand.

The College President represents the College in the media on most College matters, but if unavailable, delegates this responsibility to the President-elect.

5.3 Board or President Pre-approved Spokespersons

There may be circumstances where it may be more timely and/or appropriate from an expertise perspective for Division, Faculty or Chapter Presidents to represent the College in the media or social media on a specific issue within that person's area of expertise on that particular issue and within the scope of the terms of reference of the relevant College Body.

The Board has approved those persons holding those positions below from time to time to represent the College in the media in respect of specific issues within that person's area of expertise and within the scope of the terms of reference of the relevant College Body, and subject to compliance with the process in Sections 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 6.3 and 7.1 of this Policy (each a "pre-approved spokesperson"):

- (a) Each President from time to time of the Adult Medicine Division, Paediatrics and Child Health Division, the Australasian Faculty of Occupational and

Environmental Medicine, the Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine, the Australasian Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine, the Australasian Chapter of Addiction Medicine, the Australasian Chapter Palliative Medicine and the Australasian Chapter of Sexual Health Medicine.

- (b) The Aotearoa New Zealand President from time to time.
- (c) The Chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Committee from time to time.
- (d) The Chair of the Māori Health Committee from time to time.

Nothing in the policy affects the ability of the President or Board to add or remove any of the above pre-approved spokesperson or the ability to represent the College on any issue as set out in clause 7.5 of the College Constitution. The President will be kept informed by the College of each instance of a pre-approved spokesperson making comment on behalf of or representing the College.

5.4 Key messages for pre-approved spokespeople

For some matters, Pre-approved spokespersons are supported by a suite of pre-approved key messages in respect of positions that the College has taken or committed to which must be adhered to by the pre-approved spokesperson and ensure that the College's position is being complied with.

5.5 Pre-approved spokesperson requirement to always seek advice before commenting

The appointment of pre-approved spokespersons under does not automatically confer a right for pre-approved spokespersons to comment in the media (including social media) as a College representative on College related matters without first seeking advice from the College, and ensuring that their comments comply with that advice.

Before making any comment to media or journalists, pre-approved spokespeople must always check first with the College Marketing and Communications Manager on current College positions, their proposed speaking points and potential cross College or reputation implications.

If cold-called or emailed by a journalist asking for immediate comment, this necessitates deferring any comment until such advice as above is sought and process in this policy is complied with.

5.6 Process if disagreement over comment

In rare instances, the College may advise pre-approved spokespersons that the risks of commenting on a specific matter outweigh the benefits.

If there is such disagreement, pre-approved spokespersons are not authorised to comment in the media (including social media) until the matter is resolved. If necessary, this may require escalation to the President for resolution.

5.7 Maintenance of the register of pre-approved spokespersons

The register of pre-approved spokespersons is compiled and retained by the College Marketing and Communications team,. It is reviewed annually to ensure it captures current Division, Faculty and Chapter Presidents, and reflects topics of current interest and can only be varied by the board.

5.8 Staff delegated to speak with the media

The Executive General Manager Member Services and/or nominee, including the Marketing and Communications Manager, their team and Aotearoa New Zealand communications staff, are delegated to engage with the media to discuss issues as per Section 5.1 and to maintain good working relationships with members of the press consistent with the obligations and objectives of this Policy

The building of strong working relationships and development of key contacts in the media and other key influencers assists with ensuring College press releases are likely to be picked up.

The RACP Marketing and Communications Manager or designated Marketing and

Communications team employee or Aotearoa New Zealand Manager would only speak with the media 'on the record' with the agreement of the College President.

All other College employees are not permitted to communicate with the media except in exceptional circumstances and then only with the express permission of the President.

If the media directly approaches a nominated College spokesperson or Fellow of the College, they must notify the College Marketing and Communications team which will co-ordinate any response.

College spokespeople must agree to carry a mobile phone that is switched on during reasonable hours. If the spokesperson can't be reached by mobile phone another number must be nominated.

The Marketing and Communications team or Aotearoa New Zealand Manager will liaise with Specialty Societies and other key stakeholders where appropriate on coordination of media and external communication activities.

6. PROCEDURES

The RACP has documented and detailed processes for managing media enquiries. This Media Policy gives an overview of the main considerations while emphasising that a rigorous consultation and sign-off processes is always undertaken as part of RACP Marketing and Communications team standard operating procedures.

6.1 Management of Media Enquiries

The College's retained Public Relations Agency, the Marketing and Communications team and Aotearoa New Zealand communications staff respond to media enquiries on a wide range of issues relevant to the College and the Membership.

One of their key tasks is to assist spokespeople for the College to respond to media enquiries, including the provision of a draft verbal or written media statement as appropriate.

In providing this advice, they will consider:

- a) If the issue is within the area of expertise and professional activity of the College;
- b) How to coordinate the response with previous College media statements on the same or previous issues; and
- c) The likely impact of the statement on perceptions of the College, its Fellows and trainees.

The retained Public Relations Agency, Marketing and Communications team or Aotearoa New Zealand Manager will discuss the issue and possible response with the relevant area of the College.

Unless office bearers and Fellows give permission, their personal contact details cannot be given to the media.

Only the retained public relations agency, Marketing and Communications team and Aotearoa New Zealand Manager are permitted to handle media enquiries

specifically addressed to the College.

- a) In Australia all enquiries should be directed to the Marketing and Communications Manager or retained Public Relations Agency or if necessary, the Executive General Manager, Member Engagement and Support.
- b) In Aotearoa New Zealand all enquiries should be directed to Aotearoa New Zealand Manager. The Marketing and Communications team in Sydney, or the designated retained public relations agency should be made aware of all Aotearoa New Zealand media enquiries. All media enquiries/issues require a response from the College as soon as possible and preferably within the relevant media cycle and at minimum within 24 hours.

Specific Marketing and Communications team staff in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand are supplied with a mobile phone which the media should be able to contact during reasonable hours seven days a week. Otherwise, the Executive General Manager, Member Engagement and Support & Aotearoa New Zealand Manager are available.

Only the Marketing and Communications team and appropriate Aotearoa New Zealand communications staff with the oversight of the Sydney Marketing and Communications team or retained public relations agency issue College media releases and arrange College media events, press conferences or spokespeople for the College.

6.3 Procedure for Fielding Media Enquiries

If contacted directly by the media, any Fellow spokesperson must contact the retained public relations agency, the Marketing and Communications team or Aotearoa New Zealand Manager, before making any on the record comment and are not authorised to make any comment to the media before they have done so. This includes pre-approved spokespeople. These teams will promptly review the issue and ascertain:

- I. If there is current College policy relating to the topic.
- II. If a proposed response needs to consider College policy, in discussion with the Fellow.
- III. If the policy is aligned with the College's strategic directions.
- IV. If the policy is of interest to the College in the current circumstances.
- V. If this an appropriate time to make an external comment – activities and events need to be considered in the widest possible context.
- VI. If there is a need to consult with senior College Fellows e.g., the Aotearoa New Zealand President, President-elect, Chair of Policy & Advocacy Committee and identified experts.
- VII. The Marketing and Communications team or Aotearoa New Zealand Manager will liaise with Specialty Societies and other key stakeholders where appropriate on coordination of media and external communication activities.

6.4 Media Management of College Meetings and Events

The College supports several conference and events, including State and Territory Committees, Aotearoa New Zealand, scientific and committee meetings, as well as forums and other activities.

The College Congress is an opportunity to positively profile the work of Fellows in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. A separate Media and Communications Plan is developed for Congress.

All conferences, meetings and events involving the College and College Fellows are bound by this Media Policy.

7. MEDIA ACTIVITIES

7.1 Media Releases

The purpose of media releases is to get coverage in the media. Media releases can either be proactive or reactive.

The College uses media releases to influence external stakeholder behaviour in support of the RACP's vision, strategies and objectives that represent the interests of the membership and promote positive health outcomes for our communities.

Pre-approved spokespersons may request the development of proactive media releases. However, the subject of the media release must pass a newsworthiness appraisal from the relevant business unit (e.g., Policy and Advocacy or Member Engagement and Support) and the College's media advisors before any work commences.

Drafting and promoting media releases takes time and incurs public relations agency expense, and the College must be certain there are no conflicting positions, reputational risk and that there is a realistic possibility of resulting media coverage. If there is disagreement, the matter will be escalated to the President for resolution.

7.2 Engagement of Relevant Stakeholders and Sign-off

Ultimately it is the Board that is responsible for ensuring that nominated spokespersons represent College policy.

All media releases written under the College's media release banner must be approved by the President or Board, the pre-approved person (subject to their compliance with this policy including commenting only within that person's area of expertise). The Chief Executive Officer may approve the release in the event any one of the above approve the content of the media release within the delegated authority provided in this policy.

Controversial matters should be referred to the relevant College committee before they are distributed. Distribution is defined to include circulating the draft release to any external bodies or individual.

Currently the President and President-elect seek to represent the views of the Board. Where there are significant differences of opinion, an attempt to come to an agreed opinion should be made by the College Policy & Advocacy Committee, State and Territory Committees or Aotearoa New Zealand Committee.

There may be the uncommon instance where a sufficient level of agreement cannot be actioned, and the College is unable to provide a consensus statement on the

matter.

It should be noted that in line with section 5.1 of this Policy, there may be matters which, in the opinion of the President, are of such significant public interest that a comment from the College is required. In such circumstances, and in the absence of a formalised College policy or agreement/consensus between relevant experts, such a decision can be made at the sole discretion of the College President.

College bodies, such as Divisions, Faculties, Chapters, College Committees and Expert Advisory Groups, including State and Territory Committees and Aotearoa New Zealand are not authorised to independently issue media releases without the involvement of the College President, or a pre-approved spokesperson and the retained public relations agency, or Marketing and Communications team.

The Marketing and Communications team or Aotearoa New Zealand communications staff will liaise with Specialty Societies and other key stakeholders where appropriate on coordination of media and external communication activities.

If a media release submitted by a College body is deemed by the President to be unsuitable or to need substantial changes, the College President will discuss the matter with the College body that developed the statement. The objective of such a discussion would be to come to an agreed position, which may be a compromise of differing views. In areas where an agreed position cannot be reached, the matter should be referred to the relevant College committee.

All RACP media releases proposed or developed by a College body or associated entity are bound by this Media Policy and must be either co-branded with College or solely under the College banner. Any release involving the brand of a College body or associated entity must be approved by the elected official of that body or associated entity.

All media releases that quote a Fellow or trainee must be approved by them and the College President before they are released.

Media releases prepared specifically for Aotearoa New Zealand are approved by the Aotearoa New Zealand Communications Manager, the Sydney based Marketing and Communications team or retained public relations agency, before being finally approved by the Aotearoa New Zealand President. The College President and CEO should be copied in as a courtesy.

When office bearers, nominated spokespeople or Fellows agree to be part of a College media release or response then they must supply a contact phone number and agree to media interviews as required.

All media releases distributed by the Marketing and Communications team, including the Aotearoa New Zealand communications staff, must be made available on the College website, even if the release is only distributed to specific medical/health reporters.

Regular media reports are generated from the distribution of media releases by the Marketing and Communications team and Aotearoa New Zealand communications staff and are sent to the Senior Leadership Team.

Specialty Societies engaging with the media on matters or issues unrelated to the RACP or RACP policy are outside the scope of this Media Policy

7.3 Resolution of Conflicts Regarding Media Releases

In rare instances clear differences of paradigm or philosophy may prevent the ability to present a whole of College statement. In such exceptional circumstances, a Division, Faculty or Chapter, State and Territory and Aotearoa New Zealand, may, with approval of the College President, make a statement on behalf of that Division, Faculty or Chapter, State and Territory or Aotearoa New Zealand.

This action should be an avenue of last resort after all other attempts to develop a College statement or announcement have been exhausted. Fellows are also advised to seek guidance and assistance from the Marketing and Communications team or Aotearoa New Zealand communications staff, to ensure that any unintended implications or consequences can be mitigated or avoided completely, maintaining the good reputation of the College, its Fellows, members, Divisions, Faculties, Chapters and related entities.

7.4 Media Conferences

If the matter is of a high enough profile, a media conference may be warranted. During a media conference, media representatives ask questions directly to a College representative. This must be approved by the College President.

The College President should be the main representative of the College for media conferences unless the circumstances are exceptional and warrant the College CEO or other delegate as best placed to speak on the issue.

The College President or spokesperson appearing at the media conference must be thoroughly briefed on the type of questions they will be asked and the responses they should give. The RACP Marketing and Communications team and Aotearoa New Zealand communications staff maintain overall responsibility for these briefings, and the effective management of the media conference.

RACP branding must be on prominent display at any media conference called by the College.

7.5 Media Briefings

Instead of issuing a media release on an issue of concern for the College, the College President or nominated spokesperson might give a background briefing to a journalist or key stakeholder.

All background briefings must be coordinated by the RACP Marketing and Communications team or Aotearoa New Zealand communications staff.

7.6 Media Training

Where applicable and at the discretion of the RACP Marketing and Communications Manager and RACP Executive General Managers of Policy and Advocacy, and Member Services, media training may be offered to identified pre-approved spokespeople.

A pre-approved spokesperson is anyone who has been identified by the College and or its Fellows as a key subject matter expert or key opinion leader in their own field of specialty, practice or research; and has confirmed a willingness to speak on behalf of the RACP as an expert in this field.

Because of cost, externally facilitated media training is generally limited to key office bearers and spokespeople, with the Marketing and Communications team and Aotearoa New Zealand communications staff able to provide on-going advice, support and training for designated RACP media spokespeople.

7.7 Media Monitoring

The Marketing and Communications team and Aotearoa New Zealand communications staff monitor media activity, including College activities. Because of cost, only the Marketing and Communications team and appropriate Aotearoa New Zealand staff, can authorise and/or order media monitoring.

8. OPINION EDITORIAL PIECES

Opinion Editorial pieces (Op-Eds) in which a member writes an article on behalf of the College for an external publication articulating the College's view on a particular issue are considered the same as media releases. They are subject to the same approval and sign off processes as media releases.

9. REPLIES OR INVITED COMMENTS TO ARTICLES

Any article published through a College communications channel such as an eBulletin, an online forum or any media release that invites replies or comments in response should direct those comments or replies to an RACP email address or an RACP communications channel only. Personal email addresses or personal communications channels should not be used by Directors, Non-Member Directors, Members or Staff Members to solicit replies from readers.

10. COLLEGE JOURNALS

The Internal Medicine Journal (IMJ) and the Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health (JPCH) are accessible by the public, and as such are subject to this policy.

11. CONFIDENTIALITY

Fellows and employees must not make unauthorised disclosures of confidential information or use it for purposes other than those for which it was disclosed except as required by law. Requirements imposed by a confidentiality agreement or undertaking with a client or other person, imposed by law, or specified in College policies, procedures or rules must be followed. Where confidential information is to be provided to another party, Fellows and employees must ensure that measures are in place to maintain the confidentiality of that information, such as a legally binding confidentiality agreement.

12. LEAKS, RUMORS AND SPECULATION

The College Media Policy is to generally not comment on speculation and Members and employees should not be drawn into a discussion of leaks, rumours and speculation. Employees and Members should refer enquiries to the Marketing and Communications team in Australia or Aotearoa New Zealand communications staff.

13. CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

Refer to the relevant Crisis Communications Plan, Issues Management Strategy and/or Corporate Communications Plan (as applicable).

14. ACCESS/ AVAILABILITY OF THE RACP MEDIA POLICY

This Media Policy will be stored on the RACP Intranet and Internet. The Media Policy will also be provided to the following:

- all RACP Board Directors, including non-Fellow Directors;
- any Fellow from the Divisions, Faculties or Chapters holding the position of President or President-elect; and
- any College Fellow or trainee who has been nominated as a spokesperson for the College on a specific area of clinical specialty.

The RACP Marketing and Communications team in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand communications staff are responsible for ensuring that any of the above are provided with, or given access to, the most recent version of the Media Policy when it is updated.

15. BREACHES OF THIS POLICY

Any breaches of this policy by any Director, Non-Member Director, Member or Staff Member are a breach of the RACP's Code of Conduct and are subject to consideration and enforcement under the Code of Conduct.

16. COMMENTS ON THIS MEDIA POLICY

The RACP Marketing and Communications team in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand communications staff welcome comments and feedback on this Media Policy from all Fellows, trainees and other interested stakeholders. The RACP Marketing and Communications team in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand communications staff will consider all feedback provided on the Media Policy and collate comments for consideration by the RACP Board at the next scheduled Board Meeting.

Comments can be submitted to the Marketing and Communications team via email at communications@racp.edu.au

17. REVIEW OF THIS MEDIA POLICY

This Media Policy will be reviewed each three years by the Marketing and Communications team in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand communications staff. As part of this review, the

RACP Marketing and Communications team in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand communications staff will be required to consult with all Divisions, Faculties and Chapters and seek feedback and input into the overall effectiveness of the Policy.

Policy Approved on 13 September 2012.

Updated 1 December 2020 to reflect internal structural changes and Governance review recommendations.

Updated 25 May 2021 to reflect Indigenous Strategic Framework and the requirement for Indigenous spokespeople on Indigenous Matters.

Updated 2 May 2023 to add pre-approved spokespeople and suite of key messages.

Updated 24 November to add further detail to pre-approved spokespeople, and approved by the RACP Board.