

Abstract Submitted
for the MAR12 Meeting of
The American Physical Society

Controversial Science and the Media JAMES RIORDON, American Physical Society — The possibility that the OPERA collaboration has detected superluminal neutrinos was among the most controversial topics in physics news in decades, and one of the most widely covered stories in all of science in 2011. Word of the research initially reached journalists and the public prior to publication in peer-reviewed journals. Understandably, many physicists are concerned that the significance of controversial science may be exaggerated or distorted when news organizations report on science at such an early stage. I will offer an overview of the ways the story was promoted by the media relations personnel, and outline the rationales that motivate media relations efforts along with the associated benefits and drawbacks that can result. Finally, I will examine the accuracy and completeness of the superluminal neutrino news stories that ultimately were made available to the general public.

James Riordon
American Physical Society

Date submitted: 10 Nov 2011

Electronic form version 1.4