

GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Purpose:

To help guide residents and faculty in professional practices in regards to social media and networking.

Introduction:

One of our primary responsibilities as healthcare professionals is to protect patient privacy. In addition, we have a responsibility to maintain professionalism at all times and to protect and enhance the reputation of the Olive View-UCLA IM residency. Any communications on line or offline have the potential to affect our reputation as well as compromise patient privacy and therefore the utmost caution must be used when engaging in social media and networking.

Definitions:

Social Media: All online tools that are used to share content, opinions, insights, experiences, perspectives and media.

Guidelines:

- (a) Physicians should be cognizant of standards of patient privacy and confidentiality that must be maintained in all environments, including online, and must refrain from posting identifiable patient information online. (AMA)
- (b) Refrain from using de-identified discussion of patients and specific medical cases on social media.
- (c) Physicians should recognize that actions online and content posted may negatively affect their reputations among patients and colleagues and future employers. Even deleted information may at times be accessed through archived data. Information online should be considered permanent.
- (d) Always adhere to the same principles of professionalism online as you would offline
- (e) To maintain appropriate professional boundaries, physicians should separate personal and professional content online. For example, use your personal email to log on to social network sites, as content that is tagged with your DHS email will appear to represent our medical institution. (FMB)
- (f) Physician–patient interactions on-line should only take place in institutional supported forums. For example, patient communication portals
- (g) When using the Internet for social networking, physicians should use privacy settings to safeguard personal information and content to the extent possible, but should realize that privacy settings are not absolute and may be circumvented. (AMA)
- (h) Always respect the privacy of other people. Do not post photos, opinions or comments about residents, fellows, faculty, or hospital employees without their permission.

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- (i) Be thoughtful about your posts. Social Media posts can be taken out of context and misinterpreted. Remember your comments can be used in public forums i.e. courtrooms. Use sound judgement and think about all potential reactions to a post prior to posting information. Anything written and sent electronically can be forwarded easily to a large unintended audience (including program directors)! (ASG)
- (j) Be considerate: Respect yourself, colleagues and place of employment. Remember, once the words are out there you cannot get them back. Refrain from slurs, profanity and insults, as well as subtler forms of disrespect. (ASG)
- (k) When physicians see content posted by colleagues that appears unprofessional they have a responsibility to bring that content to the attention of the individual, so that he or she can remove it and/or take other appropriate actions and report the incident to the Chief Residents, APD, or PD. (AMA/Federation of MB)
- (l) Cyberbullying by physicians toward any individual is unprofessional behavior and inappropriate

Please remember to refrain from discussing any patient related information in social media forums!

Recommendations based on:

(AMA) AMA Professionalism in the Use of Social Media, AMA, Nov 2010

(FMB) Federation of Medical Boards Model Policy Guidelines for the Appropriate Use of Social Media and Networking in Medical Practice

(ASG) Allscripts Global Social Media Policy Feb 2012