

# Use of Social Media

As described above, behavior of students in the academic setting and beyond must be in keeping with the ideals of the institution and the profession of medicine. The following paragraphs indicate the current standards for behavior that relate to the use of social media.

Each student is responsible for his or her postings on the Internet and in all varieties of social media. In all communications, students are expected to be courteous, respectful, and considerate of others. Inappropriate postings on the Internet or social media will be considered lapses in the standards of professionalism expected of Emory School of Medicine students. Students responsible for such postings are subject to the Conduct Code process in the same manner as for any other unprofessional behavior that occurs outside the academic setting. Students who do not follow these expectations may face disciplinary actions including dismissal from the School of Medicine.

Students within the School of Medicine are urged to consider the following before posting any comments, videos, pictures, or essays to the Internet or a social media site:

- There is no such thing as an "anonymous" post. Furthermore, any posts or comments submitted for others to read should be posted with full identification of the writer. Where your connection to Emory is apparent, make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of Emory. A disclaimer, such as, "The views expressed on this [blog; website] are my own and do not reflect the views of my University or the School of Medicine" are required.
- Internet activities may be permanently linked to the author, such that all future employment may be hampered by inappropriate behavior on the Internet
- Making postings "private" does not preclude others copying and pasting comments on public websites. "Private" postings that become public are still subject to sanctions described in the School of Medicine Conduct Code.
- Do not share information in a way that may violate any laws or regulations (i.e. HIPAA). Disclosing information about patients without written permission of the patient and the School of Medicine, including photographs or potentially identifiable information is strictly prohibited. This rule also applies to deceased patients.
- For Emory's protection as well as your own, it is critical that you show proper respect for the laws governing intellectual property, copyright and fair use of copyrighted material owned by others, including Emory's own copyrights and brands. Curricular materials developed by Emory faculty and staff or faculty/staff of other medical schools or educational institutions should not be distributed or redistributed. When in doubt, students should seek guidance regarding appropriate use of such materials.
- Do not share confidential or proprietary information that may compromise Emory's research efforts, business practices or security.

In addition to the above, the [Social Media Guidelines for Medical Students and Physicians](#), created by the American Medical Student Association, should be followed. These guidelines are included here:

In all situations, including on social media sites, members of the medical profession should always represent him/herself in a manner that reflects values of professionalism,

accountability, integrity, honor, acceptance of diversity, and commitment to ethical behavior.

For purposes of these guidelines, "social media" includes Internet and mobile-based applications that are built on user-generated shared content. Social networks—but not limited to, blogging, microblogging (e.g., Twitter), networking sites (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn), podcasts and video sites (e.g., Flickr, YouTube)—offer opportunities for communication, information/experience sharing, collaborative learning, professional interactions and outreach.

## Guidelines for social networking

- **Be professional.** As medical students and physicians, we should represent our profession well. Adhere to rules of ethical and professional conduct at all times.
- **Be responsible.** Carefully consider content and exercise good judgment as anything you post can have immediate and/or long-term consequences and carry the potential for significant public impact and viral spread of content. Therefore, all statements must be true and not misleading. Make sure that you differentiate opinions from facts.
- **Maintain separation.** Avoid interacting with current or past patients through social media, and avoid requests to give medical advice through social media.
- **Be transparent/use disclaimers.** Disclose yourself and provide an appropriate disclaimer that distinguishes your views from those of the clinic, hospital system and/or University with which you are associated (while at the same time, being careful not to violate any social media policy to which you may be subject by such organizations). Without specific direction from the appropriate personnel, you may not present yourself as an official representative or spokesperson for said organizations. Also, be sure to reveal any conflicts of interest and be honest about your credentials as a medical student or physician (resident or otherwise).
- **Be respectful.** Do not use defamatory, vulgar, libelous and potentially inflammatory language and do not display language or photographs that imply disrespect for any individual or group because of age, race, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, marital status, genetic information, military status, or any other protected characterization or group.
- **Follow copyright laws.** Comply with copyright laws. Make sure you have the right to use material before publishing.
- **Protect client/patient information.** Do not discuss confidential information and follow standards of patient privacy and confidentiality and regulations outlined in Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 20 U.S.C. Section 1232g). Remember you could personally face a HIPAA violation if there are enough details in the post for patients to recognize themselves.
- **Avoid politics.** Political endorsements or advocacy positions should generally be avoided.
- **Comply with all legal restrictions and obligations.** Remember use of social networking sites or weblogs can carry legal and professional ramifications. Comments made in an unprofessional manner can be used in

legal, professional, or other disciplinary proceedings (i.e., hearings before a State Medical Licensing Board).

- **Be aware of risks to privacy and security.** Read the site's Terms of Use and Privacy Policy. Be cognizant of continuous changes in these sites and closely monitor the privacy settings of the social network accounts to optimize your privacy and security.

Adapted from the Social Media Guidelines for the American Medical Student Association (AMSA).

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