



Social Media Policy

Guidelines for Postgraduate resident and fellows in the Public Forum

Social media are becoming increasingly present in society, and are being rapidly integrated into the lives of healthcare professionals. Social media for the purpose of these recommendations is defined as any electronic forum that connects trainees with faculty, other health professionals, other trainees, patients, and the public. Such forums include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+, Wikipedia, Blog Posts, and LinkedIn.

All residents must be aware of and respect the relevant policies and regulations regarding confidentiality in the hospital(s) and province(s) in which they are working. The Code of Ethics of the College of physicians of Quebec is available for review in the relevant section at:

www.cmq.org

[Code of Conduct](#) (Chapter III, Division I, #20.2)

I. Considerations when using social media:

1. Maintain a safe professional distance between patients, colleagues and supervisors online.
2. It is discouraged to accept invitations to become online 'friends' with patients and their families.
3. Avoid profanity and substance abuse associated with your online profile. Conduct yourself online as you would in public places. Your online identity is a reflection of you thus, it is important to maintain professionalism.
4. Do not discuss clinical encounters online. It is critical to maintain the confidentiality of patients. Failure to do so represents a serious lapse in professional judgement and can result in sanctions.
5. Never post photos of clinical encounters online. This is also a breach of confidentiality. Moreover, photographing a patient, for any purpose, requires clearly documented written consent from that patient or any legal guardian.

6. Always treat your colleagues with respect. Remember that publishing a photo online or an audiovisual clip of anyone requires their consent, including attending physicians, residents, and medical students. Do not publicize your frustrations. If you feel as though you have been mistreated or are frustrated with any aspect of your training program, you are advised to follow the formal process for addressing such matters.

7. Never discriminate, publicly or online. Although easy to click a button to post a comment online which might be inappropriate, but it is very important to remember that by posting such a comment it might be linked to you for an indefinite period of time, and could jeopardize professional advancement.

II. Recommendations For "Cleaning Up" Your Social Media/Online Identity:

1. Search your own name on the web and ensure that there is no inappropriate content associated with you online.
2. Subscribe to Google Alerts. This will keep you informed if any new public information is posted on the Internet about you.
3. Review the privacy settings of all your social media accounts.
4. Review your friend list on a regular basis.
5. Read through your blogs, tweets, and profiles. Remove any posts that might be considered unprofessional/inappropriate.
6. Review your institutional guidelines and familiarize yourself with them. Ignorance is not an acceptable excuse for unprofessional behavior.

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