



McGill

Faculty of
Medicine

Faculté de
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UGME Guidelines for Social Media Use

Approved By: MDCM Program Committee

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Updated by: Governance Officer, Medical Education

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Pertinent to: MDCM students

Purpose: General guidelines on social media and public forum use for the MDCM program.

Preamble

It is critical to learn, adopt, and continually exhibit the values of respect and integrity towards colleagues, instructors, patients, and the public in order to develop and maintain the behaviours associated with being a medical professional while protecting patient confidentiality. The guidelines that follow are written in consideration of the long-term consequences of posting to social media, as future employers look at such platforms and online lapses in professionalism can follow an individual for a long time.

For the purpose of the recommendations listed below, a social medium is defined as any digital forum that connects trainees with faculty, other health professionals, other trainees, patients, and the public. Such forums include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, YouTube, Google, Wikipedia, blogs, podcasts, and LinkedIn.

Relevant policies and regulations

1. All UGME and dentistry students 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, as well as those of the faculties they belong to.
 - 1.1. McGill University's [Faculty of Medicine Code of Conduct](#);
 - 1.2. The [Code of Ethics of the College of physicians of Quebec](#), specifically Chapter III, Division I, #20;
 - 1.3. UGME's policy on [Student Professional Behaviours](#);
 - 1.4. UGME's [Anatomy Lab Code of Conduct](#);
 - 1.5. For dentistry students, the [Code of Ethics of the Quebec Order of Dentists](#).

Guidelines

1. Exercise caution and maintain a professional online distance between patients, colleagues, and supervisors.
 - 1.1. It is discouraged to accept invitations to become online ‘friends’ or ‘followers’ with patients and their families. If this situation is unavoidable, dual online identities may be best to separate personal and professional interactions.
2. Always treat patients, peers, body donors, colleagues, staff, and professors with respect.
3. Avoid profanity and use professional language at all times if posting on social media, as online profiles are a reflection of an individual. It is best to be proactive in creating and maintaining online identities, as lapses can follow an individual for years.
4. Never discuss clinical encounters online so as to maintain the confidentiality of patients. Failure to do so represents a lapse in professional judgement and can result in sanctions. Even a discussion that has no identifying information is unacceptable and should be avoided.
5. Never post photos of clinical or teaching encounters online, as this is a breach of confidentiality.
 - 5.1. Photographing a patient, for any purpose, requires clearly documented written consent from the patient or legal guardian.
 - 5.1.1. Additional consent is required for online publication, as receiving permission to take a picture of a patient is not explicit consent to post said picture online.
 - 5.2. Publishing a photo or an audiovisual clip from a teaching setting also requires consent, including consent from professors, teaching assistants, laboratory demonstrators, attending physicians, other health care professionals or trainees, residents, and medical or dental students.
6. Never discriminate, publicly or online. Although it is easy to click a button to post a comment online which might be inappropriate, it is very important to remember that posting such a comment might be linked to you for an indefinite period of time, and could jeopardize professional advancement.
7. Be clear that thoughts and views published on personal social media platforms are your own, and do not reflect those of other students, colleagues, health institutions, or the University.

Recommendations for protecting and maintaining your online identity and social media accounts

1. Search your name on the web to ensure that no inappropriate content is associated with you.
2. Subscribe to Google Alerts to stay informed if 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 lists on a regular basis.
5. Review your blogs, tweets, and profiles and remove posts that might be considered unprofessional/inappropriate.
6. Review institutional guidelines on professionalism and social media use, as ignorance is not an acceptable excuse for unprofessional behavior.
7. Use different passwords on each social media platform.
8. Avoid selecting the “remember me” option on public computers.

9. Avoid posting information about scheduling on social media.

Resources

1. McGill University – [Test your knowledge of social media policies](#)
2. McGill University – [Social media guidelines](#)
3. Canadian Federation of Medical Student – [Recommendations For Social Media](#)

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