



Policy Name: Social and Other Media Guidelines

Pertinent to: Students

Purpose: Guidelines for Medical Students when using Social and Other Media.

Writing or Speaking

Students who express personal opinions in a public forum (e.g., letter to the editor) must be careful to state that their opinions are personal and that they are not speaking on behalf of the medical school, the program, the Faculty or the University. It is permissible to sign the letter as “Name, medical student registered at McGill University”. It is not permissible to sign off as “Name, McGill, Faculty of Medicine”. If the student is an officer of the MSS and is authorized to speak on behalf of the MSS on a given matter, then s/he can identify her/himself with the position held in the student organization. The Code of Ethics of physicians of the Collège des médecins du Québec has requirements of the physician when expressing medical opinions through any public information media. Students who wish to do so have an obligation to familiarize themselves with these requirements.

Social Media

What is social media?

Social media is defined as a group of internet-based applications that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content (1). Colleagues, patients, family, friends and even the public may access the content. Such platforms include: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+, Wikipedia, Blog Posts, and LinkedIn etc...

I. Considerations when using social media:

1. When describing a clinical encounter, it is critical to remove identifying information that may jeopardize the privacy of your colleagues, other physicians and confidentiality of patients. Failure to do so can result in sanctions.
2. Profanity, discriminatory language and depiction of substance abuse are amongst the most commonly reported misconduct on social media platforms (2). Your online identity is a reflection of your personal and professional identity and thus it is important to maintain professionalism.
3. It is advisable not to accept “friend” requests from patients, their families, and instructors online. If unavoidable, consider creating dual online identities, separating personal from professional interactions (3).
4. Posting photographs of clinical encounters is a breach of patient confidentiality. Whenever taking a photo, follow institutional regulations and obtain consent. You may be required to get permission from your attending physician in addition to the patient or legal guardian, if applicable.

5. Treat colleagues with respect. Don't publicize your frustrations. If you feel as though you have been mistreated or are frustrated with any aspect of your school related encounter, follow the formal process for addressing such matters. When in doubt, visit "McGill Student Services" to look for appropriate resources to get assistance.
6. Misconduct on social media platforms may be linked to you for an indefinite period of time and could jeopardize professional advancement. Inform yourself of the limitations of privacy settings and exercise caution when interacting on social media.

References:

1. Kaplan, A. & Haenlein, M. (2010) Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, 53, 59-68.
2. Chretien KC, Greyson SR, Chretien JP, et al. (2009) Online posting of unprofessional content by medical students. *JAMA* 302:1309-1315.
3. Leiker M. (2011) When to "friend" a patient: social media tips for health care professionals. *WMJ* 110:42-43.

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

1. Search your own name on the web
2. Subscribe to Google Alerts
3. Review the privacy settings of your online accounts
4. Review your friend list annually
5. Censor your old blogs, tweets and profiles
6. Review your institutional guidelines

III. Test your knowledge: <https://www.mcgill.ca/thewelloffice/resources/yourwellness/social>