



Use of Internet and Social Networking Sites Policy

Purpose/Intent: This policy provides guidance regarding the appropriate use using the internet and social networking websites for communication.

Summary: Inappropriate internet and social networking communication is unprofessional and may be a source of liability and embarrassment for individuals and institutions.

UCFCOM supports the proper use of social media and recognizes the need to manage the use of social media in the workplace to protect the reputation of the College, participating hospitals and clinical sites as well as to ensure the privacy of their staff, faculty and patients. This policy establishes the standards to ensure that use of social media by all Residents is appropriate and consistent, and that personal use of social media does not interfere with work responsibilities.

Definition of Social Media:

Social Media includes but is not limited to blogs, online discussion boards, online communities, social networks, microblogs, photo and video sharing sites. Examples include, but are not limited to Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube and online comments sections.

General Information:

Residents need to be cognizant that when posting content online, they are representing the university, the participating hospitals, the clinical sites and the medical community. Residents are subject to the University Use of Information Technology and Resource Policy 4-002. Residents should be aware that:

- All material published on the internet should be considered public and permanent.
- Any information posted on a social networking site may be disseminated (whether intended or not) to a larger audience, and that the post may be taken out of context or remain available online in perpetuity.
- There is no expectation of privacy when using institutional computers and electronic devices.
- Residents should carefully consider and implement the privacy settings on all social networking sites.
- Limit Internet use for social networking to your personal time only and by utilizing your personal equipment.

Professionalism

The tone and content of all electronic conversations should remain professional and respectful. To use social media and social networking sites professionally residents should:

- Refrain from posting unprofessional images or behavior that may tarnish their professional image and impair their ability to practice medicine effectively, become licensed, and/or participate in positions of trust and responsibility within an institution or within the community.
- Never post any material that is obscene, defamatory, profane, libelous, threatening, harassing, abusive, hateful, or embarrassing to another person or any other entity.

- Never use social media to discriminate or harass any individual based on race, color, gender, religion, national origin, disability, age, veteran status, genetic information or any other characteristic protected by state or federal law.
- Never use social media to impersonate another user or mislead a recipient about one's identity.
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Protecting Privacy/Confidentiality

Just as in the hospital or ambulatory setting, patient privacy and confidentiality must be protected at all times, especially on social media and social networking websites. Online communications are held to the same laws and policies as offline communications.

- Privacy and confidentiality between physician and patient are of the utmost importance. All health care providers have an obligation to maintain the privacy of health information as outlined by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).
- Identifiable protected health information (PHI) should never be published/posted on the internet. This applies even if no one other than the patient is able to identify him/herself from the posted information. Patient images should be only obtained with written consent, and then only using institutional hardware, and never using Residents' personal equipment. Patient images must be stored and/or transmitted only using institutional hardware, and never on personal equipment or posted online.
- Each individual is responsible for the content of his/her own posts and blogs, including any legal liability incurred (HIPAA or other).
- Residents should never mention patients' room numbers, refer to them by code names, post pictures of them, or post any identifiable information of patients.
- Transitions of care/sign-out of patients must not be done by routine email or unencrypted data file sharing sites.
- Personal phones, personal cameras and other personal devices shall not be used to photograph, film or record patients or to receive, store or transmit individually identifiable information about patients.

Respecting Copyright laws

- Residents must avoid discussing any sensitive, proprietary, confidential, or financial information about any institution. Any material posted by a Resident that identifies an institution in which the Resident has worked or is working should have prior written authorization by the appropriate official of that institution.
- Unauthorized use of institutional information or logos is prohibited, including but not limited to UCF and affiliates.
- No institutional phone numbers, e-mail addresses, or web addresses may be posted to a website without written permission from an authorized institutional official.

Interacting with Patients

To maintain appropriate professional boundaries and compliance with HIPAA:

- Residents should not “friend”, “connect with”, or “follow” patients on any social networking site or review patient profiles on these sites.
- It is never appropriate to provide specific medical advice to a patient on a social networking site.

References:

Federation of State Medical Boards. Model Policy Guidelines for the Appropriate Use of Social Media and Social Networking in Medical Practice. Available at <http://www.fsmb.org/pdf/pub-social-media-guidelines.pdf>

Posting with Caution

Postings within social networking sites are subject to the same professionalism standards as any other personal interaction. Remember that online activities, even those that seem private, can become public if content is copied, forwarded or printed. Text, images and video can remain on the internet even after efforts have been made to remove them. Residents should routinely monitor their own “internet presence” to ensure that their personal and professional information posted by them or others is accurate and professional. This includes making an effort that they are not “tagged” in images posted by others that might be seen as portraying them in an unprofessional manner. Residents should ensure that they have implemented appropriate privacy settings to avoid inadvertent dissemination of personal information to others outside of their control.

Residents are strongly encouraged to take a moment to reflect before every posting to a social media site to consider if the posting could potentially violate any patient privacy laws and/or the content of this policy. If there is any doubt, resident should not continue with the posting.

Policy Violations

Failure to comply with the provisions of this policy will result in corrective action up to and including termination from the Residency program.

This policy governs all GME programs sponsored by UCF. However, hospitals and clinical teaching sites may have additional policies related to the use of social media that are more restrictive and Residents are subject to the policies of their respective teaching sites. Individual residency program may provide additional policies.