Social Media and Medical Education Programs: Professionalism, Policy, and Opportunity in the Age of Facebook

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Disclosures

• All presenters have no financial conflicts of interest and will not be discussing off label drugs.
Questions To Answer

• What is social media?
• Why is social media relevant to medical education? What are the risks and benefits?
• How is a social media policy created?
• How can I use social media as a positive tool for education?
What is social media?

**Definition:** Internet based sites, messages, or apps that allow for the exchange of ideas and person-to-person communication

- Facebook ( >1 billion users)
- Twitter ( >200 million users)
- Instagram ( >150 million users)
- List-serves
- Websites
- Blogs
Why is social media relevant to medical trainees?

National Use of Social Media by Pediatric Residents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Media Outlet</th>
<th>Percent of Residents Using Social Media Outlet</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blog</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physician Listserve</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>29%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Social Media</td>
<td>95%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Percent of Residents Using Social Media Outlet (From 287 Resident Respondents)
How does social media impact medical trainees?

What are some of the **BENEFITS** you have thought of, heard about, or experienced?
Resident Qualitative Data on Benefits of Social Media: Professional

- “Communicating with the public in a greater way to educate and spread accurate info”
- “Provide greater accessibility to patients reluctant to reach out for medical advice..”
- “Peer networking, discussion forums, continued education”
- “Sense of community. Improved connectedness. Professional development”
Resident Qualitative Data on Benefits of Social Media: Personal

• “Feel like a normal person”

• “Makes people seem more real”

• “Support, especially during residency as lots of people are far from home and family may not understand the stressors or the happy things that residents are going through”
How does social media impact medical trainees?

What are some of the **RISKS** you have thought of, heard about, or experienced?
Resident Qualitative Data on Drawbacks of Social Networking

• “…jeopardizes our ability to maintain a professional image. I have seen many residents post things that, if they were to be read by patients...make doctors as a whole appear unprofessional. Some of these posts give people the impression that we are judgmental of our patients.”

• “Patient confidentiality, affecting reputation of hospital/program”
Resident Qualitative Data on Drawbacks of Social Networking

• “I think that residents often put too much information about their shifts at work and what patients they are seeing that day”
• “Everything posted online can be made public. I’ve found attendings, program directors online as friends of friends with inappropriate posts…”
• “Too easy to be unprofessional”
• “Medical-legal implications, inappropriate access to physicians by patients”
Dangers of Social Media: Fact or Fiction?

- Chretien KC, et al. Online posting of Unprofessional Content by Medical Students. JAMA. 2009
  - Survey of Deans of Student Affairs at AAMC programs
  - 60% reported incidences of unprofessional content

  - 18% reported an incident leading to reprimanding of housestaff
Dangers of Social Media: Fact or Fiction?

Inappropriate Social Media Use Resulting in Disciplinary Action Reported by Pediatric Residents

- Unprofessional behavior
- Disparaging remarks about hospital/co-worker
- HIPPA violation
- Inappropriate patient contact

# of Residents Reporting Type of Inappropriate Use

Stanford Children’s Health | Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital Stanford
For doctors, social media a tricky case

By Chelsea Conaboy
Globe Staff / April 20, 2011

Some want Mercy Hospital doctor fired because of Facebook post

KMOV.com
Posted on February 3, 2013 at 9:29 PM
Updated Monday, Feb 4 at 8:56 PM
Outline: Steps to Creating a Policy

• Define the purpose of the policy
• Define your specific concerns
• Review existing polices for additional ideas
• Decide what to put in your policy
• Consider how your policy components effect other stakeholders
• Write your policy
• Publicize and Operationalize
Steps to Creating a Policy

- Define the purpose of the policy
- Define your specific concerns
- Review existing policies for additional ideas
- Decide what to put in your policy
- Consider how your policy components affect other stakeholders
- Write your policy
- Publicize and Operationalize
What is the overall purpose of your policy and what are your biggest concerns?
Steps to Creating a Policy

1. Define the purpose of the policy
2. Define your specific concerns
3. Review existing policies for additional ideas
4. Decide what to put in your policy
5. Consider how your policy components effect other stakeholders
6. Write your policy
7. Publicize and Operationalize
Protect patient confidentiality

Monitor your social media use to insure information is accurate and appropriate

 Maintain appropriate patient boundaries, consider personal and professional accounts

Alert your colleagues to unprofessional content so they can remove it

Recognize that online actions may negatively affect your reputation...your medical career...and trust in the medical profession
Themes in Existing Social Media Policies

• Protecting patient confidentiality
• Proper physician-patient relationships
• How to safely provide information to patients
• Protecting personal professional image
• Protecting institutional image
Steps to Creating a Policy

• Define the purpose of the policy
• Define your specific concerns
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• Write your policy
• Publicize and Operationalize
Decide What to Put in Your Policy

• Definite: What are things residents **MUST** do/not do?

• Gray Zone: What are things residents **SHOULD** do/not do?
How Should Social Media Be Used By Trainees?

Resident Agreement With Potential Policy Components (N=284-288)

- Should Be Able to Use Any Language: 56%
- Should Not Friend Patients: 69%
- Should Be Able to Show Affiliation: 93%
- Risk for HIPAA Violation: 71%
- Risk for Unprofessional Behavior: 86%
What Authority Should a Program Have Over Social Media Use?

Resident Agreement With Each Potential Area of Authority (N=244-248)

- Remove Posts that are Unprofessional: 57%
- Remove Posts that Violate HIPAA: 92%
- Program Should Screen Accounts: 7%
- Liable to be Disciplined: 55%
Steps to Creating a Policy

• Define the purpose of the policy
• Define your specific concerns
• Review existing polices for additional ideas
• Decide what to put in your policy
• Consider how your policy components effect other stakeholders
• Write your policy
• Publicize and Operationalize
Considerations When Writing Your Own Policy

• Find out if a social media policy already exists from your affiliated hospital and/or medical school
• Explore institutional rules and any controls on creating new policies
• Talk with legal/risk management departments about local and federal laws
Publicize and Operationalize

• Post your policy on your residency webpage or somewhere easily accessible
• Have an interactive session about eprofessionalism at the introduction of your social media policy
• Continue training sessions with residents to emphasize of attention to these issues
3 Case Studies (see handouts)
Incorporating social media in your educational program

• What are your goals?
  – Augment your educational program using Social Media
    • Stimulate robust interaction
    • Amplify experiences or voices
  – Train residents on how to use Social Media in their future practice
How do MDs in practice use social media?

• Curating information through links, publications, guidelines from trusted sources
• Health advocacy – pushing correct information to public and counteracting bad information
• Social Media chats with other physicians, patient advocates, patients
### Social Media Platforms – an limited and evolving list

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amplification</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Attention - required</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="facebook" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="twitter" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Instagram" /></td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Pinterest" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Blogs" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="WordPress" /></td>
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*Note: The table represents a limited and evolving list of social media platforms.*
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### Advantages

- Very committed user base
- Hashtags make it easy to find similar subjects
- Robust interaction
- Great for amplifying message, listening to a lot of voices, curating information

### Disadvantages

- Many residents are not on Twitter
- Limited to 140 characters
- Too public?
- Requires too much attention?
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### Advantages

<table>
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<th>Advantage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most people already use Facebook and use it often</td>
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<tr>
<td>Easy to have discussion in comments</td>
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### Disadvantages

<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td>Difficult to post long text</td>
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<tr>
<td>Too public?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blurring of personal/work lines (See Social Media Policy section!)</td>
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Blogs

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Easy to understand and use</td>
<td>Users must actively go to site (information not pushed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suitable for text, links, pictures</td>
<td>Not as much “wow” factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not require constant attention</td>
<td>Less amplification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have complete control over content!</td>
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How do you choose?

• What Social Media platforms do your trainees use?
• How much amplification, interaction, attention do you want?
• Don’t violate your e-professionalism policies
• Don’t get tied down to one technology
• Be agile
Work-in-progress: The Parenting Blog Project
The internet as diagnostic tool...

1. 59% of U.S. adults have looked online for health information in the past year.

2. 35% of U.S. adults say they have used the internet to try to figure out what medical condition they or another may have. We call them “online diagnosers.”

3. 53% of online diagnosers talked with a clinician about what they found online.

4. 41% of online diagnosers had their condition confirmed by a clinician.

Source: Pew Research Center
Take Home Points

• Social media use is highly prevalent within the medical community and has vast opportunities for both positive and negative effects

• Creating a social media policy can act as a framework for residents as to what is considered appropriate and inappropriate online behavior
References


• Chretien KC, et al. Online posting of Unprofessional Content by Medical Students. *JAMA.* 2009