Social Media Policy

GMEC approved: February 2015
GMEC revised and approved: October 2016

Purpose:

This policy is intended to be used as a guide to encourage School of Medicine (SOM) residents who use social media to protect themselves from the unintended consequences of such practices and to maintain public trust. The term “social media” should be broadly understood for purposes of this policy to include but not be limited to blogs, wikis, microblogs, message boards, chat rooms, electronic newsletters, online forums, and social networking sites. The SOM is a principled organization, and as such, has an interest in its residents being above reproach in the eyes of their peers and the public. This document is crafted to help the residents navigate the continually changing world of social media.

Participating thoughtfully in social networking and other similar Internet opportunities can support personal expression, enable individuals to have a professional presence online, foster collegiality and camaraderie within the healthcare and biomedical research professions, and provide opportunity to widely disseminate public health messages, scientific observations, and related communications. However, social networks, blogs, and other forms of communication online also create new challenges to interpersonal relationships. Medical professionals, including those still in training, should weigh a number of considerations when maintaining a presence online:

Policy

WSUSOM GME recognizes that Residents may have their own personal Social Media accounts or participate in Social Media forums outside of the workplace. Nothing in this section will interfere with or otherwise be used to discriminate against Residents who use personal Social Media on non-working time for discussion of wages, hours or other terms and conditions of employment or for political, or other lawful purposes

Privacy and Confidentiality

- SOM residents must be cognizant of, and adhere to, standards of patient privacy and confidentiality in all environments, including online, and must refrain from posting potentially identifiable patient information on personal accounts or websites, when valid, written permission was not given by the patient.
- Posting any patient information, photos, commentary, content or images may be a breach in confidentiality that could be harmful to the patient and may be a violation of federal privacy laws, including but not limited to provisions within the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Furthermore, while HIPAA is a United States federal law, the ethical principles that underlie it extend to patients seen outside the country as well.
- Sensitive information such as medical records or proprietary information is never to be transmitted by social media.
Professionalism

- Professional conduct (see Professionalism Policy) must be adhered to at all times, including during the use of social media. The public holds physicians to a high standard of professional conduct.
- When writing online as representatives of the SOM about experiences as health professionals – residents must reveal any existing conflicts of interest and be honest about their credentials.
- SOM residents may not use their professional position to develop personal relationships with patients, whether online or in person. SOM residents are discouraged from interacting with current or past patients on personal social networking sites such as Facebook.
- SOM residents who do not maintain the school’s professional code of conduct are subject to disciplinary action. The SOM reserves the right to ask SOM residents to edit, modify, review or delete any posting that violates the school’s professional code of conduct. SOM residents assume all risks related to the security, privacy and confidentiality of their posts.
- Residents must not represent or imply that they are expressing the opinion of the organization by using hospital or institution proprietary information such as SOM/hospital logos, trademarks, images, or related representations unless granted permission in writing from the Executive Director, Office of Marketing and Publications, Wayne State University or representative from the affiliated hospital. Trainees must comply with the current hospital or institutional policies with respect to such information.
- SOM residents should recognize that actions online and content posted may negatively affect their reputations and those of their colleagues at the SOM among patients and colleagues, may have consequences for their medical, teaching, and/or research careers, and could undermine public trust in the medical community. One should always remember that he or she is representing the medical community.
- To maintain appropriate professional boundaries, SOM residents should consider separating personal and professional content online. For professional use, SOM residents are strongly encouraged to use their med.wayne.edu email addresses. The med.wayne.edu email address is required for all communication with the SOM (see Email policy).
- When using the Internet for social networking, SOM residents should use the maximum privacy settings to safeguard personal information and content, but should realize that privacy settings are not absolute and that once on the Internet, content is likely there permanently. Thus, SOM residents should routinely monitor their own Internet presence to ensure that the personal and professional information on their own sites and content posted about them by others is accurate and appropriate. One should assume that everything he or she writes, exchanges or receives on a social media site is public.
- SOM residents acting in a public capacity are an ambassador of the SOM while in that capacity. Controversial subjects should be discussed thoughtfully, respectfully, and in a professional manner.
- SOM residents should take caution not to post information that is ambiguous or that could be misconstrued or taken out of context.
- SOM residents should be aware that content posted in any format (g., video, song, and etc.) may be taken out of context by others and used for an unintended purpose. Posting online is public and permanent and can be used by anyone without prior request to the original posters. Always
consider how people outside of your target group will review the content.

- SOM residents are encouraged to avoid posting material on residency group sites that could be seen as marginalizing to any individual or group; for example, regarding gender, race, religion, social background or sexual orientation.
- SOM residents are encouraged to avoid posting comments about the health, weight, attitude, or lifestyle choices of SOM faculty members, trainees, academic staff members, and other residents.
- When SOM residents see content posted by colleagues that appears unprofessional, they have a responsibility to bring that content to the attention of the individual, so that he or she can remove it and/or take other appropriate actions. If, in the opinion of the observer, the behavior significantly violates professional norms and the individual does not take appropriate action to resolve the situation, the observer should report the matter to the GME office and DIO.
- SOM residents should familiarize themselves with relevant Federal, state, and local laws governing online activities. Any issue of concern on social media (including threats, violence, suicide, slander, cyberbullying, etc.) should be reported immediately to the Wayne State University Police Department (phone #:313 577-2222) and/or GME office. When uncertain whether these laws are followed, please refer to a residency administrator before posting.

Procedures

Inappropriate use of the internet and social networking sites may result in:

- Professionalism academic remediation
- Discipline for breach of hospital or institutional policy
  - Loss of computer privileges at hospital or WSUSOM
  - Potential suspension
  - Potential dismissal
  - Other assignments and/or remediation plans based upon the infraction

- Any violation of HIPAA can result in potential dismissal from program as well as possible criminal and/or civil penalties. A violation of HIPAA may also negatively impact your license to practice medicine.

Monitoring:

Compliance with the institutional and individual program’s policy will be monitored by the GMEC via:

- Annual Program Evaluation
- Special Review of the Program
- ACGME Annual Resident Survey
- Annual GME resident evaluation of the program
- Resident Quality Council
- Anonymous contact via hotline and/or online complaint form

Adapted from the WSU SOM Social Media Policy
See also

WSUPG Social Media Policy: https://upgdocs.ellucid.com/documents/view/434 (secure site)


WSU Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources: https://wayne.edu/policies/acceptable-use/