

Guidelines for Maintaining Professional Image

Reading time:

Jayson Nagpiing

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It is important for all healthcare practitioners to actively conduct yourself professionally and personally appropriately and to maintain a profile expected of a health professional because of:

- increased regulation and supervision of health care professionals
- explicit codes of conduct issued by Ahpra
- patients who seek out practitioners with a good reputation
- strong community and media interest in healthcare
- commonplace investigation of inappropriate conduct
- the consequences for inappropriate conduct



Medical and Dental Board Codes of Conduct:

Ahpra have codes of conduct for medical and dental practitioners. You need to be very mindful of these and it is this in which your conduct will be assessed. The following in italics is quoted from that code:

10. Professional behaviour refers to:

- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Professional boundaries
- 10.3 Reporting obligations (to Ahpra)
- 10.4 Vexatious complaints
- 10.5 Appropriate medical records
- 10.6 Professional indemnity insurance requirement
- 10.7 Appropriate advertising of medical services
- 10.8 Fair medico legal, insurance assessments
- 10.9 Truthful and honest medical reports, certificates (sickness, death), legal documents and evidence
- 10.10 Accurate and truthful CV
- 10.11 Cooperation with any investigation of your practice, a complaint or enquiry

10.12 Recognise, announce and resolve any conflict of interest

10.13 Be honest and transparent in financial arrangements with patients

4. Working with other healthcare professionals:

4.2 Respect for Medical colleagues and other health professionals

Good relationships with medical colleagues, nurses and other health professionals strengthen the doctor-patient relationship and enhances patient care.

Good medical practice involves:

- Clear, effective, respectful and prompt communication with others
- Acknowledging and respecting the contribution of others
- Behaving professionally and courteously to colleagues including when using social media

4.4 Teamwork

Good medical practice involves:

- mutual respect and clear communication
- understanding any constraints
- clearly delineating roles and informing patients
- understanding the nature and consequences of bullying and harassment, and seeking to eliminate such behaviour in the workplace.



Social Media

Summary of new Board Social media policy

Registered health practitioners should only post information that is not in breach of code of conduct and advertising guidelines by:

- Complying with professional obligations (legal, ethical and professional as per codes)
- Complying with confidentiality and privacy obligations
- Presenting information in an unbiased, evidence based context, and
- Not making unsubstantiated claims (Advertising code)

Policies are designed to “protect the public”.

Social media rules

- Do not intertwine private and professional personas
- Treat emails as a written clinical record; write as though anyone will read it and keep a copy on the patient file. Maintain

boundaries regarding content and address content, privacy and security issues

- Do not promote prescription medications or other products
- Ensure your practice has a social media policy
- Keep a balance between your private/public life – always ensure patient privacy is adhered to.
- If you wouldn't say it, don't type it!

References

Medical Board of Australia

Codes, guidelines and policies: medicalboard.gov.au

Dental Board of Australia

Policies, Codes, Guidelines and FAQ: dentalboard.gov.au

For both boards, note additional guidelines of:

- social media policy
- mandatory notifications
- advertising
- various other Fact Sheets and FAQs

Australian Medical Association

Social media and the medical profession: ama.com.au
