

Social Media Conduct for Healthcare Pros



Reading time:
Jayson Nagpiing

Last Modified on 01/05/2024 11:44 am AEST

Tags: [Medical Practitioner](#) | [Dental Practitioner](#) | [Article](#) | [Technology](#) | [Risk Education](#)

Avoiding professional commentary on Facebook

The rule of patient confidentiality is paramount. All practitioners need to be very careful where any communication occurs with a patient (or even prospective patient) that may compromise boundaries of an acceptable doctor-patient relationship.

In New South Wales a disgruntled patient made a complaint to the Medical Board after reading some nasty comments made by the patient's doctor on Facebook.

This resulted in a caution from the Board being issued to the doctor for making "flippant and derogatory" comments about patients and breaching confidentiality.

All doctors need to be mindful of professional boundaries and avoid accepting patients as 'friends' on social networking sites. In this way any blurring of the lines between friendship and a professional relationship can be prevented.

In another instance, a practitioner wrote about his experience with a certain drug in a blog which drew requests for further commentary from someone clearly intending to rely on the response for some personal crusade, and another response from a person who appears to have seen this as an opportunity for a teleconsultation. Both could have been professionally disastrous.

Some university medical schools in Australia now lecture students against the inappropriate use of social media such as posting comments/opinions of a professional nature in a public domain and warn of the consequences. The fallout from such activity can be serious and may ultimately affect your registration.

- Avoid professional commentary and/or discussion in any public social network
- Be aware that any professional one-on-one discussion could be seen as a teleconsultation
- Never discuss patient or employment related issues, regardless of how well you believe they have been de-identified
- Whatever you write is difficult to retract.

Resources

"Social media and the medical profession – A Guide to online professionalism for medical practitioners and medical students"
– <https://ama.com.au/social-media-and-medical-profession>

Related articles





CAREER LEADERSHIP PROGRAM >