

Session 3: Digital Professionalism

Physician use of social media is on the rise and is evolving as a means of communication. The boundary between personal and public aspects of physician's lives on the web can often be unclear. Even if inadvertent, breaches of patient privacy can occur via Facebook, Twitter or other media despite using secure privacy settings. So how can physicians use social media safely?

In this session, we will discuss some of the recent cases surrounding social media as well as radiology-specific case scenarios to better understand the issues surrounding patient confidentiality, what constitutes acceptable online professional conduct, and how to safely incorporate social media into both personal and professional lives.

Tasks:

1. Complete online survey about social media prior to session.
2. Read through cases below and be prepared to discuss at the session.

Live Cases:

Employees used a camera phone to take a picture of an X-ray and text it to one another. The image also was posted to one employee's personal Facebook page, but has since been removed. And no information identifying the name or other information about the patient was displayed with the image.

Question: Is this a breach of patient privacy? Should these employees be disciplined?

Dr. T. communicated a few of her clinical experiences in the hospital's emergency department on her Facebook account but never specifically named the patients. However, one patient's injuries were such that an unidentified third party was able to identify the person.

Question: Should the doctor be found guilty of "unprofessional conduct" and should her clinical privileges be terminated?

Radiology-specific scenarios:

1. You are on your Facebook account and a friend request pops up from your attending, Dr. S. Should you accept the invitation?
2. You are applying for fellowship training at a prestigious Institution. As part of the fellowship application, you are requested to allow the fellowship director to review your Facebook account. Is this request acceptable to you? Should you disclose your Facebook account?

3. One of the patient's you recently imaged in the breast imaging section contacts you by email as her recent breast biopsy was positive for malignancy. She tells you that her surgeon has recommended mastectomy. The patient wants to undergo bilateral mastectomy for definitive treatment and risk reduction but is concerned about the ultimate cosmetic result. She asks you to provide her with the name of the plastic surgeon you would recommend. How should you respond to this request? Does it matter if you performed any of her imaging studies and/or biopsy