

Social Networking and Patient Privacy

As the popularity of social networking soars, so do breaches of patient privacy associated with blogging and tweeting:

"St. Mary Medical Center staff members were fired after posting photos of a dying man on Facebook."

"Tri-City Medical Center terminated five employees after discovering they used social media to post their personal discussions concerning hospital patients."

"Physician fired from Rhode Island hospital and reprimanded by the state medical board. The board found the 48 year old guilty of "unprofessional conduct". She had written about her emergency department experience on Facebook without using patient names and did not intend to disclose patient information; however "the nature of one person's injury was such that the patient was identified by unauthorized third parties."

Do not disclose confidential information including PHI, on MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.

Do not discuss patient care events, even if names or other identifiers are not used – it is still confidential

Assignments on internal closed UNMC Blackboard sites are permitted



Social Media Policy 6081: Use of social media, even in a personal capacity, must comply with state and federal laws concerning patient information, including but not limited to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

Violations may result in corrective action up to and including termination of employment or academic disciplinary action, including dismissal.

For more information, review UNMC policy 6081 - Social Media, or Contact the Privacy Office at 402-559-5136 or dbishop@unmc.edu