Purpose:

Social media is a powerful tool that can lead to collaboration and improved patient care. However, it also has the potential to divulge protected patient information, place residents in inappropriate patient-physician relationships, and lower society’s trust and opinion of this program and the profession of medicine. The purpose of this policy is to mitigate this risk.

Scope:

This policy applies to all Internal Medicine residents of the UNMC Internal Medicine Residency Program. This policy supplements any social media policies set forth by University of Nebraska Medical Center and/or Nebraska Medicine.

Requirements

The following requirements must be followed when using social media:

1. Protected Health Information, including photographs, may not be placed on personal social media sites. This rule applies to deceased patients and posts in secure sections of social media sites;
2. For the purposes of education, descriptions of patient cases and clinical images may be posted to password protected professional sites once the data has been de-identified and patient consent obtained;
3. Residents should not establish or maintain social media relationships with patients and/or their families. This includes initiating or accepting “friend” requests on Facebook;
4. The UNMC, Nebraska Medicine, and Midtown Clinic logos may not be used in social media without specific written consent according to UNMC/Nebraska Medicine Policies and Procedures (eg. request through UNMC Branding).
5. All content must abide by all local, state and federal laws;
6. Residents may not give medical advice, unless engaged in an educational activity supervised by an attending physician and with permission from the Program Director; and
7. Residents may not post comments that disparage the Program, their colleagues, supervisors, patients, patients’ families, or hospital/University staff.

Professionalism

Even if the content does not violate the above guidelines, all employees have responsibility to the institution regardless of where and when they post something that may reflect poorly on UNMC and/or Nebraska Medicine. Electronic interactions have a potential impact on patients, colleagues, UNMC, and future colleagues opinions of you. It is important to remember that whatever is posted to social media
should be considered public and permanent information no matter what privacy settings are used. Therefore, residents should pause to consider the consequences of their social media posts and should not use obscenities, profanity, or vulgar language, and language that is threatening or defamatory.

Violations

If a violation of this policy occurs, the content will need to be removed immediately and can result in disciplinary action up to dismissal from the program.

Exceptions

Exceptions to this policy must be preapproved in writing by Program Leadership.

Important Definitions:

Protected Health Information:
Individually identifiable health information that relates to a patient’s past, present or future physical or mental health or condition, the provision of health care to a patient, or the past, present or future payment for health care provided to a patient. This includes all information that you access, use or disclose – in any form, verbal, electronic or physical – about patients or their relatives.

Social Media:
All electronic media used to transmit ideas, concepts, images, and opinions. It includes, but is not limited to, Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, Snap Chat, blogs, personal websites, wiki’s, Wikipedia, podcasts and list serves.

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