I. PURPOSE

The Internet provides considerable benefit to residents* by providing new opportunities for education and communication. However, the use of the Internet and social communication sites on the Internet can present issues in ethical behavior and professionalism. The purpose of this policy is to provide residents with guidelines for the appropriate use of social media and to emphasize the responsibilities that residents have in maintaining appropriate ethical and professional behaviors.

II. DEFINITIONS

Social media consists of any form of electronic communication, including but not limited to, blogs, wikis, virtual worlds, social networks, or other tools hosted outside of the University of Utah. These include such sites as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Flikr, Google+, MySpace and any similar site developed in the future.

III. POLICY

Residents are not allowed to release, disclose, post, display or communicate the following information:

- Identifiable, confidential protected health information (PHI) regarding any patient associated with the University of Utah, its affiliated hospitals and clinics, or other external affiliated health care organization. This includes, but is not limited to, any information, such as initials, personal activities, room numbers, pictures, or other information that might enable external parties to identify patients. Disclosure of PHI may constitute a serious HIPAA violation and may have personal and/or institutional liability consequences.

- Confidential information regarding policies and operations, including financial information, regarding the University of Utah, its affiliated hospitals and clinics, or other external affiliated health care organization.

Residents must also adhere to the following:

- Residents must not “friend” patients or their families on any social media site.

- Residents must not offer medical advice on any social media site.

* Includes fellows
Residents must not post information on any site that might be considered offensive and reflect negatively on the resident, colleagues, patients, or the University of Utah, its affiliated hospitals and clinics, or other external affiliated health care organization.

Residents should routinely monitor their own Internet presence to ensure that the personal and professional information on their own sites, and to the extent possible, content posted about them by others, is accurate and appropriate.

Residents should always be aware of their association with the University when posting to a University-sponsored or any other social networking site. Personal profiles and content should always be consistent with the professional manner in which residents are expected to present themselves to colleagues, patients and others in all settings.

Residents are personally responsible for the content they post on University-sponsored social media properties – from blogs, to social networks, list serves, wikis, websites, forums, and other social media platforms.

Residents should have no expectation of privacy when using the Internet at work and are reminded that any time spent posting and viewing social media sites or other Internet sites must not interfere with the performance of their duties.

Residents should maintain appropriate professional boundaries and should separate personal and professional content online.

Residents must recognize that their actions online may negatively affect their reputations with patients, colleagues and others, may have long-term consequences for their medical careers.

Residents should consider that everything they post online contributes to a lifetime record that is readily accessible to others. Potential employers may use social media to access this record to evaluate applicants. Posting distasteful, immature, or offensive content may eliminate job or other professional opportunities. Residents must convey a professional and ethical presence to all who might view their online information.

Violations of this policy will jeopardize the resident’s standing in his/her residency program, and may result in a written warning, probation, or dismissal from the program. Lapses in professionalism may also jeopardize the resident’s ability to sit for specialty board certification examinations.

Residents should realize that there may be serious consequences for “posting or promoting content that substantially disrupts or materially interferes with University of Utah activities, or that might lead University authorities to reasonably foresee substantial disruptions or material interference with University activities.” This may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. (University of Utah Hospitals and Clinics Standard).

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