
GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION

TRAINEE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

POLICY: TRAINEE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Policy Number: 9.7

Chapter: Training Environment

Purpose:

Social Media can be a powerful tool used in education, research, and patient care. However, the use of the Internet and social media sites can present issues in ethical behavior and professionalism. The purpose of this policy is to provide Graduate Medical Education (GME) trainees with guidelines for the appropriate use of social media and to emphasize the responsibilities that trainees have in maintaining appropriate ethical and professional behaviors.

Definitions:

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

Policy:

- A. Trainees are not allowed to release, disclose, post, display or communicate identifiable, confidential, protected health information (PHI) regarding any patient associated with University of Utah Health (UUH), its affiliated hospitals and clinics, or other external affiliated health care organizations. 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.

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Approval Body:

Graduate Medical
Education Committee

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- B. Trainees are not allowed to release, disclose, post, display or communicate confidential information regarding policies and operations, including financial information, regarding University of Utah Health, its affiliated hospitals and clinics, or other external affiliated health care organizations.
- C. Trainees should maintain appropriate professional boundaries and should separate personal and professional content online. Trainees should refrain from “friending” patients or their families on social media sites as this can lead to confusion of roles and boundaries.
- D. Trainees should be cautious about posting medical information or advice on or via the Internet. If a trainee elects to post medical advice it must be made clear that the trainee is speaking personally, and not on behalf of University of Utah Health.
- E. Trainees 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 trainees are expected to present themselves to colleagues, patients and others in all settings.
- F. Trainees must not post information on any site that might be considered offensive and reflect negatively on patients.
- G. Trainees must recognize that their actions online may negatively affect their reputations with patients, colleagues and others, and may have long-term consequences to their medical careers.
- H. Trainees 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.
- I. Trainees 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.
- J. Trainees should have no expectation of privacy when using the Internet at work and are reminded that any time spent posting to and viewing social media sites, or other Internet sites, must not interfere with the performance of their duties.
- K. Trainees 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. Trainees must convey a professional and ethical presence to all who might view their online information.

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

Trainees should realize that there may be serious consequences for "posting or promoting content that substantially disrupts or materially interferes with University of Utah Health 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 Health Standards).