

UTHSCSA Graduate Medical Education Policies

Section 5	Information Management	Effective:	May 2010
		Revised:	
Policy 5.2	Use of Internet and Social Networking Sites	Responsibility:	Associate Dean for Graduate Medical Education

Use of Internet and Social Networking Sites

Purpose Social and business networking Web sites (e.g. My Space, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, You Tube, others) are increasingly used for communication. The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to residents regarding appropriate use of social networking sites.

Policy

Guiding Principles:

- Physicians’ professional images are important and should be protected. Portrayal of unprofessional behavior may impair a physician’s ability to effectively practice medicine, become licensed, and participate in positions of trust and responsibility in the community.
- Internet use must not interfere with the timely completion of educational and clinical duties. Personal blogging or posting of updates should not be done during work hours or with institutional computers.
- All material published on the web should be considered public and permanent.
- Residents should expect no privacy when using institutional computers.
- The individual is responsible for the content of his/her own blogs/posts, including any legal liability incurred (HIPAA or other).
- Avoid discussing any sensitive, proprietary, confidential, private health information or financial information about the institution (including but not limited to UTHSCSA and the affiliated health systems). Any material posted by a resident that identifies an institution in which the resident is working should have prior written authorization by the appropriate offices of that institution.
- The tone and content of all electronic conversations should remain professional. Respect among colleagues and co-workers must occur in a multidisciplinary environment.
- Refrain from posting any material that is obscene, defamatory, profane, libelous, threatening, harassing, abusive, hateful or embarrassing to another person or any other entity.
- Privacy and confidentiality between physician and patient is of the utmost importance. All health care providers have an obligation to maintain the privacy of patient health information as outlined by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).
- It is inappropriate to “friend” patients on any social networking site or

to check patient profiles.

Patient Information:

Identifiable protected health information (PHI) should never be published on the internet. This applies even if no one other than patient is able to identify him/herself from the posted information. Residents must adhere to all HIPAA principles. Patient images should be only obtained with written consent, and then only on institutional hardware, and never on residents' personal equipment. Electronic transmission of such images must be and/or transmitted only on institutional hardware, and never on residents' personal equipment.

Communication Regarding Hospitals or the University

Unauthorized use of institutional (including but not limited to UTHSCSA and the affiliated health systems) information or logos is prohibited. No phone numbers, e-mail addresses, web addresses may be posted to a website without permission from an authorized institutional individual.

Offering Medical Advice

It is never appropriate to provide medical advice on a social networking site.

Privacy Settings

Residents should consider setting privacy at the highest level on all social networking sites.

In light of rapid change, it is envisioned that this policy will require revision at intervals.

Failure to follow these guiding principles may be considered a breach of professionalism, resulting in any and all consequences deemed appropriate by the individuals program and leadership.