

Tutor Guide: Social Media Use

Slide 1

Hello my name is Adam and today I'm going to be talking about social media use as a medical student.

Slide 2

There's not doubt that the popularity of social media has grown rapidly in recent years.

With applications such as facebook, instragram, twitter, snapchat, WhatsApp all now playing an integral role in our everyday lives.

Whilst many medical students use social media without encountering any difficulties,

A spur of the moment tweet or thoughtless post can come back to haunt you further down the line and there have been a number of cases where medical students and doctors have gotten into a lot of trouble because of this.

This talk will explore how you can apply the new joint GMC and MSC guidance Achieving good medical practice to your use of social media.

So, what we are going to do for this session. Is to split you up into small groups and I'll give each group a case. What I want you to do is to discuss your case in your groups and try to think of what actions should be taken now by the individual in the scenario and the relevant learning points/GMC guidelines for each case.

I'll give you about 5 minutes to do this.

[Split groups up and assign them a case]

[5 minutes later]

Ok everyone, that's the time up. So now we are going to discuss the cases.

Case 1: Maintain Boundaries

So here we have Thomas. **[THOMAS POP UP]**

Thomas is a 5th year medical student and is currently on GP placement.

A newly-registered patient is seen by Thomas after suffering from migraines.

[PATIENT POPS UP with migraine picture]

The patient states that she wants to get better because she is going on holiday to Bali. **[PATIENT POPS UP with aeroplane picture]**

Thomas mentions in passing that he has been to Bali last summer and recommends a number of activities to do there.

The consultation is otherwise uneventful.

A week or so later Thomas receives a friendship request from the patient on Facebook. **[PATIENT FACEBOOK POP UP WITH YES OR NO]**

He accepts the request but quickly regrets his decision after the patient starts to post flirtatious comments under multiple photos on his page.

Thomas tries to ignore this but a few days later the patient makes another appointment at the GP and asks to see Thomas.

She tells Thomas that she really enjoyed talking to him last time and thinks they should go for a drink sometime.

So Thomas has got himself into a bit of a situation.

[Ask the case 1 group to tell you what actions they think Thomas should take then show the slide on actions]

Actions

- Politely decline and say that it would be unprofessional. Explain that their relationship is strictly doctor-patient.
- Inform the GP tutor
- Don't respond online
- Unfriend her
- Seek help from a defence union if it escalates.

[Ask the case 1 group to tell you what guidelines they think are relevant then show the slide on guidelines]

Learning points: Maintain boundaries and privacy settings

- **Maintain boundaries:** this is really important because sometimes patients may send you a friend request on social media and its important that If appropriate you guide them to your professional profile (if you have one).

- Your behaviour and relationships with patients online should be no different from how you would behave towards them in person.
- **Privacy Settings:** These can be changed and it's vital that you have a solid understanding of these. If thomas had better privacy settings or didn't use his real name then perhaps the patient wouldn't have found him on facebook in the first place.
- Make sure you know who can see what on your social media accounts. However, remember that social media sites cannot guarantee confidentiality whatever privacy settings you use.

Case 2: Maintain confidentiality

Emma and Natalie are two medical students on an upper GI surgical ward. One morning, Natalie is running late so asks Emma on Facebook messenger to let her know what surgeries are scheduled for the day.

Emma takes a photograph of the operating list with the intention of sending it to Natalie.

Emma accidentally sends the photo to a group chat including all the medical students in the hospital they are at.

The theatre list shows what operations are performed, the name of the hospital, the patient names, their dates of birth and their NHS numbers. One of the medical students in the group chat is concerned about patient confidentiality and that this information may be potentially in the public domain. He reports the incident to the Medical School and a fitness to practise investigation followed.

[Ask the case 2 group to tell you what actions they think Emma should take then show the slide on actions]

Actions

- Emma should delete the picture.
- Emma should chat to her personal tutor for support.
- Emma should reflect on her own behaviour and accept responsibility for her actions. This will demonstrate that she understands the impact of what she has done and is willing to learn from her mistake.

[Ask the case 2 group to tell you what guidelines they think are relevant then show the slide on guidelines]

Learning points

- **Intended audience:** You should remember when using social media that communications intended for friends or family may become more widely available. Remember that once information is published on social media sites you may not be able to control how it is used by others and it can be difficult to remove it from the internet or the site it was originally posted on.
- **Maintaining confidentiality:** Related to the last point, many **improper disclosures are unintentional**, Emma didn't intend to break confidentiality. To maintain confidentiality you should not share identifiable information about patients on the internet. Remember your duty of confidentiality to patients and if you do discuss cases in an online chat you must make sure that patients can't be identified

Case 3: Respect for colleagues

Tessa is a medical student on a Renal ward with three other medical students.

During a ward round, Dr Hughes, a consultant asks Tessa, “What are the key features of Nephrotic syndrome?”. Tessa doesn’t know the answer.

Dr Hughes proceeds to list the key features and then suggests that Tessa spend more time in the library.

Tessa returns home upset by what the consultant said.

Tessa logs into Facebook and writes a status saying, “My new consultant, Dr Hughes is an absolute b**ch. So upset :(!”

[Ask the case 3 group to tell you what actions they think Tessa should take then show the slide on actions]

Actions

- Tessa should delete the status because people may see it and report her to the medical school
- Tessa could speak to her family or friends in private to discuss how she feels
- Tessa should accept that the consultant has identified gaps in her knowledge base and she should strive to improve

[Ask the case 3 group to tell you what guidelines they think are relevant then show the slide on guidelines]

Learning points: Respect for colleagues

- **Professionalism:** It's important that you never post when you are angry, tired or otherwise impaired.
- **Respect for colleagues:** GMC Good medical practice requires you to treat colleagues fairly and with respect. You should not post inflammatory or liable comments on social media about your placement providers, medical school, teachers or trainers.
- **Think!:** Before posting, consider how you would feel if a colleague or patient saw what you had written, or if it was shared to a wider audience. Use social media to express your views, but don't behave in a derogatory manner to other users and don't post discriminatory content.

Case 4: Use of images + videos

Alex is a medical student who is attending a clinical genetics clinic that specialises in patients with severe skeletal abnormalities of the extremities.

During this clinic, Alex was asked by the consultant to take photographs of a patient's hands and feet.

Consent was obtained from the patient to allow the photographs to be taken and stored in their notes, and the patient consented to the images being used for teaching purposes within the department

Alex then uploaded the image to the department's computer and emailed the picture to himself. He then proceeded to post it on twitter with the tweet, "Rare clinical skeletal disorder #AWESOME".

The patient later found the tweet which had been reposted by a twitter community for sufferers of the skeletal disorder. The patient recognised her engagement ring and was very upset.

The patient then made a complaint that the image had been used without her consent and was therefore a breach of confidentiality

A fitness to practice investigation then followed for Alex.

[Ask the case 4 group to tell you what actions they think Alex should take then show the slide on actions]

Actions

- Again it's important that Alex much like Emma from case 2 chats to his personal tutor for support.
- Alex should remove the image from twitter, his emails and his hard drive. He should contact the twitter community and ask to remove the photo. He should also explain his reasons for posting the image.
- Alex should reflect on his own behaviour and accept responsibility for his actions. This will demonstrate that he understands the impact of what he has done and is willing to learn from his mistake.

[Ask the case 4 group to tell you what guidelines they think are relevant then show the slide on guidelines]

Learning points

- **Appropriate Consent:** It is important to remember that patients can be identified by means other than their name or face. Posting details of a clinical case, however heavily anonymised, without patient consent would constitute a breach of confidentiality.
- **Image and videos:** Images or video recordings can only be used if you have the patient's written consent to the specific use. It is possible that images and recordings posted online may be re-used in a different context.
- **Maintaining confidentiality: Again to stress the point! Don't share information about patients or post information that could identify a patient**

Case 5: Being in the public eye

Samantha is a first year medical student.

One night during freshers fortnight she is extremely intoxicated.

The next morning Samantha gets a call from her mum asking her if she is ok and to explain the video that Samantha has just been tagged in on Facebook.

Samantha logs into Facebook and notices that her friend has tagged her in a video which shows herself stealing a traffic cone whilst screaming “fresher!” before subsequently vomiting on the floor.

Samantha is mortified.

[Ask the case 5 group to tell you what actions they think Samantha should take then show the slide on actions]

Actions

- Untag herself
- Ask her friend to remove the video
- Don't get that drunk in the first place
- Talk to her personal tutor for support if she is worried

[Ask the case 5 group to tell you what guidelines they think are relevant then show the slide on guidelines]

Learning points

- **Privacy:** the boundaries between personal and professional lives are becoming more blurred. Now, medical colleagues, patients and employers have access to our social media if the privacy settings aren't secure.
- **EMPLOYMENT:** It's worth remembering that employers can look through prospective applicants' social media profiles as part of their screening process. What they discover could influence the impression they form about an applicant.
- **Social media presence:** *think carefully about how others, particularly patients both present and future, might perceive your content.*

Additional reflective points

Ok so that's all the cases done. Before I finish I just wanted to talk about two more important points.

It's important to think very carefully before responding and if you do respond avoid getting into a full blown argument. I saw one example of a doctor getting increasingly annoyed on Facebook because a gentleman was claiming that "junior doctors knew what they signed up for in the first place and should stop complaining about the contract".

Another point I wanted to make which may come as a surprise was an example from 2009.

This involved a group of junior doctors who posted pictures of themselves 'planking' whilst on duty.

This may have been intended as harmless fun, but the doctors were suspended despite the fact that it didn't involve patients and patient care wasn't affected.

So it's really important to think before you act with regards to social media.

Everything we have discussed in located in the new joint GMC and MSC guidance Achieving good medical practice .

As medical students it's important to have a firm grasp of these guidelines because it will not only help you be a good student but in the future, a good doctor.

The final thing to say is that social media can be beneficial to medical practice. It can allow us to engage with the public in open discussions on twitter, to form international connections and allowing patients access to knowledge about their own health.

Three Take Home Points

FOCUS ON THESE :)

1) Privacy settings: Make sure your Familiarise yourself with and check/ amend the privacy settings on any social media platform you use.

2) Confidentiality: You should not share identifiable information about patients. Many improper disclosures are unintentional.

3) Maintain Boundaries: be sensible about what you post, and think “Would I be happy for my patients to read this?”.