



# Social Media Policy for Students, Residents and Fellows in the Health Sciences

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## PURPOSE

This policy provides guidance and parameters for social media (see Definitions) usage by students, residents and fellows enrolled in Academic Health Sciences educational programs. While social media tools are a very popular mode of engagement and communication and facilitate education, collaboration, research, business, and remote work, its usage by Academic Health Sciences students, residents and fellows presents unique risks to clients/patients. Because of the risks associated with inappropriate use of social media, misuse must be addressed through professionalism training, usage guidelines, and appropriate corrective and disciplinary action when warranted. The use of social media requires a conscious recognition of the profoundly public and long-lasting nature of communication via social media which provides a permanent record of postings. Each student, resident and fellow is responsible for appropriate behavior using social media just as they are with communications in other areas of their professional life.

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## POLICY

All Academic Health Sciences students, residents and fellows must adhere to the following:

1. Follow all relevant University policies. Policies include, but are not limited to, maintaining client/patient privacy, professionalism, conduct, ethics, sexual harassment, eCommunication standards, social networking site guidelines, copyright, intellectual property, branding, computer, e-mail and Internet use.
2. Understand that unprofessional behavior within social media is treated in the same manner as unprofessional behavioral in other settings.<sup>1</sup> Any individual posting depictions including, but not limited to, intoxication, drug use, bullying, violent or discriminatory language or behaviors is subject to disciplinary review and processes.<sup>2</sup>
3. Ensure confidentiality and privacy measures are employed in all situations using social media:
  - Client/patient privacy measures taken on social media must be the same as those taken in any public forum.
  - Social media discussions regarding specific client/patient care, research subjects, volunteers or cadavers are prohibited, even if all identifying information is excluded as it is always possible that someone could recognize the individual based upon the context, time stamp or location data.
  - Under no circumstances may photos or videos of clients/patients, research subjects, volunteers or cadavers, including those depicting any body parts (including microscopic) of these individuals, be

posted to social media unless specific written permission to do so has been obtained. Failure to obtain permission is a HIPAA violation and subject to sanctions (see University of Minnesota policy on Protected Health Information).

- Maintain the confidentiality of students, residents, fellows, faculty and staff by not disclosing their professional relationship with the University unless they have given explicit permission to do so.<sup>3</sup>
4. Client/patient contact
    - Do not provide medical or health care advice about individual cases using social media. Individuals with health inquiries must be directed to an appropriate health care setting.
  5. Clinical settings
    - Understand and adhere to existing policies or guidelines in each of the clinical settings in which you participate.
  6. Students, residents and fellows are strongly encouraged to report inappropriate uses of social media and privacy violations by peers/colleagues and anyone in their learning and/or work environment to their school/program per the established process within the school or training program.

Violations will be handled through the Student Conduct Code and disciplinary measures outlined by the student's, resident's or fellow's program and school.

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## PROCEDURE

1. All Academic Health Sciences students, residents and fellows must adhere to the social media policy to ensure client/patient privacy and foster a respectful, professional learning and healing environment for all.
2. Students, residents and fellows will be informed of this policy and its implications by their school/program including the guidelines and procedures.
3. Breaches of the policy standards are to be reported to the school/program per the established processes within the school or training program.
4. The school/program will investigate the complaint and then proceed with corrective and/or disciplinary action processes.

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## GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS, RESIDENTS AND FELLOWS RELATED TO SOCIAL MEDIA

1. Assume that anything posted to social media can be seen by anyone, including current and future employers. Assume that social media posts are NOT private and can be used in court or disciplinary settings.<sup>3</sup> Posts may remain public even if you modify or delete them.
2. Others may identify you in photos ("tagging"). It is your responsibility to ensure these photos do not violate this policy. It is recommended that your privacy settings be set to not allow this behavior and that strict privacy settings be used on all social media sites.
3. Interactions with clients/patients using social media are strongly discouraged unless authorized to do so by your supervisor or program.
4. Client/patient information obtained on a social media should not be entered in the client/patient's medical record without the client/patient's knowledge and consent.
5. Refrain from using social media for personal purposes while in academic related settings (e.g., clinical settings, research labs).
6. It is strongly recommended that students, residents and fellows do not interact with faculty through social media except for purposes of official course work.
7. Use University affiliation appropriately.
  - Where your connection to the University of Minnesota, the Academic Health Sciences, or your individual College, School or Center is apparent, make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of these entities.
  - If you communicate publicly on the Internet about University of Minnesota-related matters, disclose your connection and role. Use good judgment and strive for accuracy in your communications;

errors and omissions reflect poorly on both you and the University of Minnesota and may result in liability for either/both parties.

- For any personal online activity, use a personal e-mail address (not your umn.edu e-mail address) as your primary means of identification. Just as you would not use University stationery for a letter to the editor with your personal views, do not use your University e-mail address for personal views.

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1. What is the policy for use of social media by staff and faculty of the University of Minnesota?

This policy does not cover staff and faculty; however, staff and faculty must adhere to University policies and to any policies existing within the clinical and workplace settings in which they work.

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## DEFINITIONS

**Social Media:** Social media technologies take on many different forms including blogs, business networks, enterprise social networks, forums, microblogs, photo sharing, products/services review, social bookmarking, social gaming, social networks, video sharing and virtual worlds.<sup>4</sup> Social media are internet-based tools used to interact with other people through text, images or sound. Some common social media are Diggs, Facebook, Flickr, LinkedIn, Instagram, MySpace, Snapchat, Twitter, UMWiki, and YouTube. This does not include University of Minnesota email.

**Patient:** Includes humans and animals.

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## RESOURCES/RELATED POLICIES

University of Minnesota Social Media Policies and Codes of Conduct:

<https://university-relations.umn.edu/resources/social-media-policies-and-codes-conduct#confidential>

University of Minnesota Student Conduct Code:

[http://regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/policies/Student\\_Conduct\\_Code.pdf](http://regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/policies/Student_Conduct_Code.pdf)

University of Minnesota Brand Policy:

<http://policy.umn.edu/operations/branding>

University of Minnesota Copyright Ownership:

<http://policy.umn.edu/research/copyright>.

University of Minnesota Protected Health Information Policy:

<https://policy.umn.edu/operations/phi>

University Relations collects links to all official social networking profiles from University of Minnesota schools, centers, institutes and other groups. To be added to the list, e-mail [webdepot@umn.edu](mailto:webdepot@umn.edu).

## REFERENCES

1. Adapted from "Guidance on Use of Social Networking by UMMS Learners July 2013." University of Michigan Medical School. Approved August 28, 2013.
2. Adapted from "School of Medicine and Public Health. University of Wisconsin-Madison. MD Program Student Handbook. 2014-2015." University of Wisconsin-Madison. Approved on July 9, 2014.
3. Adapted from "Social Media Guidelines for Indiana University." Indiana University. Revised May 2, 2013.
4. Aichner, T. and Jacob, F. (March 2015). "Measuring the Degree of Corporate Social Media Use". *International Journal of Market Research* **57** (2): 257–275.