

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR IMC STUDENTS

International Medical College (IMC)



OVERVIEW & RATIONALE

Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Blogger have become popular content sharing and communication tools over the past several years. These forums offer unique opportunities for people to share, interact and keep in contact, and have great potential to nurture friendships and professional interactions. As professionals with a unique social contract and obligation, IMC students must be mindful of the public nature of these forums and the permanent nature of postings therein. While these sites offer terrific potential to bolster sharing of content and communication with friends and colleagues, they are also a potential forum for lapses of professionalism and professional behaviour. These sites may give the impression of privacy, but postings and other data should be considered in the public realm and freely visible by many people.

The following guidelines are to assist IMC students in safely and responsibly using social media.

DEFINITION



Social media are spaces on the internet where users can create a profile, share/generate content, and connect with others (individuals or entities) to create a personal network or website.

Examples include Facebook, Twitter, Blogger, LinkedIn, Flickr, and Foursquare.

GUIDELINES FOR ETHICAL/PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR

a. Professionalism

- i. Postings within social media sites are subject to the same standards of professional conduct as any other personal interactions. The permanence and easy public access of these postings make them even more susceptible to scrutiny than other forms of communication. Students' conduct is also governed by the IMC Student Code of Conduct. Students may be subjected to disciplinary actions within IMC for comments posted that are either unprofessional or violate patient's privacy.
- ii. Statements made by any student within online media will be treated as if you verbally made the statement in a public place.
- iii. Do not violate copyrighted or trademarked materials. If you post content, photos or other media, you are acknowledging that you own or have the right to use these items.
- iv. In online social media, the lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred. Just by identifying yourself as IMC student, you are creating perceptions about IMC by those who have access to your social media profile or blog.

Be sure that all content associated with you is consistent with your position at the college and reflects IMC values and professional standards.

IMC logo(s) may not be used on any social media site without the prior written approval of the College. Any healthcare/medical oriented blogs should contain the disclaimer:

“The posts on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent the positions, strategies, or opinions of the International Medical College.”

vi. Use of these social media sites can have legal ramifications. **Comments made regarding care of patients or that portray you or a student in an unprofessional manner can be used in court or other disciplinary proceedings in IMC.**

vii. Unprofessional postings by others on your page reflect very poorly on you. Student should monitor others' postings on their profile and work to ensure that the content would not be viewed as unprofessional. It may be useful to block postings from individuals who post unprofessional content.

viii. Students are encouraged to alert student to unprofessional or potentially offensive comments made online to avoid future indiscretions and refer them to this document.

ix. **Keep in mind that statements and photos posted within these sites are potentially viewable by future employers, and even if deleted can be recovered under certain circumstances. Be aware too, that images can be downloaded and forwarded to others.**

x. Avoid giving specific professional advice.

b. Privacy

i. Due to continuous changes in these sites it is advisable to closely monitor the privacy settings of your social media accounts to optimise their privacy and security.

ii. It is advisable that you set your privacy profile so that only those people whom you provide access may see your personal information and photos.

iii. Avoid sharing identification numbers on your personal profile. These would include address, telephone numbers, social security, passport numbers or driver's license numbers, birth date, or any other data that could be used to obtain your personal records.

iv. Others may post photos of you, and may “tag” you in each of the photos. It is your responsibility to make sure that these photos are appropriate and are not embarrassing or professionally compromising. It is wise to “untag” yourself from any photos as a general rule, and to refrain from tagging others unless you have explicit permission from them to do so.

v. Maintain the privacy of students, clinical instructors, lecturers, nurses, doctors, and other hospital employees when referring to them in a professional capacity unless they have given their permission for their name or likeness to be used.



c. Confidentiality

- i. Patient privacy measures taken in any public forum apply to social media sites as well.
- ii. Online discussions of specific patients should be avoided, even if all identifying information is excluded. It is possible that someone could recognise the patient to whom you are referring based upon the context.
- iii. Under no circumstances should photos of patients or photos depicting the body parts of patients be displayed online unless specific written permission to do so has been obtained from the patient. **Remember, even if you have permission, such photos may be downloadable and forwarded by others.**

d. Patient contact

- i. Interactions with patients within these sites are strongly discouraged. This provides an opportunity for a dual relationship, which can be damaging to the doctor-patient relationship, and can also carry legal consequences.
- ii. Private patient information obtained on a social media site should not be entered in the patient's dental/medical record without the patient's knowledge and consent.

e. Social media in clinical settings

- i. Refrain from accessing personal social media sites while at teaching and learning session or in clinical work.

Reference:

These social medial guidelines are adapted with permission from Indiana University School of Medicine; 'Guidelines for Use of Online Social Networks for Medical Students and Physicians-In-Training'. URL: <http://msa.medicine.iu.edu/files/7113/2648/2858/OnlineProfessionalism.pdf>