

University of Illinois College of Medicine Social Media Standards and Guidelines

The University of Illinois College of Medicine reminds students of their professional obligations in regard to social media and other publicly accessible online communications and offers the following best practice guidelines for these communications.

These standards and guidelines apply to all Internet- and mobile-based tools involving user-generated content and interaction, such as social networking sites (LinkedIn and Facebook), social bookmarking sites (delicious), and social news sites (Digg, Twitter, YouTube). The standards and guidelines also apply to blogs, wikis, videos, podcasts, newsgroups, and e-mail distribution lists.

Overview

The College of Medicine encourages open communication in all forms, subject to the professional standards that are important in securing and maintaining the trust of the communities we serve. The College also expects that communications by students do not materially interfere with its core enterprise, our clinical affiliates' enterprises, or violate our patients', faculty's, staff's, or students' privacy and trust, subject to students' own rights of speech.

The College does not monitor student on-line communications, but the College may become aware of and choose to review communications that appear to violate relevant law or policies.

Communications accessible by third parties that contain personal health information about patients, are *always* prohibited and may constitute grounds for immediate action in accordance with College of Medicine policy, as well as federal, state, and local law.

Only College of Medicine employees acting within their official capacities or students/other employees authorized by the medical school administration may use social media to portray themselves as representing the College or to conduct official business in the name of the College or one of its units. Use of any social media to represent the College of Medicine in this way must be approved by the College's administration (typically, the college or regional dean or designee), and uses of logos for UI-COM, the University of Illinois at Chicago, or the University of Illinois for the same purpose also require express written approval of the UI-COM Office of Publications or equivalent regional campus office.

Physicians in practice are expected to observe social media standards and guidelines from professional organizations and licensing agencies. The guidelines here reflect the standards adopted by the American Medical Association ("Professionalism in the Use of

Social Media.” (See <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/physician-resources/medical-ethics/code-medical-ethics.page>).

NOTE WELL: *Conduct in regard to the use of social media is subject to the same standards of professionalism as other student conduct. Violation of College standards of professional conduct may result in sanctions up to and including dismissal.*

General Guidelines

1. At all times, students should observe patient confidentiality, in keeping with HIPAA and other applicable laws and policies. It is important to avoid communications that could in any way convey a patient’s identity, even accidentally. Patients with rare diagnoses, unusual physical appearances and/or having in specific status within the community may be easily identifiable even in the absence of names, record numbers, or other personal identifiers. Students should only use designated secure communications when sharing any kind of patient information with authorized parties.
2. Students should familiarize themselves with the standards of conduct expressed in the Student Academic Policies and Professional Standards. These standards of professional conduct can be found at:
<https://medicine.uic.edu/education/educational-policies/>
3. Students should participate in social media in ways that conform to the standards of conduct expressed in the College Student Academic Promotions Policies.
4. Students should never make representations that they speak on behalf of the College of Medicine unless they have been formally authorized to do so.
5. Students may never disclose UI-COM’s confidential or other proprietary information to any third party. Students are required to respect copyright, trademarks and other intellectual property rights of others.

Best Practices

In addition to the foregoing guidelines, the College recommends the following best practices.

1. Be guided in on-line communications by the knowledge that posted information may persist even after attempts to erase or delete them. Certain communications may remain accessible to third parties, including the University, other students, patients, and future employers. Take advantage of available privacy settings to avoid dissemination of information beyond your intended audience.

2. Avoid making comments that may be considered defamatory, unlawful harassment, obscene, that may pose a “true threat,” or that incite imminent lawless action, as these terms are defined by law.
3. Ensure that all communications in social media forums comply with applicable UI-COM policies regarding privacy and confidentiality in matters pertaining to patient and student records.
4. Routinely monitor your own Internet presence to ensure that the personal and professional information on your own sites and, to the extent possible, content posted about you, is accurate and, conforms to College of Medicine policies and standards.
5. The Office of Student Affairs is a resource – *before or after the fact* – for questions about whether any of your on-line communications violate professional standards or are imprudent in some other way.
6. Notify College of Medicine administration if you identify on-line communications involving College of Medicine students that appear inconsistent with College standards of professional conduct or the best-practice recommendations presented here.
7. If you have questions about these guidelines, please contact the Office of Student Affairs at Chicago: 312-996-2450; Peoria: 309-671-8411; Rockford: 815-395-5630; Urbana: 217-333-8146.

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