

GUIDELINES FOR USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION



**MEDICAL SCIENCES COUNCIL
OF NEW ZEALAND**

TE KAUNIHERA PŪTAIAO HAUORA O AOTEAROA

PURPOSE

Guidelines for registered medical laboratory science and anaesthetic technology practitioners for the use of social and other digital media.

DEFINITIONS:

Social media are internet technologies that allow people to connect, communicate and interact in real time to share and exchange information.

SOCIAL MEDIA INCLUDES (BUT NOT LIMITED TO):

- Facebook, blogs, twitter, email groups, instant messaging and encompasses text, photographs, images, video or audio files.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION INCLUDES (BUT NOT LIMITED TO):

- Email and text messaging.

PRINCIPLES

Healthcare organisations utilising electronic and social media typically have policies governing employee use of such media in the work place, and registered health practitioners need to be aware of and follow these policies.

Registered health practitioners may use social media in their personal lives. In doing so, they are responsible for maintaining the same standards of professional behaviour in social media as would occur if the communication was face to face.

Whatever medium a registered health practitioner uses to communicate health information or information of a private matter they must consider issues of privacy, security and the sensitivity of the information.

The health Information Privacy Code 1994 applies rules to the NZ health sector to ensure protection of individual privacy, registered health practitioners must ensure they act within the rules it outlines.

Registered health practitioners must exercise ethical behaviour when using social media or electronic devices.



Things to be aware when using social media:

- ★ *Content once posted or sent, can be distributed to others;*
- ★ *Content deleted from a site, does not mean it is no longer accessible;*
- ★ *It is not acceptable to discuss or refer to patients*

BEST PRACTICE

- ✓ Regardless of whether you are a health practitioner on-line you should act responsibly and uphold the reputation of your profession;
- ✓ You are personally accountable for your professional practice;
- ✓ You must always be prepared to explain your decisions and actions;
- ✓ You have an ethical and legal responsibility to maintain patient confidentiality;
- ✓ You are responsible for entering into and maintaining a professional relationship with colleagues and employers;
- ✓ Keep your professional and personal lives separate, carefully consider who you accept as a friend online;
- ✓ Consider the personal information you post on line, it could be damaging to your professional conduct;
- ✓ Doubts? If in doubt, don't post it
- ✓ Do not communicate anything you would not like to see repeated in the media;
- ✓ Permanent: remember once something is posted online it's very difficult to remove it

Links:

[Health Information Privacy Code 1994](#)

If you are in breach of these guidelines, the Council has the authority to look at your professional conduct and take action under the HPCAA Act

If you have any queries please email msc@medsci.co.nz
Information regarding the Council can be found on the website

www.msccouncil.org.nz