<h1 style="text-align:center">Social Media Use in Health Care</h1>

Social media is defined as web-based and mobile platforms for user-generated content that create interactive and highly accessible, and often public, dialogue. Examples of social media outlets include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and YouTube. Social media can benefit health care providers by fostering professional connections, promoting timely communication with patients and family members, and educating and informing consumers and health care professionals.

There are potential risks involved with the use of social media as a health care professional. Online content and behaviors have the potential to both enhance and undermine the individual as well as the image of health care professionals as a whole.

Risks involved with utilization of social media:
- Information can take on a life of its own where inaccuracies become "fact"
- Patient privacy can be breached which may result in both civil and criminal penalties
- The public's trust of health care professionals can be compromised
- Activities may violate the employer's policies, resulting in disciplinary action or termination

Common myths related to social media:
- A communication or post is private and accessible only to the intended recipient(s).
- Deleted content is gone forever. *Once data are posted online, they are forever embedded into the server and can be retrieved.*
- It is okay to discuss or refer to patients if they are not referred to by name. *Referring to a patient by a nickname, room number, diagnosis, or condition is a breach of confidentiality.*
- The ease of posting, and nature of sharing information quickly, may appear to blur the line between one's personal and professional lives. *The ability to post comments and content reduces the amount of time spent considering whether the post is appropriate and the possible ramifications.*

How to Avoid Problems:
- Recognize the ethical and legal obligation to maintain patient privacy and confidentiality at all times. Confidential information should not be disclosed to persons no longer involved with the care of the patient.
- Never use personal devices to take photos or videos of patients.
- Do not share, post, or disseminate any information about a patient or information gained in the professional relationship with anyone unless there is a patient-care related need or legal obligation.
- Never identify a patient by name or post information that may lead to identification of the patient.
- Do not refer to a patient in a disparaging manner.
- Maintain professional boundaries in the use of electronic media. Online contact with current or former patients blurs the distinction between a professional and personal relationship.
- Promptly report any identified breach of confidentiality or privacy.
- Do not make disparaging remarks about employers or co-workers. Do not make threatening, harassing, profane, obscene, sexually explicit, racially derogatory, homophobic, or other offensive comments.
- Remember that social media platforms are public forums. Refrain from making any statement on a social media site that you would not be comfortable saying out loud in public. Employers and recruiters look for social media activity when reviewing resumes for job opportunities.

References

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