

Social Media and the Medical Practice

Social media offers both benefits and challenges to physicians. While social media can be a powerful tool for improving communication, educating patients and promoting a practice, its use can potentially lead to HIPAA violations, malpractice suits, or the unlicensed practice of medicine.

Physicians who choose to utilize Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, or some other social media outlet, should take steps to ensure their communication occurs within a framework that promotes professional ethics. Some recommendations include:

- Create a page separate from your personal account to represent your medical practice
- Make all correspondence professional
- Be mindful of patient confidentiality
- Recognize that information you post on the internet is not anonymous and may be available indefinitely
- Monitor web activity regularly

The Federation of State Medical Boards has also adopted policy guidelines that detail how physicians can use social media while still maintaining a standard of professionalism. The guidelines are available for free online at <http://www.fsmb.org/Media/Default/PDF/FSMB/Advocacy/pub-social-media-guidelines.pdf/>

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