

**MARSHALL UNIVERSITY JOAN C. EDWARDS SCHOOL OF MEDICINE  
GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION  
POLICY ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

**SECTION 1. STATEMENT AND SCOPE OF POLICY**

The Internet provides considerable benefit to residents and fellows by providing new opportunities for education and communication. However, the use of the Internet and its social communication sites can present issues in ethical behavior and professionalism. The purpose of this policy is to provide residents and fellows with guidelines for the appropriate use of social media and to emphasize the responsibilities that they fellows have in maintaining appropriate ethical and professional behaviors.

**SECTION 2. DEFINITIONS**

- 2.1. The term “social media” is a group of Internet-based applications that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, online forums, social networking sites and services, blogs, microblogs, wikis or vlogs (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat YouTube, Twitter, health pages and blogs, media sites or similar types of online forums).
- 2.2. For the purposes of this policy, the term “residents” shall also include “fellows” and any other graduate medical education trainee.
- 2.3. The term “online communications” shall refer to communication, postings or other participation involving social media.

**SECTION 3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- 3.1. Privacy and confidentiality between physician and patient is of the utmost importance. Residents are to adhere to privacy and confidentiality guidelines across the clinical learning environment and to applicable policies of the Sponsoring Institution and its affiliate teaching hospitals and sites when interacting on the internet.
- 3.2. Residents must remain cognizant that they are personally responsible for their individual communications, whether written, audio, video, photographic or otherwise. All such communications are the individual’s personal opinions and do not reflect the opinion of the Sponsoring Institution or any of its clinical learning environments. The tone and content of all electronic communication must remain professional.
- 3.3. Residents must recognize that their actions online may negatively affect their reputations with patients, colleagues and others, may have long-term consequences for their medical careers. Residents should consider that everything they post online contributes to a lifetime record that is readily accessible to others and that deleted posts/texts can be recovered and are discoverable.
- 3.4. Appropriate professional boundaries must be maintained at all times. Resident must refrain from offering medical advice on any social media site. Residents must convey a professional and ethical presence to all who might view their online information

- 3.5. Residents are personally responsible for the content they post on University-sponsored social media properties – from blogs, to social networks, list serves, wikis, websites, forums, and other social media platforms. Any personal legal liability imposed for any published content will be the responsibility of the resident.
- 3.6. Residents should routinely monitor their own Internet presence to ensure that the personal and professional information on their own sites, and to the extent possible, content posted about them by others, is accurate and appropriate.
- 3.7. Residents should always be aware of their association with the Sponsoring Institution when posting to any other social networking site. Personal profiles and content should always be consistent with the professional manner in which residents are expected to present themselves to colleagues, patients and others in all settings.
- 3.8. Residents should have no expectation of privacy when using the Internet at work and are reminded that any time spent posting and viewing social media sites or other Internet sites must not interfere with the performance of their duties.
- 3.9. Social networking sites and texting can be the source of cyber bullying, harassment, stalking, threats or unwanted activity. Contact the Marshall Police Department or the Graduate Medical Education Hotline for assistance.

#### **SECTION 4. SOCIAL MEDIA USE RESTRICTIONS**

- 4.1. Residents may not text or post any material (whether written, audio, video, or photographic) on social media sites, that includes any of the following:
  - 4.1.1. Confidential or proprietary information or trade secrets regarding the Sponsoring Institution, affiliated hospitals or organizations. Trade secrets may include information regarding the development of systems, processes, products, know-how and technology;
  - 4.1.2. Protected health information as that term is defined by the HIPAA Privacy Rule;
  - 4.1.3. Peer review protected information;
  - 4.1.4. Information subject to attorney-client privilege;
  - 4.1.5. Information that an individual is contractually or ethically obligated to protect from disclosure;
  - 4.1.6. Information, including photographs, images or videos, that is malicious, obscene, threatening, harassing, abusive, hateful or humiliating to another person or organization. Examples of such conduct might include offensive posts meant to intentionally harm someone's reputation or posts that could contribute to or create a hostile work environment based on race, sex, disability, religion, age, or any other status protected by law or other administrative policy;
  - 4.1.7. Photographs or images of patients posted without their prior written permission; or,

- 4.1.8. Information that purports to be an official communication of the Sponsoring Institution, affiliated hospitals or other clinical learning environments, but was not posted by an approved, official spokesperson for appropriate entity. This includes, but is not limited to, comments regarding the Sponsoring Institution, its affiliated hospitals or employees, staff or patients.
- 4.2 An individual may respectfully disagree with the Sponsoring Institution or affiliate's actions, policies or management. The Sponsoring Institution and its affiliates reserve the right to request the immediate removal of any material that falls within the descriptions set forth in this Section 4 of this policy. Other action may be take consistent with the affiliate's applicable policy (ies).

**SECTION 5. VIOLATIONS**

- 5.1. Lapses in professionalism will jeopardize the resident's standing in his/her residency program. Actions may also result in disciplinary actions up to and including written warning, probation, or dismissal from the program. Violations of this policy may subject the resident or fellow to disciplinary action pursuant to the Sponsoring Institution's Professionalism/Disruptive Behavior Policy and Policy on Resident/Fellow Appeal Procedure.
- 5.2. Such professionalism lapse may also jeopardize the resident's ability to sit for specialty board certification examinations
- 5.3. Appeals of actions resulting from violations of this policy shall be in accordance with the Policy on Resident/Fellow Appeal Procedure.

Effective Date: October 30, 2018

Approved by GMEC: October 30, 2018

Approved by DIO: October 30, 2018