

Policy Number	UME.AC.108
Policy Title	Social Media Use Policy and Guidelines
Effective Date	June 20, 2018
Last Revision Date (if any)	December 12, 2022
Scope	UME Students
LCME Element(s) (if any)	N/A

Social Media Use Policy and Guidelines

I. PURPOSE

This policy outlines expectations and offers guidance to students on how to participate in social media without jeopardizing the professional, ethical, and legal standards expected of them due to their affinity with the medical profession and with the Perelman School of Medicine (PSOM) at the University of Pennsylvania. The policy will outline suggested guidelines, as well as draw attention to a few clear violations of appropriate use of social media. PSOM believes that participation in online communities and social media is a valuable method of sharing, communicating, and remaining in touch with friends and loved ones. This policy is not meant to restrict the flow of useful and appropriate information.

The term “social media” is broad, and students should think critically before interacting in any internet public forum, including but not limited to Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Reddit, blogs, comment sections of news sources, and similar online social media pleasure or networking sites. Postings and discussions on student-run class websites and school-sponsored Canvas websites also apply.

As members of the medical community and as students enrolled at PSOM, students must realize that their behavior on social media is subject to a higher degree of scrutiny and may reflect on more than just the intended scope of their personal life. Students have a responsibility to uphold the professional standards of physicians beyond the classroom, which can be particularly challenging in the new era of widespread access and sharing of information via the internet. Inappropriate behavior may risk the student’s professional reputation and good standing in the medical school.

II. SCOPE

This policy is directed toward undergraduate medical education students; however, best practices apply to all those associated with the Perelman School of Medicine and Penn Medicine.

III. POLICY

Students are expected to adhere to all laws and policies related to patient right to privacy and student professionalism, including but not limited to HIPAA and copyright laws, and student conduct.

- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA): It is extremely important to remember the sharing of personal health information is strictly prohibited. Clinically associated scenarios and/or photographs may be identifiable. As such, posting of images/clinical information without explicit, informed consent may be subject to academic, professional, and/or legal implications. For more information on potential HIPAA violations and outcomes see: <https://www.hipaajournal.com/what-is-a-hipaa-violation/>

- Use of Name: Use of the Perelman School of Medicine and/or University of Pennsylvania’s name and/or logo are prohibited unless pre-approved. Students should use caution when naming and/or tagging their social media accounts and posts. For more specific information see: <https://secretary.upenn.edu/trustees-governance/use-university-name>

Violations of these policies will be addressed according to the specific policy violated, e.g., a professionalism sanction included in the student’s Medical Student Performance Evaluation; a HIPAA violation; invoking the [Academic Review of Professionalism at PSOM](#).

IV. GUIDELINES

When interacting on social media students should think critically about how they would like to be perceived publicly, or by a broader audience than they may initially anticipate. Asking questions like, “would I want my coworkers, faculty, future residency program directors, or patients to see this?” before posting is a helpful exercise. Avoid engaging in conduct that could be viewed by others as defamatory, harassing, or an infringement of the rights of others.

Students must use caution when referencing their experiences in or events associated with the medical school or with patient care on social media. It is important to be transparent. Always make it clear that your posts are your opinion unless you are authorized to speak on behalf of PSOM and/or the University of Pennsylvania, e.g. *"The views expressed on this [blog; website] are my own and do not reflect the views of the Perelman School of Medicine."*

Furthermore, students must adhere to all policies of the medical school, hospital and affiliated clinical sites, and University in their social media, included below.

[Penn Medicine Social Media Handbook](#)

[Guidelines for the Use of Social Media at Penn \(2012\)](#)

[Acceptable Use Policy on Electronic Resources](#)

V. POLICY AUTHOR(S)

Policy Committee

VI. REFERENCES

<https://www.hipaajournal.com/what-is-a-hipaa-violation/>

<https://secretary.upenn.edu/trustees-governance/use-university-name>

[Academic Review of Professionalism at PSOM](#)

[Penn Medicine Social Media Handbook](#)

[Guidelines for the Use of Social Media at Penn \(2012\)](#)

[Acceptable Use Policy on Electronic Resources](#)

VII. GOVERNING BODY

Undergraduate Medical Education Committee

VIII. POLICY HISTORY

Date	Change
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06/20/2018	Created & Approved
06/10/2019	Revised & Approved
11/12/2022	Revised
12/12/22	Approved