

## Guidance on the use of Social Media: Radiotherapy and Oncology

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The statistics on Social Networking Sites is constantly changing but here are some facts and figures...



Twitter, a micro blogging service that enables users to send and read text based posts of up to 140 characters. There are 200 million active users on Twitter and it handles over 1.6 billion searches per day

Facebook, a networking site with over 1 billion users. Around 50% of the adult UK population uses Facebook.



LinkedIn, a site with over 200 million users that offers features aimed at establishing professional networks

YouTube, a free video sharing website, part of Google, users can upload, view and share videos. Registered users can upload an unlimited number of videos



Blogs, a regularly updated website with regular entries and commentaries.

Increasingly different tools can now be linked together for example updates from Twitter can be loaded direct onto your Facebook account. This can lead to blurring of the personal and the professional.

## A view from the Radiotherapy team at SHU:

We do not view social networking sites as a bad thing and we do not attempt to control the digital environment. We consider the building of peer support groups and networks as an excellent support tool for the completion of the programme. Social networking sites offer exciting opportunities in all areas of your personal and professional life.

We have a responsibility to inform you of any potential risks so that you can make your own informed decisions within the context of your own personal and professional life.

The standard of your conduct as a Radiotherapy student, both online and offline is important. The way you act online can jeopardise your ability to join and stay on the HCPC register, once concerns are raised with us about conduct we have no option but to fully investigate.



"The Society and College of Radiographers expect members of the profession to, at all times, conduct themselves in a manner that will maintain public trust and confidence in the profession as a whole. The reputation of the profession must never be put into jeopardy through the actions or behaviours of either its members or the wider radiography workforce".

**Society and College of Radiographers (2008) Code of conduct and ethics**

"You must keep high standards of personal conduct, as well as professional conduct. You should be aware that poor conduct outside of your professional life may still affect someone's confidence in you and your profession".

**Health and Care Professions Council (2008) Standards of conduct, performance and ethics**



Think about the codes of conduct within your profession, the way that you use social media in your private life is a matter for your own personal judgement; you should consider whether the content that you upload onto the internet could compromise public confidence in your profession.

You should also consider Sheffield Hallam's Student Charter that states that you should "have regard for the good name of the University".

<http://www.shu.ac.uk/university/overview/governance/studentcharter/>



## IS NOW THE TIME FOR YOU TO CONSIDER WHAT YOU THINK CONSTITUTES DIGITAL PROFESSIONALISM?

**88% of medical students and 80% of Foundation Year doctors reported having viewed colleagues acting unprofessionally on Facebook**

Osman A. (2011) Is it time for medicine to update its Facebook status? British Medical Journal, 343: d6334

### Things to consider...

- What you make public about your personal life on social media sites could have an impact on your employment and professional standing
- Stringent privacy settings are important but no guarantee, things that you say and post are at risk of being made public and seen by a wider audience
- Always consider your position on this training programme
- Remember that your digital profile is difficult to change/ delete

In 2010 a Nurse was struck off by the Nursing and Midwifery regulator because he had an inappropriate relationship with a former patient that he contacted via Facebook



Do not use social networks to build or pursue relationships with service users, even if they are no longer in your care.

If you receive a friendship request from a current or former service user, **ignore this request**, they are not informed and you will not cause offence

In 2009, a group of doctors and nurses were suspended for taking part in 'The Lying Down Game', an internet craze where participants take pictures of themselves lying face down in unusual places and load them on Facebook. Pictures of the staff were reported showing them on resuscitation trolleys, ward floors and the ambulance helipad. The medical director for the Trust stated that the group faced disciplinary action because they expected high standards of behaviour from their staff.



Keep your personal and professional life separate as far as possible. For example, you could keep Facebook just for close friends and family, use Twitter for sharing information with people you may not know, and use LinkedIn for building and maintaining professional relationships.

Maintain the confidentiality of patients, staff and the hospital where you are based. Never post patient details, comment on patients or staff or include medical information that could allow individuals to be identified.

A Radiography student posted comments on their Facebook page after having a bad day at work. The comments were seen by members of staff from the department who were listed as 'friends'. The comments were felt to be derogatory about members of staff and were passed to the departmental manager who contacted the University. The student's qualification date was delayed and a full investigation was conducted within the University. It was decided that the comments had been misconstrued and the student was ultimately allowed to progress.



Do not discuss work-related issues online, including conversations about service users or complaints about clinical staff / Lecturers. Even when anonymised, these are likely to be inappropriate.

Social networking sites should not be used for raising and escalating concerns (commonly referred to as whistle blowing). Please contact your PDF or a member of the course team direct to discuss any issues

We recommend that you DO NOT...

- ✗ Use social media to criticise a colleague, lecturer, manager or peer.
- ✗ Gossip about patients, colleagues or staff
- ✗ Harass or discriminate against anyone
- ✗ Speak on behalf of anyone
- ✗ Escalate situations and get involved in a war of words



This document is not intended to be an exhaustive review of the use of social media but to raise some important issues that you need to consider, it is designed to get you thinking. Discuss this with your peers, your lecturers, clinical staff and your family, this is a wide issue and making balanced judgements are important.

On the final page are some points that you may wish to think about a little more...

- ✓ If you identify yourself as a Radiotherapy student on Facebook, you should act responsibly at all times and uphold the reputation of your profession. Be aware of the image that you present online and be proactive in its management
- ✓ If you do not identify yourself as a Radiotherapy student, be aware that your conduct online could still jeopardise your registration if it calls your fitness to practise into question
- ✓ Internet links, applications and groups should be approached with caution and joined only where they would not bring you or the university into disrepute
- ✓ Groups with themes, mission statements or values contrary to NHS values and Equality and Diversity policies should be avoided
- ✓ Protect your own privacy. Think through what kinds of information you want share and with whom, and adjust your privacy settings or at the very least check what settings you are using. Remember that the personal and the professional can't always be separated
- ✓ Treat others with consideration, politeness and respect; remember that other people may be watching you
- ✓ You can take action if you find yourself the target of complaints or abuse on social networking sites. You can remove someone from your friend list and block them from interacting with you, and most sites will include mechanisms to report abusive activity and provide support for users who are subject to abuse by others
- ✓ If you are very concerned about someone else's behaviour online, you should take steps to raise your concern including, if necessary, discussing this with a member of the course team

“Students generally believe that their profiles represent them as individuals; however, they are less likely to agree that their online personas reflect their identity as future health professionals (Cain et al, 2009; Chretien et al, 2010; Finn et al, 2010). Employers, on the other hand, are more likely to view SNS profiles as reflective of students’ individual *and* professional identities”

Cain, J., Scott, D.R. & Smith, K. (2010) Use of Social Media by Residency Program Directors for Resident Selection, American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy, 67(19), 1635-1639. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2146/ajhp090658>

Remember we are here to advise and guide you not police you, we do not actively seek information on your social networking activities however if they are brought to our attention then we will need to investigate further.

**Please note: This guidance should be seen alongside your university’s policies and guidance on professional conduct and the use of social media. When on practice placement you should ensure that you are also familiar with, and abide by the placement provider’s specific policy and guidance.**