

Student - Policy on Social Media Usage



Policy Number: 301.1017.102

Policy Revision Date: 2022-05-10

Policy Category: Academic

Policy Owner: Associate Dean for Student Affairs

Policy Audience: Student Council

1. Definitions:

2. Medical Curriculum Committee Review:

May 10, 2022

3. Introduction / Purpose:

Social media platforms have become significant methods of communication and dissemination of information. Medical students' interaction with these platforms should adhere to the professional, ethical, and legal standards expected by GCSOM and Geisinger. Confidential, defamatory, inflammatory or offensive communications may create liability for the organization, as well as personal criminal or civil liability for individuals who post such comments, photos, videos, or other materials.

This policy is designed to address such concerns as well as focus our students on appropriate usages of social media, the internet and the intranet. Nothing in this policy should be interpreted to prevent, interfere with, or otherwise restrain an individual's legitimate exercise of freedom of speech.

Students are also reminded that they must comply with all the rules of procedure, conduct and appearance required by offices and institutions in which students work while fulfilling a requirement or elective of the medical curriculum; follow the standards set forth in the GCSOM Student Bulletin; and follow the standards set forth in the Student Code of Academic and Professional Integrity, the Policy on Academic and Professional Standards Governing the MD Program and the Graduate Program, the Policy on Alcohol and Drug Free Environment and the Policy on Acceptable Use of Electronic Resources.

4. Governance and Enforcement:

Associate Dean for Student Affairs

5. Policy:

This section in no way is meant to restrict a student's First Amendment rights, however, a GCSOM student who uses social media for personal reasons should keep several concepts in mind:

- A. Patient and student record confidentiality still applies even at home. HIPAA, FERPA and other confidentiality statutes and regulations apply to protected patient and student information at all times.
- B. Online conversations are permanent. Do not assume that once a post is deleted, it is no longer available elsewhere.
- C. Intellectual property and other confidential business information. Geisinger retains ownership of all intellectual, proprietary and confidential business information. Geisinger ownership still adheres even if you are posting information on your own time.
- D. Be respectful.

What a student says online may reflect on GCSOM and the general public's view of GCSOM and Geisinger. Remember that if a student does not want their colleagues or school to see their comments, it is probably unwise to post them on the Internet.

- E. Unlawful, discriminatory, retaliatory and defamatory postings, both internal and external, that involve patients, students and/or other GCSOM community members or Geisinger employees may have criminal or civil implications for the author. Comments or behavior that would be inappropriate in the workplace may also be inappropriate in the context of social media. Nothing in this policy, however, should be interpreted to prevent, interfere, or otherwise restrain an individual's legitimate exercise of their rights.
- F. A student's views are their own. While GCSOM understands that a student may wish to share an experience they have had at Geisinger, they must be clear in any communication that they are speaking on their own behalf and not as an agent or representative of GCSOM or Geisinger, unless expressly authorized to do so. In these circumstances, Geisinger encourages its students to include a disclaimer: "These are my personal views and not the views of Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine or Geisinger."
- G. Personal use of Geisinger logos. Geisinger or GCSOM logos should not be posted on any social media site without express approval of the Corporate Communications Department. However, nothing in this policy should be interpreted to prevent, interfere with, or otherwise restrain an individual's legitimate exercise of his or her rights.

- H. Promoting causes and charities. Do not use Geisinger's name when promoting a personal cause, product or charity unless such promotion is a legitimate part of an activity expressly authorized by GCSOM.

Student's own e-mails must be used to register for personal social media. Students must use a personal e-mail address as the primary means of identification when they are posting information on their own behalf. Just as one would not use Geisinger letterhead to submit a letter to the editor expressing one's personal views, do not use your Geisinger or GCSOM e-mail address to do the same online.

These special guidelines have been noted with medical students as developed for physicians and other health providers in mind:

- a. Do not give medical advice using social media.
- b. Let individuals with health inquiries know the importance of online health privacy. When possible, refer patient inquiries to Mygeisinger.org for secure messaging and medical advice.
- c. Limit contact with patients or potential patients who reach out to students via social media avenues. Even if a student blocks access to a personal site there is no guarantee personal information will be kept confidential.
- d. Students should immediately notify their faculty member if a patient contacts them via a social media platform. The student should not respond to any attempt by a patient to discuss clinical matters via a social media platform, including but not limited to Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.
- e. It is important to note that any and everything which is sent via the internet and/or social media is recorded and can be traced back to its author in one way or another.
- f. Do not use personal email accounts to exchange patient information.

Any alleged violation of this policy would be referred to CAPS for review and possible sanctions up to and including dismissal. Because the goals and objectives of GCSOM's policies differ from those of the civil and criminal justice systems, in situations which give rise to both violations of the GCSOM policies as well as violations of any local, state or federal law including HIPAA, student conduct proceedings may move forward without regard to pending civil litigation, criminal arrest, and/or prosecution. Proceedings under GCSOM's policies may be carried out prior to, simultaneously with, or following civil or criminal proceedings off-campus. CAPS reserves the right to postpone hearings and/or deliberations until the conclusion of legal proceedings. Violations of this policy could form the basis for HIPAA criminal and civil liability for both the organization and for the student.

6. Key Stakeholders:

Students