

# Guidelines for Fellows and Members on the use of Social Media

Social media use by doctors can benefit patient care, enhance learning and strengthen professional relationships.

The GMC [provides explanatory guidance](#) for Good Medical Practice (2013) in relation to social media.

This guidance discusses the principles of maintaining boundaries and confidentiality, respect for colleagues and issues surrounding privacy and anonymity.

The College expects Fellows and Members to follow these principles in their use of social media. In particular Fellows and Members are reminded that they should not use publicly accessible social media to discuss individual patients or their care with those patients or anyone else.

In addition, most employers will have a social media policy with which you will be contractually compelled to adhere.

## Addendum for College Officials

College officials, e.g. Council Members, Regional Advisors, College Tutors, and Examiners are reminded that their use of social media will be viewed by the public in the context of their College role.

Be aware that social media output is permanent, even when seemingly deleted. If in doubt, do not post.

## Other sources of guidance and advice

- [Social media and the medical profession – a guide to online professionalism for medical practitioners and medical students](#), a collaborative publication of Australasian groups of doctors in training, illustrates the application of professional standards with examples both fictional and based on previous cases.
- [The Medical Defence Union – Using social media](#)
- [The Medical Defence Union – Ethical social networking](#)
- [The British Medical Association – Using social media: practical and ethical guidance for doctors and medical students](#)

## RCoA on Social Media

- The RCoA shares regular updates over social media accounts: news, announcements, event updates and more.
- We share any relevant comments and suggestions across our networks and internally for information.
- When you 'like' us on Facebook or 'follow' us on Twitter, we may not automatically do the same. Also, being 'followed' or 'liked' or 'retweeted' by us does not mean endorsement.
- When you engage with us on social media you will be talking to a member of the RCoA staff, who will monitor and update social media channels during our normal office hours, Monday to Friday 9.00 am to 5.00 pm.
- Unfortunately the RCoA cannot reply to all comments on social media and we do not discuss any confidential issues or matters of complaint over our social media networks. Instead, we will ask you to email your concerns direct to the most relevant contact in order to resolve any issues as quickly as possible ([www.rcoa.ac.uk/about-the-college/contact-the-college](http://www.rcoa.ac.uk/about-the-college/contact-the-college)).

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## Safety information

We reserve the right to delete or reject messages or comments that include inappropriate or unrelated comments, content or links. In particular, this relates to messages that we determine to include:

- Private information about individuals or organisations.
- Abusive, hateful or discriminatory comments, content or links.
- Insensitive, inappropriate or upsetting comments, content or links.
- Allegations, defamatory or insulting comments about named individuals or organisations.
- References to specific fitness to practise investigations, ongoing hearings or litigation, and any fitness to practise matters heard in private.
- Anything which infringes or encourages infringement of the law, including the intellectual property or privacy rights of others.
- Comments that appear to be part of a concerted campaign or lobbying effort.
- Comments from anonymous individuals.
- We would ask all users to show respect for others and to abide by the terms and conditions of the social media platform you are using at all times.

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