Professionally Unacceptable: Boundaries to the Use of Social Media in Professional Nursing Practice

Power of Social Media to Effect Change

Patient Portal, Virtual Treatment, and other iterations of Health Care Delivery via Social Media
Boon or Bane for Health Care Professionals?

Boon as a Tool in Health Care Delivery
- Professional Networking
  - Information gathering
  - Information sharing
  - Open access peer review to build scholarship
  - Promotion of EBP and standardization of practices for optimal results
  - Research applications
  - Outcomes evaluation applications
- Patient Relationships
  - Personal engagement of health care services and users
  - Client empowerment & therapies
  - Real-time client/family support & communication
  - Vehicle for public health strategies implementation
  - Collective advocacy for special interest groups

Bane as a Imprecise Tool in Health Care Delivery
- Professional & Personal Networking
  - Blurring of professional and personal roles
- Patient Relationships
  - Blurring of patient & friend relationships
- Little time for reflective thoughtful responses
- Myth of privacy settings
- Practically impossible to truly delete
- Discoverable in proceedings
Risky Business

• Publicity of unprofessional HCP behavior/images that damage trust in the profession
• Libel/slander/defamation, moral turpitude
• Licensure for practice in all geographic areas served by the health care social media site
• (Mis)-management of client records
• Professional practice act violation, including failure to self-report or report others’ violations
• Medical malpractice
• Ethics breach
• Creation of unintentional client relationships

• Inaccuracies in understanding or resultant decision-making related to unmoderated content
• Misrepresentation in advertisement/interpretation of qualifications
• Client privacy violation or breach of confidentiality
• Privacy = client expectation
• Confidentiality = allowable & prohibited information disclosure
• HIPAA = protected health information sharing by electronic means
• Vicarious organizational liability
• Commercial or criminal exploitation of PHI

Protective Strategy

• Social media use must be aligned with nursing professional standards of care, scope of practice, and institutional policy

• Legal Strategies
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**Individual Use Strategies (personal/professional)**
- Posted personal behavior is essentially public → beware
- Cell phone photo dangers
- Maintenance of clear personal/professional boundaries
- Accurate portrayal of professional, educational, experiential qualifications, affiliations
- Documentation of client treatment conducted outside of the traditional setting; informed consent issues
- Clear understanding of distinctions between confidentiality and privacy
- Malpractice insurance → a necessity!

**Organizational Use Strategies (patient portal, virtual care)**
- Documented client informed consent re: release, electronic transmission of PHI
- Quality issues
  - Manpower to constantly monitor, timely respond
  - High level data security programming
  - Data breach → hacking
  - Encryption/de-identification of PHI
- Social media legal/expert consultations → a necessity!

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### Resources

  - [http://www.nursingworld.org/codeofethics](http://www.nursingworld.org/codeofethics)
- Department of Health and Human Service, Office of Civil Rights, Health Information Privacy.
  - [http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/index.html](http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/index.html)
- International Nurse Regulator Collaboration
  - [https://www.ncsbn.org/international.htm](https://www.ncsbn.org/international.htm)
- National Council of State Boards of Nursing
  - [https://www.ncsbn.org/index.htm](https://www.ncsbn.org/index.htm)