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Registrant Use of Social Media

This policy has been developed to outline the expectations of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of PEI regarding the use of social media by registrants.

Introduction:

Registrants must be aware that participation in social media is subject to regulatory purview. The College recognizes that registrants have rights and freedoms under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, including the freedom of expression, subject to reasonably limits. This policy is not intended to restrict any registrant's right to freedom of expression; however, it is intended to guide registrants in the appropriate use of social media, taking into account the applicable professional, ethical, and legal obligations.

Definition:

The term "social media" refers to online platforms, technologies, and practices that people use to share content, opinions, insights, experiences, and perspectives. Social media platforms are constantly changing and include, but are not limited to, Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, and discussion forums such as Quora and Reddit.

Policy:

Professionalism

When engaging in social media, registrants must ensure all communications, activity and social media postings are professional, ethical and do not reflect poorly on the medical profession.

Registrants must comply with the professional expectations set out in this policy, other College policies, the CMA Code of Ethics and Professionalism, and other relevant legislative requirements when using social media.

If registrants identify themselves as doctors on social media, they should also identify themselves by name. Any material posted by those who represent themselves as physicians is likely to be taken on trust and may reasonably be taken to represent the views of the profession more widely.

As required by paragraph 41 of the *CMA Code of Ethics and Professionalism*, physicians should "provide opinions consistent with the current and widely accepted views of the profession when interpreting scientific knowledge to the public" and should "clearly indicate when you present an opinion that is contrary to the accepted views of the profession."

If expressing an opinion related to medical issues, a registrant should accurately describe their credentials as relevant to the opinion expressed and must not misrepresent their qualifications.

Registrant-Patient Relationship

Registrants are responsible to maintain the appropriate boundaries of the registrant-patient relationship while using social media. Registrants should exercise caution and sound judgment when connecting with patients or their family members on social media.

Registrants must not communicate with individual patients on social media with regards to their medical care.

Confidentiality of Patient Information

When engaging in social media, registrants must ensure that patient confidentiality is maintained, and must not post identifiable patient information or patient images to social media unless the patient has provided consent. This applies even in a closed or private online forum. Registrants should also be mindful that an unnamed patient may be identifiable though minimal information such as area of residence and a general description of condition.

Privacy

Registrants should read, understand, and apply the most appropriate privacy settings to maintain control over access to information. However, registrants should also be aware that privacy settings are imperfect and should assume that all social media content is in the public domain.

Registrants must respect the privacy of patients, colleagues, and co-workers.

Legal Obligations

Registrants should be mindful that defamatory statements published online may result in complaints to the College or legal action claiming damages for defamation.

Registrants should be aware that plagiarism and copyright infringement may also lead to legal action and should always provide credit and links back to original sources when sharing information.

Registrants must represent their credentials accurately and declare conflicts of interest where applicable.

Applicable Legislation:

Medical Practitioners Regulations section 34(1) (b) and (z), and section 35
CMA Code of Ethics and Professionalism

Document History:

Approval Date: June 2024
Review Date: June 2027