Slide 1

Slide 2

Twit-less Twittering and Proper Postings: Ethical Use of Social Media in Professional Practice

Image Source: http://www.hashtags.org/how-to/search/social-media-analytics-and-the-

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BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION

Slide 3

Objectives

- Understand the benefits and risks of social media use by health care professionals.
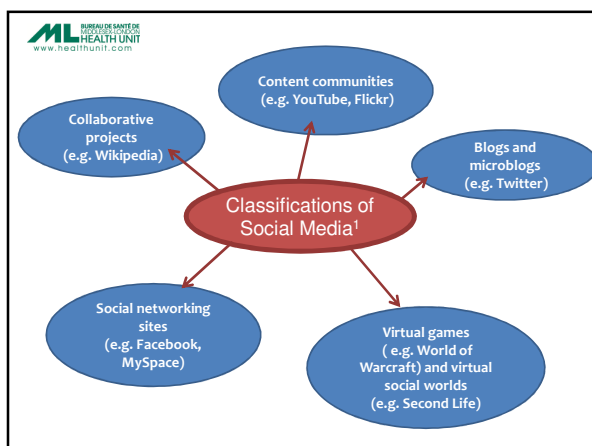- Apply best practice principles to decrease professional and personal risks.

Image Source: http://bestpsdfreebies.deviantart.com/art/Minimal-Social-Media-Icons-319587024lm

Slide 4

Definition of Social Media

"Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content."[1, p.61]

Image Source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Social-media-for-public-relations1.jpg

Slide 5

- Collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia)
- Content communities (e.g. YouTube, Flickr)
- Blogs and microblogs (e.g. Twitter)
- Classifications of Social Media[1]
- Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, MySpace)
- Virtual games (e.g. World of Warcraft) and virtual social worlds (e.g. Second Life)

Slide 6

Benefits of Social Media

Slide 1

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Benefits of Social Media

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Benefits of Social Media

- Use of social media to directly interact with patients/clients to augment clinical care.[2, 5, 6]

- Increases capacity to reach patients and families with high-quality health information[4] in a timely manner.[5, 6]

- Supports professional communities of practice.[2, 3]

Image Source: http://bestpsdfreebies.deviantart.com/art/Social-Buttons-288998112?q=gallery%3Abestpsdfreebies%20randomize%3A1&qo=0

Slide 5

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Benefits of Social Media
continued…

- Shows potential to facilitate research and knowledge translation.[2, 7]

- Serve as a teaching tool with health care professional students.[8]

- Can decrease consumer health disparity due to geographical barriers.[2, 9, 10]

Slide 6

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Benefits of Social Media
continued…

- Online support groups can foster personal empowerment.[11]

Social media has significant benefits for both health care professionals as well as health care consumers.

Image Source: http://office.microsoft.com/en-ca/images/results.aspx?qu=hands&ex=1#ai:MC900441322|

Facts and Figures

57% of adults over the age of 50 use social media

Harris-Decima survey
conducted for Canadian Press

6.4 million Facebook users in Ontario

6S Marketing

Facts and Figures

• 56% want their health care providers to use social media.[13]

• 11% of social network users have followed a friend's personal health experiences, 4% of adults have started or joined a health-related group, and 5% have posted about health related matters.[14]

Image Source: http://office.microsoft.com/en-ca/images/results.aspx?qu=charts&ex=1#ai:MC900438779|

Facts and Figures
continued...

Compared to other sectors, Canadian healthcare organizations are slow adopters.[7,15]

WHY?

Ethical Challenges Related to Social Media Use

• Over a four year period, 22 nurses were reported by employers to the College of Nurses of Ontario for misuse of social media resulting in terminations or disciplinary action.[16]

• One such nurse created a Facebook page and represented it as the official page of the College of Nurses of Ontario.[16]

Image Source: http://ethicsinsociety.stanford.edu/ethics-events/ethics-and-professions/[

Photos of dying patient posted to Facebook get four hospital workers fired

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WISCONSIN NURSES FIRED OVER CELL PHOTOS OF X-RAY

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NURSE FACES DISCIPLINARY ACTION FOR BLOGGING ABOUT HER "LITTLE HANDICAPPER" PATIENT

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Inappropriate e-mail photo of patient lands nurse in hot water

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Nursing student posted photo of 3-year old patient on Facebook is expelled

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"Nurses respect policies that protect and preserve people's privacy, including security safeguards in information technology."[17, p.15]

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Ethical Challenges Related to Social Media Use
continued…

There are specific ethical issues that require special attention:

CONFIDENTIAL

Privacy and Confidentiality
- All health care professionals must protect the privacy and confidentiality of those in our care.[16, 17]
- Codes of Ethics for nurses [17] and professional practice standards[18, 19] outline accountabilities. Various national and provincial laws protect individuals' rights from unauthorized disclosure of information.[20, 21]

Image Source: http://www.corporateink.com/blog/2012/02/03/pr-confidential/

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Ethical Challenges Related to Social Media Use
continued…

- Online breaches of privacy and confidentiality cause more harm.[2]

- Such breaches, even if unintentional, erode public trust and damage therapeutic relationships.[22]

CONFIDENTIAL

Image Source: http://www.corporateink.com/blog/2012/02/03/pr-confidential/

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Ethical Challenges Related to Social Media Use
continued…

Maintenance of Therapeutic Relationships

- Health care professionals must maintain therapeutic boundaries.[26]
- The literature suggests that cultural and social norms around the use of social media are not well established and can result in confusion.[27]
- Many people experience a sense of "disinhibition" when online.[28, p.1227]

Image Source: http://psychotherapy-vancouver.com/therapy-process/

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"Social networks may be considered the new millennium's elevator: a public forum where you have little to no control over who hears what you say, even if the material is not intended for the public."[3, p. 561]

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Ethical Challenges Related to Social Media Use
continued…

Professionalism

- Generally, health care professionals continue to be viewed in their professional role even in their personal lives.[2, 29]
- Regulatory bodies warn that health care professionals may face disciplinary action for inappropriate use of social media on grounds of unprofessional or unethical conduct, mismanagement of patient records, revealing privileged communications, or breach of confidentiality.[23]

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Ethical Challenges Related to Social Media Use
continued…

- There are no specific published Canadian guidelines for nurses to support their use of social media.

Consistent Canadian social media guidelines related to nursing are required to minimize the risks associated with its use in professional practice.

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Risk Management Recommendations from the Literature

- Understand and adhere to organizational policies.[23, 30, 32]

- Never use social networks to air grievances and complaints about colleagues, clients, and employers.[23, 29, 32, 33]

- As a general rule, health care professionals are advised not to electronically "friend" or communicate with clients through social media sites in order to avoid extending the scope of professional responsibility.[18, 21, 29]

Image Source: http://office.microsoft.com/en-ca/images/results.aspx?qu=risk&ex=2#ai:MP900438797|

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Risk Management Recommendations from the Literature
continued…

- Recognize that health care professionals have an ethical and legal obligation to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of patients/clients at all times.[16, 17, 23, 32] Never take photos or videos of patients on personal devices, identify them by name or post identifying information.[17, 23, 32, 33] Never transmit by way of electronic media any patient-related images.[32]
- Promptly report any breaches of confidentiality or privacy by colleagues.[23, 32]

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Risk Management Recommendations from the Literature
continued…

- Use social media wisely in your personal life. Make your personal profile private and accessible only by people you know and trust.[33] Use strong passwords and change them frequently.[33] Present yourself in photos, videos and posting in a professional manner.[29, 33] Set privacy settings to their highest levels[16, 26, 29] and understand social network providers may make information available to third parties.[16]

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Some Unanswered Ethical Questions

- Are we ignoring those in our community that do not participate in social media?[4]
- Is it ethical for employers to view current or potential employees' social networking sites?[31]
- Is personal social media use supporting collegial relationships or contributing to lateral violence?[26, 31]

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Conclusion

- No national guidelines exist.

- Ethical principles to consider include privacy and confidentiality obligations, therapeutic boundaries, and professionalism.

- Health care organizations and academic institutions need to educate health care professionals how to reduce their professional and personal risks.[7,15] Organizational policies are essential but typically do not address the professional's use outside work.[7, 32, 35]

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