

Social Media: The Blurring of Professional Boundaries

**Satellite Conference and Live Webcast
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**Produced by the Alabama Department of Public Health
Video Communications and Distance Learning Division**

Faculty

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Issue

- **Healthcare professionals' appropriate use of social media is of great concern to and from multiple perspectives**

Issue

- **Beyond the basic concerns of patient safety, confidentiality and privacy, there are significant fiduciary concerns in terms of human resource management, litigation and / or fines from various regulatory agencies for the provider and / or their employer**

Review of Literature

College Students Post Things to Social Media They Know Are Inappropriate

- Miller, Parsons & Lifer, 2010

**35% of Nursing Students
Admitted to Improper
Disclosure of PHI**

- McCrink, 2010

**Graduate Students
“Googled” Their Patients
and Did Not Think
it Was Inappropriate**

- Dilillo & Gale, 2011

**Organizations
(Schools / Employers)
Do Not Have Social Media
Policies**

**70% of Electronic
Applications Deleted Due to
Information Available
on Social Media
About Applicants**

- Trossman, 2010

Root of the Issue

- **Boundaries**
 - Webster’s
 - Professional

The Same or Different?

- **Privacy**
- **Confidentiality**

**Is Anything
Confidential Anymore?**

Regulatory

- HIPAA and HITECH
- Practice Act
- Professional Standards
 - Individual
 - Program

Federal

- HIPAA 1.0 (1996)
- HIPAA 2.0 (2003)
- HITECH (2009)

State

- Nurse Practice Act
- Therapist Practice Act
- Social Worker Practice Act

Professional Standards

- Public does not care if the person sitting next to us on the bus posts silly things, but for the person responsible for making life / death decisions the public expects competency in decision-making ability with online information

**Principles of
Social Networking**

- Nurses must not transmit or place online individually identifiable patient information
- Nurses must observe ethically prescribed professional patient-nurse boundaries

Principles of Social Networking

- Nurses should understand that patients, colleagues, institutions, and employers may view postings
- Nurses should take advantage of privacy setting and seek to separate personal and professional information online

Principles of Social Networking

- Nurses should bring content that could harm a patient's privacy, rights or welfare to the attention of appropriate authorities
- Nurses should participate in developing institutional policies governing online conduct

Consequences

- Personal
- Provider

Personal

- Employment
- Licensing Board
- Criminal

Provider

- Financial
- Regulatory
- Image

Future Considerations

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