

## Use of Social Media and Digital Profile of Physicians: What One Needs to Know?

Sir,

We would like to discuss the importance of social media profiles for doctors in today's digital age. With the rise of social media platforms, doctors now have an opportunity to engage with patients outside the traditional clinical setting.<sup>1</sup> However, there are potential risks involved, such as privacy breaches and unprofessional behaviour. This is why it is crucial for doctors to carefully curate their social media profiles.

Firstly, a well-crafted social media profile can help build trust between doctors and patients. Patients are more likely to seek treatment from a doctor they feel they can trust. By having a professional and engaging online presence, doctors can build a positive image of themselves and their practice. A digital profile allows doctors to manage their online reputation and present a professional image to the potential patients. This is especially important in the age of online reviews and ratings, as patients often rely on these to make decisions about which doctors to consult.

Secondly, social media can be a powerful tool for patient education.<sup>2</sup> Doctors can use their profiles to share important health information and resources, such as articles and videos. This can help patients become more informed about their health and better understand the treatments and procedures they are receiving.

However, there are also risks involved in using the social media. Privacy breaches are a significant concern, as doctors must be careful not to share any confidential patient information online. Additionally, unprofessional behaviour, such as making inappropriate comments or engaging in arguments with patients, can harm a doctor's reputation and credibility. Managing a digital and social media presence can be time-consuming, as it requires a consistent effort to create and post content, engage with followers, and respond to comments or messages. This can be especially challenging for busy doctors who may not have the time to devote to social media.

To mitigate these risks, doctors should follow certain guidelines when creating and maintaining their social media profiles.<sup>3</sup> Firstly, they should ensure that their profiles are professional and reflective of their medical expertise. This can include using a profile picture, and including a brief biography that highlights their education and experience. Doctors should also be mindful of the content they share on social media. They should avoid sharing patients' information and ensure the accuracy of any health information shared on their profile. They should also avoid engaging in any behaviour that could be seen as unprofessional, such as making controversial statements or

engaging in arguments with patients.<sup>4</sup> Doctors should monitor their online reputation and take steps to address any negative reviews or comments. This may include responding to negative feedback in a professional and constructive manner and seeking out opportunities to showcase their positive contributions to the medical field. They should also be mindful of the personal information they share on social media and use privacy settings to protect their personal information. This includes avoiding the sharing of sensitive or personal information, such as home address or phone number.

In conclusion, social media profiles can be a valuable tool for doctors to engage with patients and provide important health information. However, doctors must be careful to create and maintain professional profiles that do not compromise patient privacy or harm their reputation.<sup>5</sup> By following certain guidelines and being mindful of their behaviour, doctors can use the social media to build trust with patients and improve healthcare outcomes.

### COMPETING INTEREST:

The authors declared no competing interest.

### AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION:

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