



WJ HEALTHCARE

**S O C I A L M E D I A
P O L I C Y D O C U M E N T**

7 The Precinct, Cheadle Hulme, Manchester, SK8 5BB

Tel: 0333 772 3242



WJ HEALTHCARE

CONTENTS

■ General Guidance:

- Policy purpose
- Social media: Definition and examples
- Social media identities
- Protecting privacy
- Copyright laws
- Confidentiality Guidance
- The Rule of Respect
- WJH Basic Rules Guide

■ Doctor Specific Guidance:

- General Medical Council Principles and Guidance
- Responding to Criticism and Comment on Social Media

■ Useful Documents



WJ HEALTHCARE

GENERAL GUIDANCE

POLICY PURPOSE

Access to social media platforms has never been easier and usage never higher. This brings obvious social interaction and connectivity benefits, but also presents opportunities to publish offensive material, as well as breach confidentiality and common decency standards. WJ Healthcare members, staff and affiliates carry with them an additional responsibility to ensure that no such breaches occur through their engagement in social media.

WJ Healthcare members, staff and affiliates must not write or photograph anything which they would not be happy to present to a GMC Fitness to Practise Panel or to the Information Commissioners Office.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to WJH members and staff in their use of social media.

SOCIAL MEDIA: DEFINITION AND EXAMPLES

Social media is defined as websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking

A non-exhaustive list of social media platforms include:

- Facebook
- X
- Instagram
- TikTok
- YouTube
- Reddit
- Wiki
- LinkedIn



WJ HEALTHCARE

SOCIAL MEDIA IDENTITIES

WJ Healthcare members' social media identities, login details and usernames must not include or make reference to WJ Healthcare in any way

PROTECTING PRIVACY

It is not advisable to allow others access to staff or member's personal information, this data is best kept within the close family and friends' circle. WJH advises that privacy settings on social media devices should be set at such a level to only allow public domain users to see basic, profile information only - similar to the information available on websites (where relevant).

COPYRIGHT LAWS

WJH members and staff must be aware of publishing material which is owned by others. Do not use narrative, images, music, or videos unless you have permission from the copyright holder to do so. Creating a link to the work of others rather than reproducing it is good practice and will avoid copyright issues.

CONFIDENTIALITY GUIDANCE

This section should be read in conjunction with the 'WJH Data Security Policy Document' available at www.wjhealthcare.co.uk.

In The GMC guidance document - *Confidentiality: Good practice in handling patient information* they say:

'Trust is an essential part of the doctor-patient relationship and confidentiality is a central to this. Patients may avoid seeking medical help or may under report symptoms if they think that their personal information will be disclosed by doctors without consent, or without the chance to have some control over the timing or amount of information shared.'

So, with this in mind, it is never acceptable to publish confidential information. Confidential information includes, patient and members information, intellectual property, trade secrets, and financial information about the group and unpublished details about WJH software. It is acceptable to talk in general terms about the nature of your work, but never about patient specific details.



WJ HEALTHCARE

THE RULE OF RESPECT

We all have differing opinions and it is important that we respect the views of others and strive to be respectful of these, especially when passing comment or publishing our opinions on social media platforms. At WJH we call this The Rule of Respect and we expect all our members to buy in and adhere to this key driver.

WJH BASIC RULES GUIDE

It is extremely easy to send a poorly considered message or picture to people who may view the message totally differently. All WJH staff and members should regard all information published on social media as being archived and publicly available and as soon as posted or sent, this data you may no longer solely be in control of where else it may be used.

WJH encourages members right to freedom of speech and are free to comment however they wish when not working as a WJH member. However, they must remember that, even when not at work, they remain a doctor, bound by the codes of 'Good Medical Practice' or a staff member of The Group. As such, members are always responsible for the information they publish, which must never be about patients, members or other staff. They should never discuss their treatments provided, costs, or identify people who have provided their personal details to WJH and entrusted them to our safe keeping. Any breaches of this are likely to be used as evidence against them in conduct or FTP reviews.

The WJH Board has put together a list of simple common sense rules to guide our members in their personal use of social media. This is not an exhaustive list, and we rely on the good judgment of our members when using these platforms. Some simple guidance includes:

- Never say or publish anything which could be interpreted as offensive, such as racial or ethnic comments, personal insults, or comments of a sexist, ageist, or obscene nature.
- Make it clear that any comments are your personal opinions and not those of the WJH or other members.
- Always respect the privacy of others
- Avoid where possible discussions of a religious or political nature
- Do not make comment on protected characteristics

More... 

7 The Precinct, Cheadle Hulme, Manchester, SK8 5BB

Tel: 0333 772 3242



WJ HEALTHCARE

- Do not identify members, patients, partners, or business suppliers
- Do not have a discussion with a patient on social media
- Avoid engaging in discussions of an argumentative nature and if something is said about WJH specifically, get permission from the WJH Board before replying
- Avoid publishing comments that give contrary advice to that of WJH and be careful that any opinions you do give reflect the values of the establishment.
- Be careful never to give unprofessional, misleading, or unsafe advice and if in doubt seek advice from the WJH management team before communicating it to the world.

Once again, it is worth remembering that you may have to account for what has been said on social media platforms and frequently this information can, and is brought forward as evidence in conduct reviews.

ADVICE ON SOCIAL MEDIA DISCLAIMERS

You may use a disclaimer in your use of social media, but you should be aware that this may not provide total protection.

As mentioned in the WJH Basic Rules Guide section of this document, if you are disclosing that you are a member of WJH, you should make it clear that the opinions you are making are yours and not those of the management or your co-workers.

Be certain you understand the rules as disregarding them could be deemed a serious disciplinary matter, perhaps resulting in termination of your membership

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

If WJH members publish information online, it is advisable to be open about any conflicts of interest and declare any financial or commercial interests in healthcare or pharmaceutical organisations and biomedical companies.



WJ HEALTHCARE

DOCTOR SPECIFIC GUIDANCE

GENERAL MEDICAL COUNCIL PRINCIPLES AND GUIDANCE

The WJH Board has reviewed The GMC Guidance on Doctors' use of social media, along with the GMC document piece on Confidentiality: Good practice in handling patient information, we have summarised areas for consideration by our WJH members.

The GMC Guidance on Doctors' use of social media, they highlight specific relevant areas of Good Medical Practice that doctors should bear in mind when engaging in social media and these include:

- You must treat colleagues fairly
- You must make sure that your conduct justifies your patient's trust in you and the public's trust in the profession.
- When communicating publicly, including speaking to or writing in the media, you must maintain patient confidentiality. You should remember when using social media that communications intended for friends or family may become more widely available.
- When advertising your services, you must make sure the information you publish is factual and can be checked and does not exploit patients' vulnerability or lack of medical knowledge
- The standards expected of WJH members as doctors do not change because they are communicating through social media rather than face to face, or through traditional media.
- If a patient contacts you via your private profile, you must indicate that you cannot mix social and professional relationships, and direct them to your professional contact details
- WJH members are encouraged to consider that although one piece of information may not specifically identify a patient or colleague, the use of cumulative publications may be enough to identify them.

More... 

7 The Precinct, Cheadle Hulme, Manchester, SK8 5BB

Tel: 0333 772 3242



WJ HEALTHCARE

■ If WJH members identify themselves in publicly accessible social media, you should always identify yourself by name. This is because any material written by authors who represent themselves as doctors is likely to be taken on trust and may be reasonably taken to represent the profession more widely.

■ WJH members should be aware that content uploaded anonymously can, in many cases be traced back to its point of origin.

■ Interactions or comments about individuals or organisations online are subject to the same copyright and defamations laws as written or verbal communications., whether they are made in a personal or professional capacity.

The GMC Guidance on Doctors' use of social media, they highlight specific relevant areas of Confidentiality: Good practice in handling patient information that Doctors should bear in mind when engaging in social media and these include:

■ Many improper disclosures of patient information are unintentional, conversations in reception areas, at a patient's bedside and in public places may be overheard. Notes and records may be seen by other patients, unauthorised staff, or the public if they are not managed securely. Patient details can be lost if handover lists are misplaced, or when patient notes are in transit

■ You must make sure any personal information about patients that you hold, or control is effectively protected at all times against improper access, disclosure or loss. You should not leave patients' records, or other notes you make about patients, either on paper or on screen, unattended. You should not share passwords.



WJ HEALTHCARE

RESPONDING TO CRITICISM AND COMMENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media, broadcast media and print are forums in which doctors can be criticised, often by patients or someone close to the patient. This criticism may be deemed by the WJH member in question to contain inaccuracies or misleading information.

This may be very distressing for WJH members, but we urge them to consider the following guidance provided by The GMC in Responding to Criticism in the media (2013):

- Support is available via the WJH complaints and responding to concerns team
- Members are not excluded or relieved from their duty to respect patient confidentiality
- You must limit your public response to an explanation of your legal and professional duty of confidentiality.
- You must not put information that you have learned in confidence without explicit confirmation from the patient
- Do not reveal personal information about a patient or outline their care pathway without obtaining their consent. This includes any information in a denial response.
- You should seek advice from your professional defence body or solicitor on how to respond to criticism in the media.

USEFUL DOCUMENTS

1. General Medical Council (2013) Good Medical Practice
2. 'WJH Data Security Policy Document'
3. General Medical Council (2017) Confidentiality: Good practice in handling patient information.
4. General Medical Council (2017) Confidentiality: Responding to Criticism in the Media
5. General Medical Council (2013) Doctors' Use of Social Media