

## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

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DISTRIBUTION: NSCMIRTP Board

COMMITTEE: Communication Committee

DATE(S) REVIEWED (REVISED):

ISSUING AUTHORITY: NSCMIRTP Board

APPROVAL:  

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to advise registrants of the Nova Scotia College of Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy Professionals (NSCMIRTP) of the potential risks of general social media use. It also serves to provide information to registrants, employers, and the public on professional expectations and recommendations of appropriate social media use, both within and outside of the workplace (1).

### BACKGROUND

Social media refers to websites, applications and platforms that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking (i.e Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Snapchat or Instagram) (2).

Social networking has impacted healthcare through increased interaction between practitioners and their patients. Social media has become a powerful tool in facilitating the flow of healthcare related information to patients.

Social media has changed the way in which people and organizations interact, however many individuals are not fully aware of the potential issues that may arise with general social media use. Most employers and organizations have policies in place and provide education to employees regarding the appropriate use of social media (1).

This policy intends to inform all NSCMIRTP registrants that their conduct in the social media domain can reflect negatively on their reputation and the reputation of the profession. Registrants are responsible for all content personally added to any social media platform.

### RISKS

While recognizing the many benefits of social media, registrants must also be aware of its associated risks. Such risks include breaches of privacy and confidentiality, violation of professional boundaries, professional misconduct, and conduct unbecoming.

Registrants are required to demonstrate behaviors that uphold the public trust and are responsible and accountable for their actions and decisions. Inappropriate use of social media could constitute a breach of the Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics and/or the NSCMIRTP Act and By-laws. Inappropriate use could also result in a complaint submitted to an employer and/or the NSCMIRTP. Substantiated complaints may result in disciplinary action, including upto revocation of licensure.



### **Breach of Privacy and Confidentiality**

NSCMIRTP registrants are held to a high standard in managing patient information. It is critical that any content published by a registrant does not, under any circumstances, violate patients' rights to privacy and confidentiality. Content must never contain patient identifying information, even if this information is only identifiable by the patient.

Even with the strictest privacy settings on social media platforms, information has the ability to reach people far beyond the registrant's own settings.

Information made public, and that has subsequently been removed may still be accessible (1).

A breach of confidentiality, even inadvertent, can damage the client relationship and impact the trustworthiness of the profession.

### **Violation of Professional Boundaries**

Every effort should be made to keep personal and professional lives separate. Accepting patients as "friends" on social media platforms, for example, can blur personal-professional boundaries.

By connecting with patients, existing or former, they are given access to your personal information, private photos, conversations, etc. This has the potential to compromise your safety and privacy (1).

### **General Misconduct**

NSCMIRTP registrants are accountable for comments and information disclosed regarding employers, educators, students, and co-workers. Negative or unprofessional comments are always inappropriate and may lead to disciplinary action, even if the harm was unintentional.

Information made public that may depict discriminatory or derogatory behavior/comments, or any form of inappropriate social behavior is inappropriate.

Information made public containing institutional intellectual property, copyrights or trademarks without explicit permission is also inappropriate.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are intended to help NSCMIRTP registrants maximize the benefits and minimize the risks associated with general social media use.

- Make yourself aware of any related policies your workplace and the NSCMIRTP may have on social media and always adhere to these policies, i.e. confidentiality policies.
- Behave online with the belief that there will be a permanent record of your actions.
- Prior to posting, reflect on whether the content could impact your future—professionally or personally.
- Use the strictest privacy settings available on social media platforms.
- Never post any confidential, patient identifying information.

- Ensure posts do not contain institutional intellectual property, copyrights or trademarks.
- \*Information shared related to medical procedures and treatment should be evidence based and registrants should be thoughtful before sharing information without first ensuring the accuracy of the source.
- \*Promptly report any breaches in privacy or confidentiality to your employer and the NSCMIRTP (1).

## TERMS OF USE FOR NSCMIRTP OWNED SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

NSCMIRTP welcomes comments, opinions, questions, responses and feedback on its social media platforms, such as the NSCMIRTP Facebook page. Users must display professional conduct online and adhere to NSCMIRTP's Social Media Policy and Terms of Use. Users should also be aware of employer-specific policies regarding the use of social media and internet usage.

Violation of the Terms of Use may lead to restrictions regarding the user's access and use of NSCMIRTP's social media platform.

NSCMIRTP asks that users report, to [info@nscmirtp.ca](mailto:info@nscmirtp.ca), any comments, content, etc, that breach privacy or confidentiality policies or otherwise do not comply with these Terms of Use.

NSCMIRTP reserves the right to delete comments, at their sole discretion, if the comments:

- Contain abusive, vulgar, offensive, threatening or harassing language
- Include personal attacks of any kind or terms targeting specific individuals/groups
- Contain patient, member or third party identifiers
- Promote or advertise services, products, and politics
- Defame/discredit NSCMIRTP or any other person in any manner
- Include allegations and/or address an ongoing investigation
- Breach any NSCMIRTP by-law, policy or terms of use (including these Terms of Use)
- Breach any law, statute, regulation, order, code, standard or rule
- Are deemed irrelevant to NSCMIRTP's professional values
- Are discriminatory, misleading, defamatory, slanderous or libelous in nature (3,4)

All comments posted are the opinion of the user (writer), not NSCMIRTP. Each user is fully responsible for the comments they post. NSCMIRTP is in no way responsible for any information, opinions, claims, links, references or advice in such comments (3).

Information appearing on NSCMIRTP's social media platforms may be verified through official channels at NSCMIRTP, via our website [www.nscmirtp.ca](http://www.nscmirtp.ca), email [info@nscmirtp.ca](mailto:info@nscmirtp.ca), or telephone 902-832-3167

Facebook and other social media platforms are public. Accordingly, users should not post any personal information, social insurance numbers, addresses or telephone numbers. NSCMIRTP disclaims any liability for any loss or damage resulting from any comments posted on NSCMIRTP's Facebook site (3).

In addition, users should be aware of Facebook's own privacy policy, which can be found at [www.facebook.com/about/privacy/](http://www.facebook.com/about/privacy/)



NSCMIRTP claims ownership of all content posted to their social media platforms. This means NSCMIRTP may repost, share and/or use in advertisements any such content (3).

Communication via Facebook or other social media platforms does not constitute official notice to NSCMIRTP. These platforms may not be used for the submission of any claim, demand, informal/formal complaint, or any other form of legal and/or administrative notice or process (3).

## REFERENCES

1. College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia (CRNNS). (2012). *Position statement: social media*. Retrieved from [http://www.crnns.ca/documents/PositionStatement\\_SocialMedia.pdf](http://www.crnns.ca/documents/PositionStatement_SocialMedia.pdf)
2. Oxford University Press. (2014). *Social media*. Retrieved from <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/social-media>
3. College of Medical Radiation Technologists of Ontario (CMRTO). (2016). *Social Media Terms of Use*. Retrieved from <https://www.cmrto.org/social-media-policy/>
4. Alberta College of Medical Diagnostic and Therapeutic Technologists (ACMDTT). (2014). *Facebook Guidelines*. Retrieved from <http://acmdtt.com/uncategorized/social-media-december-2014/>