ETHICS AND PROFESSIONALISM ON SOCIAL MEDIA USE BY HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

Background

Social media (SM) is the centre stage for social interactions and communication. Its infiltration into healthcare presents a challenge to the healthcare professionals’ (HCP) ethical and professional guidelines. A focus on the traditional ethical and professional foundations would make it possible to engage on SM without discord, termed as e-professionalism.\(^1,2,3\)

The aim was to conduct a scoping review of literature on ethical and professionalism issues on social media use by HCP to inform a protocol.

Methodology

A PRISMA search was done using identified search terms and included articles between 2013 and 2017 in the English language.

2 pertinent guidelines from those identified were analysed using the AGREE II reporting checklist and utilized to inform the guidelines and its summary protocol.

| 445 Articles via EBSCO Host, PubMed |
| 118 Articles after duplicates removed |
| 73 Records screened |
| 45 records excluded |
| 59 Full-text articles assessed for eligibility |
| 44 articles excluded |
| 15 Articles reviewed |

Results

The following themes emerged:
- SM used by the digital natives and immigrants born before and after 1980 respectively
- Professionalism
- Use of separate personal and professional sites or blend both sites
- Patient privacy and confidentiality concerns
- Spheres of SM engagement
- Knowledge of existing guidelines.

Summary Protocol

- Blended or personal and professional sites
- Depict accurate professional credentials
- Use privacy policy settings
- Think before sharing posting or liking
- Follow organizational/professional bodies policy
- Consider future background checks
- Ensure patient’s privacy and confidentiality
- Dissociate personal views expressed
- Use for professional development
- Maintain HCP/patient boundary
- Don’t give personal advice
- Advocacy - vulnerable children and adolescents

Conclusion

- The use of SM has challenges and benefits
- Healthcare professional's use of SM should not be stifled by the implementation of these guidelines
- They are meant as a guide on e-professionalism
- The online world is fast paced, which may necessitate ongoing review of the guidelines
- A recommendation is to incorporate professionalism on SM as part of the communication competency within the HCP’s curriculum.

References:


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