RNAO Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario
L'Association des infirmières et infirmiers
autorisés de l'Ontario

Social Media Guidelines

Electronic communication has altered the way we interact with one another, organizations, and products.

The ever-changing digital landscape can bring uncertainty to professionals such as nurses when it comes to appropriate online conduct. We encourage every nurse to become familiar with the standards and codes of ethics set out by their regulating board/college to ensure compliance.

There is a general perception that nurses are trustworthy and the nursing profession is honorable. We implore all nurses/nursing students to conduct themselves in a manner that not only maintains this trust in the profession, but also builds upon it.

The tips below are guidelines on how to create a constructive, respectful, and authentic online persona whether you are on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn YouTube, or any other social channel. Remember: as a nurse, you work in the public sphere. Carefully consider what you write before hitting the 'Post' button.

1. **Build your brand** – Are you speaking as yourself, with or without your 'nursing hat' on? Tone and context can often be misinterpreted. Building your voice or online persona will help to minimize confusion when it comes to the tone of your comments.

2. **Transparency** – Identify yourself, write in the first person, and don't be afraid to show your personality. Own your voice. Social media is all about continuous dialogue. Be smart, post smarter.

3. **Honesty** – Do not make false or misleading comments/statements. If you make a mistake, take responsibility for it. It's ok! It's better to own it and clarify than to deny or ignore and open yourself to further criticism.

4. **Respectfulness** – Exercise discretion and confidentiality when referring to others, including coworkers, patients and clients. Do not post identifiable information and/or content unless you have permission to do so. Avoid harassment, intimidation, abuse or threats (both when posting and responding to posts). Not all conversations are worth participating in. Anything you post online becomes public information and may remain online indefinitely, even if you attempt to modify or delete your post. Avoid fights and personal attacks.

5. **Add value** – Stick to what you know. Post meaningful comments, and aim for quality. Interested in gaining new knowledge? Ask! Someone will likely post back to you!

6. **Be diligent** – Check your sources. Separate opinions from facts. Know the difference between offering suggestions and offering health-related advice. Offering advice could lead to liability.

7. **Stay engaged** – Stay informed, post regularly, and respond to comments in a timely manner.

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8. **Protect your privacy** – Never disclose your personal information. Once it's posted, it's there for good. Keep your personal information personal. Get to know your privacy settings.

9. **When in doubt, don't post** – Many social applications have timers built in. If you're unsure about posting something, ask yourself 'is this something that MUST be posted right now?' 'Am I posting out of emotion?' If you are afraid of losing your thought, type it out and put it on a delayed post. Come back to it later. Social media is very fleeting. By the time you decide it wasn't worth posting, the topic might be irrelevant on social media.

10. **Get off the Internet** - Be aware of the amount of time you spend on social media. Don't let it negatively affect your life. There's nothing wrong with unplugging.

#HaveFun

Resources
http://www.ama-toronto.com/
http://cnps.ca/index.php?page=147
http://www.arnnl.ca/documents/publications/Position_Statement_on_Social_Media_2013.pdf
http://www.cna-aiic.ca/en/buydownload/nursing-ethics/
http://www2.cna-aiic.ca/CNA/documents/pdf/publications/Ethics_in_Practice_Feb_2012_e.pdf
http://www.cno.org/en/learn-about-standards-guidelines/educational-tools/ask-practice/discussing-clients-with-colleagues-online/
http://www.cno.org/en/learn-about-standards-guidelines/educational-tools/ask-practice/communicating-with-clients-online/
http://www.cma.ca/socialmedia
http://www.cma.ca/advocacy/social-media-use