Master of Science
Physician Assistant Studies

Social Media and the Medical Professional

Responsible Party	Program Director and Principal Faculty
Minimum Review Frequency	Annual
Associated Forms	None
ARC-PA Associated Standards	N/A
Initial Effective Date	11/19/2021
Last Review Date	11/19/2021
Next Review Date	09/01/2023

Rationale

The purpose of this policy is three-fold:
- to define ethical and professional expectations regarding the use of social media by medical professionals,
- to define program-specific behavioral expectations pertinent to social media in the classroom and other educational environments, and
- to communicate a resource that supports student development in their personal and corporate use of social media.

Policy Statement

Social Media and the Medical Professional

The Pfeiffer University Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies supports the American Medical Association's (AMA) opinion titled "Professionalism in the Use of Social Media". The opinion has been quoted below with modifications to align with physician assistant education and practice. The original opinion is available at: http://www.ama-assn.org/resources/doc/code-medical-ethics/9124a.pdf

The Internet has created the ability for physician assistant (PA) students and PAs to easily communicate and share information with millions of people. Participating in social networking and other similar Internet opportunities can support a PAs personal expression, enable individual PAs to have a professional presence online, foster collegiality and camaraderie within the profession, and provide opportunity to widely disseminate public health messages and other health communications. Social networks, blogs, and other forms of communication online also create new challenges to the patient-provider relationship. PAs should weigh a number of considerations when maintaining a presence online:

- PAs should be cognizant of standards of patient privacy and confidentiality that must be maintained in all environments, including online, and must refrain from posting identifiable patient information online.
- When using the Internet for social networking, PAs should use privacy settings to safeguard personal information and content to the extent possible, but should realize that privacy settings are not absolute and that once on the Internet, content is likely there permanently. Thus, PAs should routinely monitor their own Internet presence to ensure that the personal and professional information on their own sites and, to the extent possible, content posted about them by others, is accurate and appropriate.
- PA students are not to interact with patients, patient's family members, or caregivers via social media

- To maintain appropriate professional boundaries PAs should separate personal and professional content online.
- When PAs see content posted by colleagues that appears unprofessional they have a responsibility to bring that content to the attention of the individual, so that he or she can remove it and/or take other appropriate actions. If the behavior significantly violates professional norms and the individual does not take appropriate action to resolve the situation, the PA should report the matter to appropriate authorities.
- PAs must recognize that actions online and posted content may negatively affect their reputations among patients and colleagues, may have consequences for their medical careers (particularly for PA students), and can undermine public trust in the medical profession.

Program-Specific Social Media Expectations

Pfeiffer University PA students and faculty should understand and adhere to the following guidelines and professional considerations when engaging in social media networking:

- Pfeiffer University PA Faculty and Staff members are not permitted to extend or accept "friend requests" to/from students.
- Classroom and clinical site training commitments should be respected. Students should not engage in social networking during in-class and on-site clinical time.
- The integrity of the coursework of the Pfeiffer University PA program, student, and classroom should be protected. Students should not share questions or answers to assignments, exams, or quizzes via social media.
- Patient privacy must be protected. Students should not share any identifiable patient or clinical information via social media. HIPAA laws apply to all social networking sites.
- Students should ensure accuracy regarding statements made about the Pfeiffer University PA program and its community members. Students should not provide false, intentionally inaccurate, or inflammatory comments.
- All laws governing copyright and fair use of copyrighted material must be followed.
- Students should recognize that one's professional reputation can be affected through social networking and therefore be judicious when posting content.

Review

This policy will be reviewed at the annual program retreat.