DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY Postgraduate Medical Education	*Policy Sponsor:* Faculty of Medicine	*Approval Date:* *PGME Committee: October 1 , 2026* *Faculty Council: November 3, 2026*
Social Media and Electronic Communications Policy	*Responsible Unit:* Postgraduate Medical Education	*Amendments:*

1. Purpose

Dalhousie University Postgraduate Medical Education (PGME) recognizes that social media and electronic communications can support education, professional engagement, scholarly activity, advocacy, and public communication. Residents and clinical fellows must use these platforms in a manner that upholds the trust of patients, the public, the medical profession, and the University.

The purpose of this policy is to establish expectations for the professional use of social media and electronic communications by residents and clinical fellows participating in PGME programs. This policy applies to content posted, shared, transmitted, or otherwise communicated by residents and clinical fellows. It does not govern learners' access to, viewing of, or personal consumption of social media content.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia (CPSNS) Physician Use of Social Media standard is the primary professional standard governing social media use by residents and clinical fellows. Residents and clinical fellows are expected to comply with all applicable regulatory requirements, professional standards, and ethical obligations when engaging in social media and electronic communications. This policy provides additional guidance regarding expectations within Dalhousie University's postgraduate medical education environment.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All residents and clinical fellows registered in Dalhousie University PGME programs.
- Activities occurring in clinical, educational, research, administrative, and public settings.
- Use of social media and electronic communications for both professional and personal purposes where an individual's status as a resident or clinical fellow is identified, apparent, or reasonably inferable.

3. Guiding Principles

Residents and clinical fellows are expected to demonstrate professionalism, integrity, respect, and accountability in all forms of communication, including online activity.
Online conduct must be consistent with the standards expected of physicians and learners in all other professional settings.
Residents and clinical fellows should assume that any information shared electronically may become public, permanent, and attributable to them regardless of privacy settings.
These expectations apply whether communication occurs through publicly accessible platforms, private groups, messaging applications, discussion forums, blogs, websites, or emerging technologies.

4. Professional Expectations

4.1 Protect Privacy and Confidentiality

Residents and clinical fellows must:

- Maintain patient confidentiality at all times.
- Comply with applicable privacy legislation, including the Personal Health Information Act (PHIA).
- Refrain from posting, transmitting, or sharing identifiable patient information without appropriate authority and consent.
- Exercise caution when sharing clinical experiences, educational cases, photographs, or workplace information.

4.2 Maintain Professional Boundaries

Residents and clinical fellows must:

- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries with patients and their families.
- Avoid using social media as a substitute for clinical care or physician-patient communication.
- Use approved clinical communication systems when communicating about patient care.

4.3 Demonstrate Professional Conduct

Residents and clinical fellows must:

- Communicate respectfully and professionally.
- Avoid content that may reasonably be considered discriminatory, harassing, intimidating, defamatory, or inconsistent with Faculty of Medicine professionalism expectations.
- Respect colleagues, learners, faculty, staff, patients, health-care team members, and affiliated institutions.

4.4 Represent the Profession Responsibly

Residents and clinical fellows must:

- Recognize that online conduct may affect public trust in the medical profession, affiliated health authorities, and the University.
- Ensure that professional opinions and public communications are accurate, evidence-informed, and consistent with professional obligations.
- Respect copyright, intellectual property, and applicable laws.

5. Relationship to Other Standards and Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia (CPSNS) *Physician Use of Social Media* Standard.
- Dalhousie University Student Code of Conduct.
- Dalhousie University Social Media Guidelines.
- Faculty of Medicine Professionalism Policy.
- PGME Assessment of Training and Promotion Regulations.
- Applicable health authority policies relating to social media, electronic communications, privacy, confidentiality, media relations, information management, and professional conduct, including those of Nova Scotia Health, IWK Health, Horizon Health Network, and other affiliated training sites.
- Applicable privacy legislation, including the Personal Health Information Act (PHIA).
- Applicable copyright, defamation, harassment, and human rights legislation.

Where there is a conflict between this policy and applicable legislation, regulatory standards, university policies, health authority policies, or collective agreements, the more restrictive requirement shall apply.

6. Reporting and Consequences

Concerns regarding social media or electronic communication conduct may be addressed through applicable PGME, Faculty of Medicine, health authority, university, or regulatory processes. Breaches of this policy may constitute professionalism concerns and may be managed through the PGME Assessment of Training and Promotion Regulations, the Faculty of Medicine Professionalism Policy, health authority processes, or other applicable procedures.

7. References

1. College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia. *Physician Use of Social Media* (2021).
2. Faculty of Medicine Professionalism Policy.
3. PGME Assessment of Training and Promotion Regulations.