



UKPCA policy and guidance on the use of social media in a professional capacity

Background

Social media is the fastest growing communication phenomenon in the world today. It is overtaking the use of email in some circumstances and populations as a web-based way to connect with friends, family and colleagues, and its popularity is increasing.

Social media is a term used to refer to online technologies and practices that are used to share information, promote discussion and build relationships. Common social media technologies are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Wikipedia and other blogging forums and virtual networks.

- Facebook has in excess of **350 million active users** worldwide
- There are around **2.5bn** photo uploads to Facebook each month
- LinkedIn has over **50million members** worldwide
- Twitter has **75m user accounts**, with around 15m as active users on a regular basis
- Wikipedia currently has in excess of **14m articles**

With the increase in mobile-based devices it is much easier for people to communicate via social media regardless of where they are or what time it is. More than 65 million Facebook users access the site in this way.

As with all forms of communication, care must be taken around the type and tone of information released; this is most important with web-based media where information is stored and available infinitely.

It is also particularly important for healthcare practitioners, who have a professional duty to build trust and respect the confidentiality of their patients and colleagues.

We believe social media has an important role in the personal and professional lives of our members, and can be used in any number of positive and beneficial ways. We suggest below some areas to consider when posting messages and images on social media sites.

UKPCA guidance on social media use as a professional practitioner

- When posting messages and images, consider that this information is essentially in the public domain even though you may have restricted access to chosen individuals. The information can be circulated and shared beyond your control.
- Respect at all times the confidentiality of your patients and colleagues
- Maintain professional boundaries with patients

- Consider the impact of the information on your professional image, the organisation you represent, and the profession as a whole
- As a member of the General Pharmaceutical Council you are bound to adhere to the standards of conduct, ethics and performance. This applies when communicating via social media as well as in other forms of communication.
- Be aware that libel, defamation, copyright and data protection laws apply to social media communications.

UKCPA Disclaimer

Individuals commenting via social media technologies which are not officially managed by UKCPA represent the views of that individual and not of the Association.

Official UKCPA social media channels are as follows:

Website: www.ukcpa.org

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/UKCPA-United-Kingdom-Clinical-Pharmacy-Association/171369509561902>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/UKCPA>
<http://twitter.com/UKCPAChair>