

COLLEGE OF ANAESTHESIOLOGISTS OF IRELAND
SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY
DECEMBER 2020

1. PURPOSE

To ensure that Fellows, Members, trainees and staff of the College of Anaesthesiologists of Ireland (CAI) acknowledge and understand the purpose, effects and possible risks associated with the use of social media across all platforms.

2. INTRODUCTION

CAI recognises social media as a credible and accepted form of communication. CAI therefore supports responsible use of this communication tool. As the use of social media increases, so too does evidence that medical professionals can face risks that can damage personal integrity as well as their professional relationships with patients and colleagues. This policy should be used in conjunction with the Medical Council's recommendations in the [Guide to Professional Conduct and Ethics](#) and the [CAI Guide to Professionalism](#).

3. POLICY

The following principles have been adopted by CAI as a guideline when communicating through social media:

- I. Social media platforms require you to maintain the same professional standards and integrity that you would observe in other modes of communication.
- II. When authorised individuals post on the social media accounts of the CAI they are not personal posts. They are posting on behalf of the CAI or whichever part of the CAI with which they are associated. Those posting should in general confine the subject of their posts to the relevant area of their function within the CAI.
- III. Be aware that your online image and postings may impact on your professional standing and reputation. Members, Fellows, trainees and staff must be cognisant of their professional positions within the community and their responsibility to the College.
- IV. Care must be taken to avoid crossing the line into unacceptable behaviour that is offensive, abusive, malicious, or intimidating. Always treat others politely and with respect and consideration. This does not preclude free open enquiry, discussion of ideas, or humour.
- V. Before publishing one's opinions and comments on social media, consider the impact of what you are about to post on colleagues and organisations, and the public perception of both the profession and patients.
- VI. If you experience 'trolling' or receive upsetting messages from other users, you can protect yourself by muting or blocking their account. You can also report threats or harassment to the social media provider.
- VII. Before posting, you should consider your comments carefully and ensure that they are not defamatory or contravening the law. Any gratuitous or unsubstantiated comments about individuals should be avoided. Never post anything on social media that you would not wish to see printed in a newspaper.

- VIII. While many advocacy groups will engage with members who are active on social media on broad health issues, members should aim to keep online discourse to general comments always ensuring we respect patient confidentiality.
- IX. When using social media sites always review and engage strict privacy settings. Do not upload any information that is sensitive, in the knowledge that other users may distribute it further and therefore it may become more widely available or lose context. Remember that content published on social media sites is publicly available — even on personal accounts.
- X. Never give medical advice online through social media.
- XI. Be aware that due to the distributed nature of social media data, a posting cannot necessarily be deleted and could resurface in future years.
- XII. A designated college officer – typically the communications/media administrator – will be responsible for the initial opening and formatting college social media accounts. They will retain access details for each account. Any changes in access details should be notified to this designated administrator. The access details for each account will be shared with those authorised to post on or assist with the administration of the account. The access details should not be shared with anyone who is not authorised to post or assist in the administration of those accounts.

4. CONCERNS OR COMMENTS

If you have any concerns about the Social Media Policy please contact the Chief Operations Officer whose contact details are at the end of this policy. Requests must be in writing and resolution of concerns will be sought promptly.

5. CHANGES TO THE CAI SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

The College may modify or amend this policy at any time. Formal notice of amendments will not ordinarily be given, but the current Social Media Policy will be available on the College website.

6. REFERENCES

IHCA Social Media Policy July 2020
ANZCA Social Media Policy 2015

Contact person: Ms Margaret Jenkinson, Chief Operations Officer mjenkinson@coa.ie