

Learnings from Incidents – UHN News series (May 2011)

Insert #3 – Social Media

Whether staff use social media for personal reasons or to communicate approved corporate messages, staff must remember that professionalism and confidentiality are required at all times.

What happened?

A group of clinical staff members decided to make a video about hand washing to inspire their colleagues. Staff who wanted to participate signed consent forms. They were filmed entering the hospital and moving through their daily tasks, washing their hands at many points along the way. The video was uploaded onto YouTube for easy access. Shortly after it was posted, someone noticed that people who were not UHN staff could be seen in the background of the scene where a staff member enters the hospital through a main door. The people in the background could have been patients, visitors or members of the public. The clinician who uploaded the video was told about the issue and removed the video. A revised video, without any images of patients or visitors, was created and uploaded as a replacement.

What was the risk?

Patients and visitors expect privacy when in the hospital. 'Releasing' their identities to the public by posting the video on a public site meant that their information was recorded and used in a way that they weren't expecting and didn't consent to.

Removing pictures, videos and written statements from social media websites can be very difficult. Once uploaded or posted, the information leaves the care and control of UHN and the host site may retain copies of the information indefinitely, even if deleted by end users. In this case, the clinician who uploaded the hand washing video was able to remove the video, but other social media sites don't give users that much control. Therefore, users must be cautious to avoid posting or uploading patients' personal health information and corporate confidential information.

LESSONS LEARNED

You are responsible for your postings and for the consequences of those posts.

What do the [Social Media Guidelines](#) tell you to do?

- Check the foreground and background of pictures and videos to make sure that patients, patient information, patients' belongings and/or visitors are not visible. If they are, and the person had not provided their express consent, do not upload the image. Use the [Photo, Video Consent form](#) to document consent from patients or staff.
- Use your public voice and write in a professional tone. Written comments, whether posted to a site that is accessible by the public or by a limited number of people, should reflect professionalism and respect patient and staff confidentiality.
- Avoid posting statements or images related to:
 - Patients – including their information, belongings or visitors
 - Legal matters
 - Non-public financial information
 - Open RFP processes
 - Employee information
- Keep content and tone professional. If you're posting a comment about UHN or if it's clear in your post that you have a connection to UHN, the content must reflect UHN's mission, vision and values. . When making a connection to UHN, include the disclaimer to clarify that you are only speaking for yourself: "The views expressed on this site are my own and don't necessarily those of UHN." Only

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For more information:

Remember existing UHN policies apply. Find them on the intranet: [Code of Conduct](#), [Internet Usage policy](#), and [Information Security and Appropriate Use of Technology policy](#).

Check with your professional college or association for guidance around using social media. Examples include:

- Canadian Medical Protective Association [Using social or professional networking websites can breach confidentiality](#)
- Registered Nurses Association of Ontario [Legal Column: The dangers of social media](#)

For questions about UHN policies or procedures:

- Privacy Office: 14-6937 or privacy@uhn.on.ca or [Privacy Office intranet site](#)
- Public Affairs and Communications: 14-4636 or uhn.news@uhn.on.ca or [Public Affairs and Communications intranet site](#)