

## Position Statement

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### Social Media Use by Laboratory Professionals

The Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS) supports laboratory professionals and laboratory students and recognize their need to be fully aware of the positive and negative implications of their online actions through social media and consider the potential impact that their interactions on such platforms can have on how they are perceived as professionals.

Laboratory professionals should always be mindful that the content posted to social media sites can reach the public domain regardless of the intention to keep such information private. Laboratory professionals should never rely on a social media platform's privacy setting to be absolute and should always consider the potential professional implications of any content that is posted.

Laboratory professionals should be aware that their actions online reflect on them as a professional and can positively and negatively impact their current and future employment opportunities. It is often the practice to screen the social media presence of job candidates and that screening process can influence an employer's decision in a positive or negative manner.

#### Risks of social media use

Laboratory professionals must be aware of the professional and legal risks associated with inappropriate use of social media. These risks include, but are not limited to:

- Breach of patient or health information privacy
- Breach of confidentiality, to include but not limited to employer, coworker, or patient
- Violation of professional standards of practice
- Damage to personal or professional reputation
- Harassment or defamation claims by peers, or other health care professionals.

Laboratory professionals who do not approach social media with careful consideration may cause harm to patients, their employer, their educational institution and/or themselves. Violations may result in disciplinary actions by regulatory colleges, and/or other professional bodies ranging up to and including loss or suspension of license, disciplinary actions by employers ranging up to and including termination, disciplinary actions by educational institutions ranging up to and including expulsion, and possible civil or criminal proceedings.

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#### Document History:

**Created:** June 2016

**Revision:** August 2024

## Recommendations

Laboratory professionals should:

- Abide by organizational policies concerning personal and professional social media use
- Maintain patient privacy and the protection of personal health information
- Maintain professional boundaries with patients
- Refrain from posting unprofessional or negative comments about patients or educators, coworkers or other health care professionals, and employers
- All social media presences, whether private or professional, should be treated and managed with professionalism in mind
- Never speak on behalf of your organization unless authorized to do so
- Use social media to build and nurture your organization's professional reputation
- Use social media to enhance the understanding and recognition of medical laboratory professionals

Employers should:

- Provide employees with clear expectations on the use of social media through a social media policy which:
  - Reflects the mission, vision and values of the organization
  - Sets forth clear rules for conduct and implications for violations
  - Identifies what information employees are and are not able to share
  - Identifies a resource for employees if they have questions or are unsure about their social media use
- Incorporate their social media policy as part of orientation or onboarding procedures as well as refresher training for existing staff

Educators should:

- Provide training around the appropriate use of social media
- Incorporate professionalism in the curriculum
- Encourage the positive uses of social media