



Institute of  
Medical  
Illustrators

# IMI National Guidelines

## A Guide to Good Practice

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### An Ethical Guide to Social Media

*These guidelines have been developed by the Institute of Medical Illustrators, in consultation with specialist advisors. They should be considered a guide to good practice, providing a baseline for auditable standards. If necessary, adaptations may be made to take into account your local conditions.*

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clinical photography, design and video in **healthcare**

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## 1. Introduction

These guidelines address the use of social networking sites for Medical Illustrators and students; they provide practical advice on the use of such media in relation to the Institute of Medical Illustrators (IMI) Code of Conduct (IMI, 2014).

The advice can be applied to the use of Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, however its principles can be applied to other social networking sites, blogs, instant messaging and emails.

To maintain the professionalism of both IMI and Medical Illustration as a whole, we need to promote the proper use of such sites, and while Social media has numerous benefits if used properly, there are also many pitfalls that a user can fall into and many lines are blurred with regard to what should be shared, and what we should avoid.

## 2. Applying the code of conduct to social networking sites

The code of professional conduct (IMI, 2014) aims to guide and inform the professional practice of all its members, and requires that all members practise in an ethical and professional manner, which includes online networking and day-to-day practice.

The code may be used in disciplinary procedures as evidence of the requirements of fitness to practise. As set out in the code, reasonable penalties may be imposed on members who are found to breach requirements within this code. This includes behaviour of members using social networking sites as well as in the real world. Individuals found to be behaving in an unsatisfactory way jeopardise their right to practise as well as their IMI membership. Offences can include the following:

- sharing confidential information online
- posting inappropriate comments about colleagues or patients
- using social networking sites to bully or intimidate colleagues
- pursuing personal relationships with patients or service users
- distributing material without patient consent
- using social networking sites in any way that is unlawful.

Social networking is an amazing form of communication that is constantly evolving. Many individuals find it greatly beneficial, and use it without any issues. It can enable users to develop their careers, network with colleagues and raise awareness of their profession and these guidelines can offer guidance when using Social media and get the most out of its benefits.



### 3. Practical advice for members and students using social networking sites at work

The Institute's 'A Code of Professional Conduct for Members' should be adhered to in both the physical and online environment. A PDF of the code can be found on the IMI website. Please read and understand the code of conduct, and apply these guidelines when using social networking sites, to avoid any unlawful or unethical behaviour. A good thing to remember is that these websites are controlled by outside sources and that each site has their own terms and conditions to take into consideration.

- It is best to keep your personal and professional life separate as far as possible and to maintain professional boundaries between friends, colleagues and service users. For example, you could keep Facebook just for close friends and family, use Twitter for sharing information with people you may not know, and use LinkedIn for building and maintaining professional relationships.
- If you identify yourself as a Medical Illustrator on Facebook, you should act responsibly at all times and uphold the reputation of your profession. If promoting any work-related activity, the information you give must be accurate to the best of your knowledge, and not misleading.
- Protect your own privacy by checking the privacy settings on your account. Think through what kinds of information you want share and with whom, and adjust your privacy settings as appropriate. It is always best to remember that your posts and personal information could still be seen by others, so it is best to assume that anything you post online can be viewed by anyone.
- Do not use social networks to build or pursue relationships with patients and service users. If you receive a friendship request from a current or former patient, Facebook allows you to ignore this request without the person being informed, avoiding the need to give unnecessary offence.
- Do not discuss work-related issues online, including conversations about patients or complaints about colleagues. Even when anonymised, any such discussions are likely to be inappropriate.
- Never post pictures of patients or service users, even if they ask you to do this. If your mobile phone has a camera, you should not use it in the workplace.
- Social networking sites should not be used for raising and escalating concerns (commonly referred to as whistleblowing).
- Remember that everything you post online is public, even with the strictest privacy settings. Once something is online, it can be copied and redistributed, and it is easy to lose control of it. Presume that everything you post online will be permanent and could be shared.
- You can take action if you find yourself the target of complaints or abuse/ trolling on social networking sites. You can remove someone from your friend list and block them from interacting with you, and most sites will include mechanisms to report abusive activity and provide support for users who are subject to abuse by others. If you are very concerned about someone else's behaviour online, you should take steps to raise your concern. In the most serious circumstances, for example if someone's use of a social networking site is unlawful, you should also report the incident to the police.



## 4. References

Institute of Medical Illustrators, A Code of Professional Conduct for Members, 2015.  
Available from: <http://imi.org.uk/document/code-of-conduct>

10 Facebook safety tips – How to protect yourself  
Available from: <http://www.turleylawfirm.com/library/10-facebook-safety-tips-how-to-protect-yourself.cfm>

Nursing and Midwifery Council  
Available from: <http://bit.ly/nhgycl>

General Medical Council – Avoiding social Media Pitfalls  
Available from: [http://www.gmc-uk.org/information\\_for\\_you/23513.asp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/information_for_you/23513.asp)

Doctor's use of Social Media: Guidance  
Available from: [http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/ethical\\_guidance/30173.asp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/ethical_guidance/30173.asp)

Social Media – A Guide for Staff  
Produced by: Communications Department (in partnership with Human Resources and Staff Side),  
Manchester Foundation Trust. November 2013.  
Available from the MFT intranet.

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